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The Sight Center of Northwest Pennsylvania

Position Guide

Optometrist/Vision Rehabilitation Specialist

Organization Mission:

To prevent blindness and promote independence in those who are losing their vision and those who are blind.

Our vision is a world where preventable blindness is a distant memory and those with congenital blindness or other vision loss live in parity with their sighted peers.

About the Sight Center of NW PA

Founded in 1938 as Pennsylvania Association for the Blind, Erie Branch, the Sight Center of NW PA is known locally as one of Erie's oldest and most respected social service agencies. The agency continues to evolve with the changing needs of the community we serve, from a sheltered workshop operation employing blinded veterans to a full-service vision rehabilitation center serving seven counties in northwest Pennsylvania.

The City of Erie is widely recognized by Forbes, the Brookings Institution, and others as a community on the rise. The Sight Center operates from a state of the art, suburban facility and is an integral part of the Erie medical and professional community. The Center is accredited by the PA Association of Non-profit Organizations for adherence to the Standards of Excellence in Non-profit Ethics and Accountability.

With our region's population aging and the incidence of diabetes rising, the Lake Erie region of Pennsylvania is one of the "blindest" populations in the country and demand for Sight Center services remains high.

Center programs fall into three major categories: *prevention of blindness, vision rehabilitation and social support.*

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Prevention of Blindness

Pre-school Vision Screening: Early detection of visual anomaly is important to the prevention of blindness. The service includes children's vision screening; adult vision screening; eye safety programs in schools, industries, businesses, community organizations and senior centers; public education; follow-up and referral; and data collection.

National Diabetes Prevention Program: Because diabetes is the leading cause of vision loss in persons of all ages in the United States today, preventing diabetes fits naturally into the Sight Center's mission to prevent blindness. The Diabetes Prevention Program is offered through the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC's National Diabetes Prevention Program is an evidence-based behavioral change program, designed to support lifestyle balance, healthy eating, physical activity and exercise, and motivational support. The program is delivered by a trained Lifestyle Coach, who facilitates the CDC-approved curriculum and works to encourage and sustain group interaction so that participants support each other during the year-long program.

Low Income Eyeglass program: Casework service provided by the Sight Center with referral to local optical professionals is available to adults and children who qualify financially, either uninsured or underinsured. No visual qualifications. Financial assistance for care is available through the Erie Lions' Save An Eye Fund.

Vision Rehabilitation

Low vision clinic: The Center's low vision clinic provides evaluations, recommendations for magnification, lighting, alternative techniques, and follow-up for those adults and children with low vision defined as visual acuity of 20/70 or worse, best corrected in the best eye and/or significant field loss. Goal is continued ability to perform the activities of daily living in an independent manner.

New opportunities with Erie's low-income high-rises: The Center recently received a contract to provide low vision rehabilitation to a large population of residents of four urban high-rise apartment buildings purchased in 2019 by a developer whose mission is to improve living conditions in urban dwellings. A brand new, "storefront" low vision center is currently under construction to serve this population.

New opportunities with urban and rural aging population in group residences: The Center has also received the go-ahead to begin working in several senior residential communities to provide both primary optometry and low vision services.

Vision Rehabilitation and Occupational Therapy: Vision rehab therapists and/or occupational therapists provide professional follow-up to patients of the low vision clinic, assistance with clients of the Specialized Services contract, Youth Experience Program, Diabetes Prevention Program, and assistive technology training.

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Youth Experience Program: The Center’s experience-based program for children with severe visual loss complements and supplements the school curriculum in coordination with the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) and the Intermediate Unit. The pillars of the Youth Experience Program are SNOW CAMP! and exSIGHTabilities Sports Camp as well as activities throughout the year to enhance socialization and participation. Visits to local schools help to enhance social function for children with vision loss and increase expectations of our youth with severe vision loss or blindness.

Visual Motor Integration (VMI) and Eyeglass Program in Erie’s Community Schools: A program funded under the United Way provides on-site eye exams as well as evaluation and treatment of visual motor processing deficits among 4–5-year-olds to enhance reading readiness and school success in the region’s poorest elementary schools.

