

Getting Residents the Glasses They Need: The Importance of Prescription Eyewear

By Doug Streifel, O.D., Chief Medical Officer of Optometry, Aria Care Partners



Restoring functional sight for residents in skilled nursing facilities sometimes is as simple as securing the right prescription eyeglasses. After all, uncorrected refractive error is a leading cause of visual impairment in older adults. Many residents may not be using their glasses because they've been lost, damaged, or are no longer sufficient to correct their vision.

Providing prescription eyewear as part of an onsite vision care program advances resident care and yields benefits beyond visual acuity. In fact, proper eyeglasses improve quality of life in seniors and have even been shown to decrease symptoms of depression.^{1,2}

An onsite eyeglass program that delivers convenience

Implementing an eyeglass program within a skilled nursing community removes common obstacles that get in the way of ensuring that residents have the prescription eyewear they need. For example, Aria Care Partners offers a full-featured program that includes:

- **Onsite care:** Experienced optometrists perform appropriately adaptive eye tests and conduct vision analyses for prescription glasses on the facility premises. These eye care professionals understand the needs of the typical resident population.
- **Same-day selection with broad choice:** Residents can choose from a wide variety of affordable frames at the time of their onsite eye exam.
- **Easy eyeglass identification:** With the added feature of engraving the individual's name onto the frames, prompt identification of misplaced glasses becomes simpler for facility staff.
- **Direct shipping:** The eyeglass program bypasses the need for off-site pickup by shipping the prescription glasses directly to the resident.
- **Ongoing support:** The trained team of optometry professionals routinely conducts eyeglass checks for fitting, adjustments, repairs, and maintenance – again, all onsite.
- **No added administrative tasks:** Aria Care Partners manages all appointments, paperwork, progress reports, and billing.

A helpful insurance option

Historically, paying for prescription eyewear has been an issue for many seniors. Medicare benefits don't cover eyeglasses or contact lenses, and not all state Medicaid plans reimburse for glasses. Aria Care Partners helps your residents by offering convenient insurance coverage.³ Aria's plan supports onsite enrollment, allows for new glasses once a year, and provides a selection of premium frames and lenses. What's more, policy options are designed for a range of needs: Medicaid residents without income, Medicaid residents with income, private pay residents, and short-term rehab residents.

Everyone benefits

Partnering with an onsite experienced vision care provider enables skilled nursing facilities to manage prescription glasses in ways that deliver real convenience and efficiency for their residents. That boosts satisfaction, creating a marketing advantage.

Having optometry expertise onsite to support a glasses program likewise enhances compliance and care management. Specifically, it helps ensure that residents receive proper treatment and eyeglasses to maintain vision ability and avoid negative impacts on daily living activities from uncorrected vision acuity. Pressure ulcers are also avoided by adjusting the fit of eyeglasses regularly, while eyeglasses with the correct prescription diminish the risk of falls.

Resident choice from a wide variety of frame options coupled with up-to-date prescriptions means residents will be more comfortable and likely to wear their glasses regularly, bolstering their independence and freeing staff time.

From specific safety concerns to overall quality of life, the impact on seniors in skilled nursing facilities from uncorrected refractive errors can be substantial. Collaborating with Aria Care Partners is an easy solution for getting residents the prescription eyeglasses they need for the most functional vision possible.

References

¹ A. Coleman, F. Yu, E. Keeler, et al. "Treatment of Uncorrected Refractive Error Improves Vision-Specific Quality of Life," *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, June 6, 2006.

² C. Owsley, G. McGwin Jr, K. Scilley, et al., "Effect of Refractive Error Correction on Health-Related Quality of Life and Depression in Older Nursing Home Residents," *JAMA Ophthalmology*, November 2007.

³ Insurance policies offered by Aria are issued and underwritten by Citizens Security Life Insurance Company, Florida Dental Benefits AccessCare General, Inc., AccessCare General, LLC, AccessCare General Oklahoma, LLC, or AccessCare General Wisconsin Insurance, Inc. Not available in all states.