**Discharge letter**

Ophthalmologist: Place on your letterhead

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I am an ophthalmologist (eye physician and surgeon). Your baby’s doctor asked me to examine the baby’s eyes. This letter will explain why I did the exam. It will also explain when an ophthalmologist needs to examine the baby’s eyes again.

**Your baby may have a condition of the retina (the back of the eye) called ROP (retinopathy of prematurity).** After a premature birth, the blood vessels at the back of the eye may stop growing. The baby’s body responds by making a chemical called VEGF (vascular endothelial growth factor) that causes new blood vessels to grow. These blood vessels are not normal: they can bleed and can also pull (detach) the retina away from its normal position. If the retina becomes detached, it can cause blindness.

ROP needs to be treated with 72 hours if it reaches a certain stage. Your baby could go blind without treatment.

**The next few months are very important.** We need your help to keep your baby from going blind. An ophthalmologist will need to examine the baby’s eyes many times. The ophthalmologist is checking for abnormal blood vessels. The exams must continue until the blood vessels heal.

You must bring the baby in to the office or clinic for every appointment. The ophthalmologist will contact you if you missan appointment. If the ophthalmologist cannot reach you, the ophthalmologist may need to contact Child Protective Services to help bring the baby in for an eye exam.

**Here is what I found today when I examined your baby**

* \_\_\_\_\_Your baby’s blood vessels are abnormal and the baby may need treatment soon. An ophthalmologist will examine the baby each week to see if treatment is needed. The next ROP exam should take place by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (date) in \_\_\_\_\_ weeks.
* \_\_\_\_\_Your baby’s blood vessels are abnormal but the baby does not need treatment right now. An ophthalmologist will examine the baby again to see if treatment is needed. The next ROP exam should take place by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (date) in \_\_\_\_\_\_ weeks.
* \_\_\_\_\_Your baby’s blood vessels are almost normal. The baby will not need treatment for ROP, but does need a different type of eye exam to check for crossed eyes, lazy eye, or nearsightedness. Your baby should be checked by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (date). Ask the baby’s doctor (pediatrician) for a referral to an ophthalmologist then call the ophthalmologist and make the appointment. It is very important that the baby is examined by the date shown above.

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Name of ophthalmologist Date