



DECEMBER 2020

COVID-19 Safety in VisionSpring's Outreach Programs Guidelines and Toolkit



Introduction

VisionSpring is among the many global social enterprises that have had to respond to the spread and impact of the new coronavirus. VisionSpring's primary strategic question in 2020 was how to provide people living under \$4/day with access to affordable, attractive eyeglasses while also keeping its teams and customers safe from the spread of COVID-19.

VisionSpring developed a new protocol to integrate infection prevention and control into our vision outreach programs. Using national public health guidelines and input from global and field optometrists, a VisionSpring innovation team defined, beta tested and then piloted the new procedures and tools in India from July to September 2020. The process is described in the document [Learning for the New Normal: VisionSpring Guidelines for COVID-19 Safe Community Vision Outreach Programs](#). Using the new protocols, VisionSpring restarted our community-based vision access programs in October 2020.

The guidelines and tools in this document are designed for VisionSpring teams and for peer organizations interested in using VisionSpring's experience to adapt their own program activities. Each section includes the tools to successfully execute the relevant practice. Tools are signified by the "+" symbol which link to Online resources and are also available in the annex.

VisionSpring is pleased to share these guidelines and tools with others, and to work with partners to adapt them to new contexts.

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I. COVID-19 Prevention Measures

Infection prevention and control requires everyone involved in an activity to follow the same set of practices and behaviors. VisionSpring's COVID-19 protocol integrates 8 essential prevention practices to create a safe journey for both customers and staff. This section summarizes these practices.

1. Require that customers wash their hands with soap and water before they register

VisionSpring brings a portable handwashing station to each program location that can be refilled, carried and maintained easily. Customers must wash their hands before registration.

2. Conduct health and symptomatic screening to decide who can enter the program

VisionSpring uses a standard symptom questionnaire and conducts temperature checks with a no-touch infrared thermometer before customers are permitted to enter the program.

3. Distribute and require masks

VisionSpring has a supply of masks available for free distribution at the registration station, for any customer who does not have one. All staff and customers must wear masks throughout the whole outreach program, with no exceptions.

4. Fast-track those who may be vulnerable to infection

VisionSpring allows older people, pregnant women or people with any medical conditions to skip lines or waiting areas, so they can go through the program efficiently and with minimal risk of exposure.

5. Manage crowds and the number of customers inside the program area at one time

VisionSpring uses social distancing circles, station numbers, arrows and a limit on the number of people who can participate in the program at one time to minimize crowds and assure people are at least 2 meters from one another.

6. Ensure ventilation inside the program

VisionSpring identifies locations that are well ventilated and regularly conducts programs in open-air or outdoor areas to reduce the risk of exposure.

7. Disinfect all equipment regularly

VisionSpring ensures every station is supplied with sanitation equipment. Station managers are responsible for disinfecting chairs and equipment after each customer's use.

8. Use no touch practices wherever it is possible

VisionSpring teams interact with customers without touching them. Customers carry their own information forms throughout the program and all activities, except for those carried out by the optometrist, are tailored to minimize contact.

II. How to Structure the Program

VisionSpring has always used physical stations to structure the way people move through outreach programs, undergo vision screening and experience buying their first pair of glasses. With the increased risk of disease, distance between stations and consistent guidelines for sanitation and disinfection of equipment are even more important. Steps on how to find the right location and set up the relevant stations are described below.



Tools needed

- [Permission letter to local authorities](#)
- [Additional tips for social distancing](#)