Social Support

The Specialized Services Program is designed to assist individuals of any age to maintain independence in their home and community. Services provided are escorted, door-through-door transportation, personal- and mail-reading, bill-paying and banking, escorted shopping, support groups, community activities and life skills education.

Numbers of persons served by program area:

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|------------------------------|---|
| Prevention of Blindness: | Approximately 8,400 annually |
| Diabetes Prevention Program: | 85-90 new members annually – projected to double |
| Vision Rehabilitation: | Currently 200-300 new patients annually; most continue with us as needed for the remaining years of their lives |
| New Opportunities: | Projected patient increase by 800-1000 patients annually |
| Community Schools Program: | 140 children pre-COVID |
| Social Support: | 220 on-going clients |

Position Summary

Due to the varied nature of the position and the exciting opportunities for growth that it presents, this position has been described as “optometry Nirvana!” The optometrist/vision rehabilitation specialist will provide low vision services to a diverse population of adults and children in multiple locations, including the Sight Center’s on-site low vision clinic, a new clinic located in a downtown high-rise “storefront” and in senior residential facilities. Primary optometry will be required in the senior residential facilities and on-site in Erie’s Community Schools (post-COVID). All equipment, both mobile and stationary, will be provided. Optometrist will receive support from a full staff including the eye care

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coordinator, vision rehabilitation therapist, social worker, scheduler, and receptionist. A tech may be hired as required by the demands of the job.

The vision rehabilitation program not only serves the mission of the organization, but medical billing for services also contributes to the on-going sustainability of the agency. Optometrist will be fully paneled and credentialed with Medicare, Medicaid and private insurances with benefits assigned to the Sight Center.

About Erie, PA

Located on the south shore of Lake Erie, Erie is Pennsylvania's primary access point to the Great Lakes. Presque Isle Bay is well known throughout the Great Lakes for fishing and sailing and is served by many yacht clubs. Presque Isle State Park, a 3,200-acre accessible peninsula that draws more than four million visitors a year to its seven miles of sandy beaches and 13 miles of bike and walking paths, surrounds this bay and provides year-round recreational opportunities.

Other bicycling and hiking opportunities abound, with the Seaway Trail running through downtown Erie along with lakefront. Erie is home to the US Brig Niagara, Pennsylvania's signature Tall Ship, and the Erie Maritime Museum.

Once primarily known as a manufacturing town, Erie now enjoys a diverse and modernized industrial base with fully developed educational, cultural, healthcare, and recreational resources that far surpass most communities of its size. Gannon University, Mercyhurst University, Penn State Behrend, Edinboro University and the nation's largest and fastest growing medical college, Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine, attract talented students from around the country and across the globe. Waterfront hotels, restaurants, museums, and a convention center highlight our downtown.

Erie is a fast-growing regional healthcare hub anchored by UPMC and Allegheny Health Network's Saint Vincent Hospital; each recently investing over \$100 million in their physical plants. Additional investments include the Magee-Women's Research Institute in Erie.

Alongside the area's healthcare and higher education communities, Erie Insurance, a Fortune 500 company headquartered in the center of the city and a business stronghold in the community since 1925, has been a leader in the private sector efforts by driving a huge transformation in downtown Erie and the area's workforce. Over the last few years, the company has invested \$135 million in capital projects and added 250 jobs per year. Currently employing 3,600 people in Erie alone, the company anticipates that this number will climb to 4,000 and beyond with the opening of a new office complex in the heart of downtown.

Scott Enterprises, a regional hospitality company, also plans an investment of over \$100 million on the City's waterfront, beginning with their recently opened Hampton Bayfront Hotel. The 42-acre Bayfront

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site, a mixed-use development within an Opportunity Zone, stands ready for residential and commercial development beginning this year.