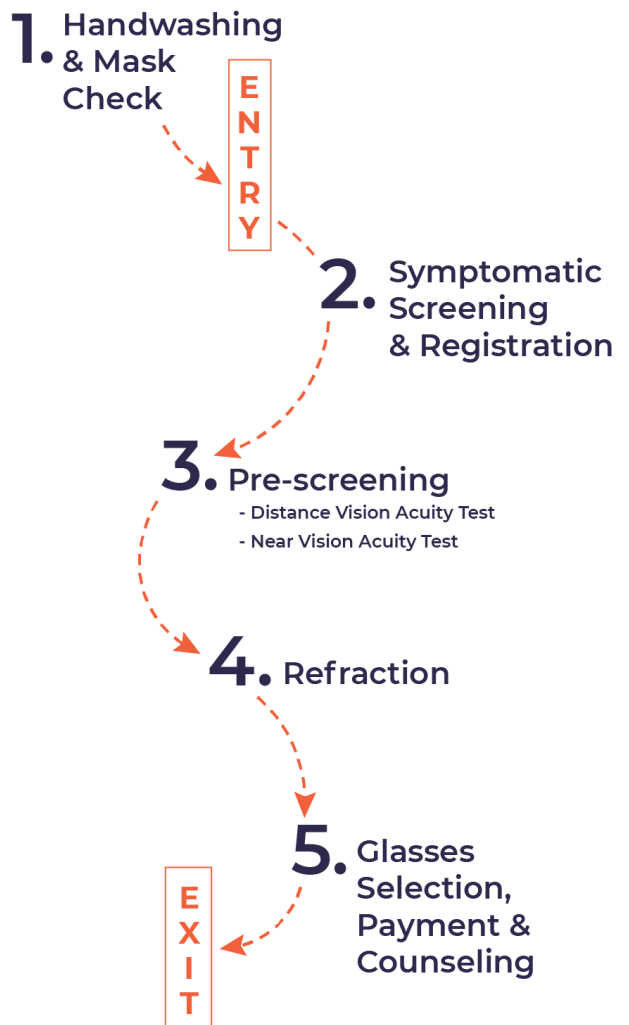
Find a location for the outreach program

- Find a location that can accommodate 5 physical stations with more than 2 meters between them.
- Try to identify an outdoor space. If indoors, assure the space is well ventilated.
- Make sure your location has easy access to a water source for the handwashing station.

Map out space for 5 stations

- Use arrows and station numbering to create a unidirectional flow for customers. Create separate entry and exit points.
- Limit the number of people in the program space to 6 at a time. If the space is large enough to add more and maintain social distancing, consider a maximum of 8 people at a time.
- Draw social distancing circles where customers should stand at all stations (2 meters from staff).
- Identify a separate space for a waiting area between the registration and refraction stations, marking spaces where customers should wait with social distancing circles.

STATION MAP



The five stations of the VisionSpring program provide the opportunity to integrate infection prevention measures into every interaction between customer and team. The description and guidance for each of the five stations follow.

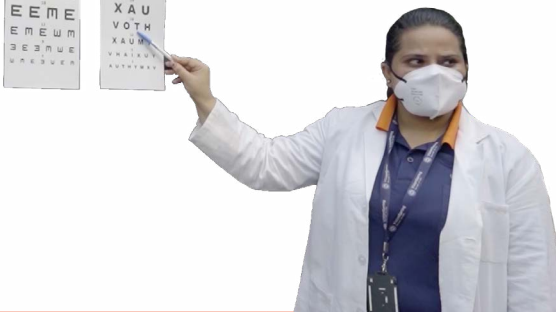
III. Station-by-Station Description



Station 1:
**Handwashing
and Mask Check**



Station 2:
**Symptomatic Screening
and Registration**



Station 3:
**Pre-Screening for
Eyeglasses**



Station 4:
Refraction



Station 5:
**Glasses Selection, Payment
and Counseling**

1. HANDWASHING AND MASK CHECK

VisionSpring uses a portable handwashing station that can be carried by team members to outdoor outreach programs. A single staff member monitors the station and ensures that anyone entering the program washes his or her hands appropriately, and is wearing a mask, before proceeding to the registration station.



Tools needed

- [How to care for handwashing station](#)
- [Information graphics and signage](#)



GUIDANCE

- The handwashing station should be set up near a water source, for easy filling of the top bucket.
- The handwashing station should be located outside or in front of the registration station, so that people cannot enter the outreach area without encountering the team member responsible for handwashing.
- The station should stock a supply of masks to give to anyone who approaches without a mask.
- The manager of the handwashing station needs to find a location at which to dispose used water regularly throughout the day. This should be close enough to make it an easy task, but not close enough to be in the path of customers and staff.
- Use a handwashing station that is a manageable size, easy to transport and maintain. VisionSpring uses a 20L Veronica Bucket model.
- Bring soap and paper towels for customers to use.
- Paste visual and easy to read instructions on “handwashing techniques” on the water bucket or near the station where customers can clearly see them. These collateral direct customers to wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap.
- Assure that one team member has the responsibility of managing the station during the duration of the program – disposing and refilling the water and encouraging people to follow the instructions on use.

2. SYMPTOMATIC SCREENING & REGISTRATION

VisionSpring aligned its health screening procedures with government and public health authority regulations in India so that questions are consistent with what people are accustomed to answering. All program customers undergo a symptomatic screening and temperature check before registering. Customers with symptoms or a fever are not permitted to register for the program.



Tools needed

- [Health Risk Assessment Form](#)
- [Symptomatic Screening Form](#)

GUIDANCE

- Use a no-touch infrared thermometer and decide with public health experts what an appropriate threshold is given the weather and the context. If someone's temperature is above the threshold, ask them to stand in the shade for a few minutes and take their temperature again.
- Treat all customers with respect when asking such personal questions about their health and wellbeing.
- If a customer has symptoms or a high temperature, advise them to wear a mask and contact a healthcare provider. Provide an easy to read paper card that has information on any national COVID-19 helplines.



If it is hot outside, body temperature goes up accordingly. In India, VisionSpring consulted public health experts and received guidance to use 100 degrees Fahrenheit as the threshold for registration.



What to do if a customer does not pass the symptomatic screening?

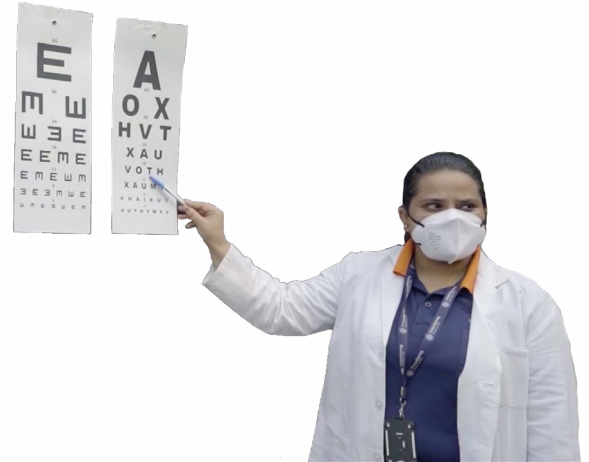
Talking to people about their personal health must be done with the utmost care and respect. Try to put yourself in the person's shoes and imagine that you are talking to a stranger about your health. Speak politely and with warmth. Make eye contact with the customer and do not rush.

If a customer has a high temperature or any symptoms, it's important not to change the tone of your voice or create any sense that the person should be embarrassed or ashamed.

- Thank the person for their interest in the program and politely tell them they cannot enter because they have symptoms.
- Be kind when you suggest that they wear a mask and wash their hands with soap regularly.
- Provide the person with an information card and suggest they call the helpline to ask for additional guidance.

3. PRE-SCREENING FOR EYEGLASSES

Pre-screening includes initial vision acuity checks conducted by VisionSpring team members, not optometrists. The goal of the pre-screening station is to keep the number of people who come into contact with the optometrists to a minimum, by determining those who do not require eyeglasses or simply require reading glasses. VisionSpring has changed its protocol to include an unaided distance test so there is no contact between the team member and the customer.



Tools needed

- [Disinfection & Disposal Guide](#)

GUIDANCE

- Ask customers to sanitize their hands and instruct them to rub the sanitizer over the palm and let it evaporate before covering the eye .
- Ask customers to use their own hands to cover their eyes for an unaided distance vision test.



Use and Specifications of Disinfectants

Hand sanitizer for customers and employees at all stations.

At least 70% alcohol based.
To be used in a spray bottle.

Alcohol based wipes / swabs for wiping retinoscope handles and trial frame and lens set at the refraction station.

Containing 70% isopropyl alcohol.
*Do not use on eyeglasses as alcohol can cause damage.

Sodium Hypochlorite for cleaning customer contact surfaces at all stations.

1% for sodium hypochlorite concentration.
Use a spray bottle and a cotton absorbent cloth.
*Can also be used to clean furniture.