Erie boasts a well-established and thriving performing arts presence and is home to many internationally and nationally recognized artists. The Erie Philharmonic is comprised of a group of professional musicians, a full chorus, and a Junior Philharmonic that tours the area. The iconic Erie Playhouse, the city's more than 100-year-old community theater provides a robust annual season of professional entertainment. Lake Erie Ballet is a professional company that performs well-known programs, and the Erie Civic Music Association attracts, sponsors, and books performances by professional musicians, singers, entertainers, and ensembles from around the world. The \$16.5 million renovation of the historic Warner Theater will create a world-class performing arts center to rival big city venues. Equally vital to the fabric of Erie's arts culture is the Erie Art Museum, also more than 100 years old, which houses a collection of more than 8,000 objects. The Museum underwent a significant expansion in 2010 to integrate five historic buildings into one. In 2011, the Federal Institute of Museum and Library Services awarded the Museum the nation's highest honor for museums, the National Medal for Museum and Library Service.

Other community assets include the Erie History Center, ExpERIENCE Children's Museum, Erie Zoo, the Bicentennial Tower overlooking Erie's Bay, Erie Land Light and Lighthouse, the Erie Maritime Museum, home to the Brig Niagara, and Presque Isle Downs and Casino. Residents and tourists cheer the city's home teams including the Erie SeaWolves, the minor league baseball team, the Erie Otters, a team in the Ontario Hockey League, and BayHawks, the NBA D league basketball team.

The Erie metropolitan area is roughly 1.5 hours from Buffalo, NY, Cleveland, OH, and Pittsburgh, PA. Peek 'N Peak Ski Resort, the Allegheny National Forest, and Chautauqua Institution are all just a short drive away. The Lake Erie Wine Trail boasts miles of fragrant vineyards and produces the third-most bountiful amount of wine in the United States.

Sources: Erie Community Foundation Executive Director Position Guide.

<https://www.eriepa.com/erie-pa-relocation-guide>;

<https://www.flagshipopportunityzone.com/why-invest-in-erie-pennsylvania>;

<https://www.eriepa.com>;

<https://www.visiterie.com>

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Job Description

Job Title: Optometrist/Vision Rehabilitation Specialist
Reports To: Executive Director

Overview

- Full-time, permanent position
- Mixture of primary eye care and low vision with emphasis on low vision
- Patients age ranges 1-100 years old
- Variety of clinical and community settings
- Works closely with vision rehabilitation therapist and full staff of support personnel
- Competitive salary and benefit package commensurate with experience and Erie, PA market

Essential Duties and Responsibilities include the following:

- Conduct low vision evaluations on-site at the Sight Center's clinic 4-8 days per month;
- Conduct low vision evaluations off-site at a low-income housing high-rise clinic 1-2 days per month;
- Deliver primary optometry services in senior residential communities/facilities 6-8 days per month;
- Deliver low vision evaluations and services as follow-up to primary optometry in senior facilities 4-6 days per month;
- Provide oversight and guidance to broad-scale pediatric vision screening program that covers multiple counties (infrequent);
- Provide primary eye exams in impoverished Community Elementary Schools as an essential part of Visual Motor Integration (OT) program (future/post-COVID 1-3 days during one month of the year)
- Must be prepared to actively promote programs and services of the Sight Center among eyecare professional peer group.
- Work with staff to review data and evaluate program efficacy and identify service needs.
- Review and approve program and service reports.
- Overview maintenance of records in compliance with organizational goals and objectives, as well as external regulatory guidelines.
- Other duties may emerge as programs evolve.

Skills and Abilities

Strong interpersonal skills such as compassion and empathy as the Sight Center is a mission-driven, social service agency with a vulnerable and varied client base.

Ability to work comfortably with diverse programs and populations.

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Strong communication skills and high work standards.

Physical Demands The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Vision and hearing correctable to within normal ranges.

May be expected to lift up to 30 lbs. for miscellaneous supplies.

To Apply for this Position

Please contact: Vicki Shields, Eyecare Programs Coordinator
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2545 West 26th Street
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Visit us on-line at: www.SightCenterNWPA.org