Dish wash solution & water for cleaning used trial frames, trial lenses, readers, frames at the refraction and dispensing stations.

Diluted dish wash gel and clean water. Use at least one-part liquid soap to 100 parts water.

4. REFRACTION STATION

The refraction station consists of a technical optometric evaluation that requires proximity to the customer, and must be done with utmost care. The optometrist uses a retinoscope to identify the customer’s prescription power, present the customer with trial frames and change the trial lenses until they work. To make sure these steps are done as safely as possible, the optometrist wears a mask, face shield and gloves, and follows very specific sanitation procedures after each customer leaves.



Tools needed

- [Prescription Card](#)
- [Customer Examination Sheet](#)

GUIDANCE

- Communicate to the customer that the refraction process will use minimal verbal communication to reduce any risk of exposure.
- Instruct the customer not to touch any equipment, except the trial frames.
- Follow the Red Tray – Green Tray procedure to assure trial frames and lenses are appropriately sanitized.
- Follow the step-by-step sanitation procedure after each customer leaves:
 - Place all used frames and lenses in red tray
 - Sanitize all equipment in the red tray with soapy water and clean with wipes and water
 - Sanitize customer seat
 - Sanitize retinoscope with alcohol-based wipes.
 - Allow sanitized equipment to dry



How does the optometrist keep all tools and equipment sanitized?

RED / USED items tray: As the optometrist used trial frame and lens for examining a customer, these instruments are placed in the red tray and not back in the trial box. Optometrists can use the red tray lens for same customer. Any used lens should NEVER go back to trial case directly. It should be sanitized before reuse.

GREEN / UNUSED items tray: All used trial frame and lens should be dipped in soapy water and clean water. The green tray should be lined with absorbent cloth to place the wet lens and frame. These should be reused or placed in trial case after drying. All sets of trial frames and lenses must be taken from the green colored tray (unused tray) wherein all disinfected/unused equipment is placed.



5. GLASSES SELECTION, PAYMENT & COUNSELING

Similar to the refraction station, the final station of glasses selection requires taking steps to minimize contact with the customer. VisionSpring uses no touch methods and a guided sanitation procedure to make sure both customers and staff stay safe. At this station, customer choose the glasses frames they would like to wear, make any payment required, and are counseled by VisionSpring staff to make sure they understand how best to care for their eyes and glasses. In light of the pandemic, VisionSpring uses this opportunity to also raise customer awareness about infection prevention.



Tools needed

- [Counseling Script](#)

GUIDANCE

- Ensure customers are socially distant from the counselor as they provide frames and lenses to try on. In the case of pre-cuts/pop-in glasses and ready readers, provide the frames with lenses to the customer. In the case of prescription eyeglasses, provide the customer with only the frames.
- Provide the customer with a mirror to use while trying on the frames. Place the mirror on a stand in a position where the customer can see. While preferable for the customer to not touch the mirror, they may handle it if they need to do so. If they do, sanitize the mirror immediately after customer leaves.
- As with the refraction station interaction, use the Green tray- Red tray sanitation procedure to make sure everything that the customer touches is properly sanitized before and after use.
- Once the customer has made their selection, fill out the customer information form and begin counseling.
- Follow the counseling script to make sure the customer knows how best to take care of their glasses and how to continue the COVID prevention steps they have followed during then program.
- If the customer is paying, ask them to place the money in the available box. If there is any change to be handed back, place the money in the same box to avoid hand-to-hand contact.
- Once the payment is completed, provide the customer with the glasses and receipt and direct them to the program exit.
- The counselor should place any payment in the main cash box and immediately wash and/or sanitize their hands.

IV. Staff Safety

Staff safety is essential to the success of a vision outreach program. All team members must have the necessary training in both COVID protocols and COVID safety in order to participate in program activities. All staff must follow daily reporting routines of sharing their health status with managers before reporting to work, and follow mask wearing, hygiene and social distancing measures at all times while at work. If staff feel any symptoms, they should not report to work.



Tools needed

- Required PPE, refer to page 11
 - [Additional tips for daily health reporting](#)
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1. Transportation

- Carry minimum personal belongings like bags, laptops etc, carry only essentials.
- Continue to wear mask even in the car to/from the outreach location.
- Do not allow any other person apart from the team members to use the car or enter the car.
- Travel with the windows down or vented.
- Keep door handles, seat belt buckles, light and air controls and the steering wheel/gears sanitized.

2. Personal Care

- Avoid direct contact with customers at all points. Use no touch technique to exchange items.
- Ensure the tables, chairs etc. in the station you occupy during the outreach are sanitized.
- Dispose of all personal PPE, used tissues, swabs, gloves masks etc in proper disposal bags. Please refer to the [Disinfection & Disposal Guide](#).
- As soon as you reach your base location or your personal home staff must:
 - Wash hands with soap for 20 seconds before touching anything and immediately bathe/wash used clothes.
 - Note temperature and any symptoms
 - Sanitize mobile phone, ID card, eyeglasses, keys etc.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

to be used by the field team during outreach

- **N95 or cloth masks** are mandatory for all outreach staff members during the outreach program. All team members should receive 4 N95 or cloth reusable masks.
 - N95 Masks: Mark the masks as 1, 2, 3 and 4. At the outreach, all team members wear the N95 mask with the same number. On day 2, all team members will use the mask numbered 2 and so on. On Day 5, all team members will go back to mask number 1.
 - After using the mask for one day, let the mask air dry and rest in direct sunlight. Fold the mask inwards and place in a brown paper bag with date. The resting mask should be used only after a minimum resting period of 72 hours and for maximum 5 uses (first use + 4 re-uses).
 - A set of 4 issued masks will work for 20 working days.
 - Wash cloth masks should with soap and hot water after every use.
- **Masks (cloth or disposable)** are mandatory for all customers at all times. In case a customer is using an improper face cover (scarf, sari dupatta, gamchha etc.), VisionSpring staff will provide a mask and give instructions for proper use.

- **Face shields and gloves** are required for optometrists while attending to customers.
- **Face shields or protective goggles** are not recommended as a mandatory protective measure for other team members, except the optometrist.
- **Disposable gloves** (powdered latex or nitrile) are recommended for the optometrist while coming into proximity with customers. Change gloves after each sitting, preferably 2-3 pair of gloves per outreach of approximately 4 hours.

Personal Protective Equipment

Station Name	Face Mask (Cloth or N95 without valve)	Face Shield	Gloves
Handwashing Station	✓	✗	✗
Registration & Symptom Screening	✓	✗	✗
Pre-screener	✓	✗	✗
Optometrist	✓	✓	✓
Counselor/Dispenser	✓	✗	✗
Customer	✓	✗	✗

*Disposable or cloth mask only

Measurement & Feedback

VisionSpring uses routine supervision and customer feedback to assure that teams adhere to the new protocols and that customers experience a safe, satisfying vision outreach program. These two feedback approaches and relevant tools are described below.



Tools needed

- [Supportive Supervision Checklist](#)
 - [Customer Feedback Form](#)
 - [Camp Observer Checklist](#)
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- Adapt relevant staff monitoring processes to integrate a focus on adherence to all COVID procedures and proper use of tools. Use a checklist to identify the observable, consistent behaviors to monitor during supervision visits.
 - During supervision visits, managers should plan on spending a full day at the program location as crowd size and staff energy may shift over time. Managers need to approach supervision as coaches, not judges. The goal is to monitor staff adherence to the protocols, but also to work with colleagues to identify and resolve any obstacles in order to improve safety for both team members and customers.
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- While supportive supervision can help managers to observe and resolve obstacles facing staff, customer feedback can help identify opportunities to improve customer service and the protocol. There are a variety of ways to collect customer feedback. We recommend two ways: during the program and after the program via a call center. When collecting during the program, team managers are responsible for ensuring feedback is collected and analyzed on a regular basis, and for recommending improvements to country and functional leadership based on the data.



Conclusion

VisionSpring launched its new COVID-19 protocol in vision outreach programs in India in October 2020.

VisionSpring is pleased to make these protocols available to all of our existing and potential partners. We aim to enable safe vision screening in every setting and look forward to working with and hearing from you soon.

Please reach out to: GlobalPartners@visionspring.org.
Stay up to date [@VisionSpring](#) on all social channels.



VisionSpring

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