Dear Friends, Families, Providers and Supporters,

Blind Early Services TN was founded in the midst of a global pandemic, making our first full year even more of a challenge than it would have been under normal circumstances, but also serving to increase our motivation to provide much-needed specialized services for families in our state. At a time when the world was shutting down, parents and caregivers were struggling to ensure their children were getting the resources, education and support they needed at home.

Parents of children with blindness ourselves, we understood firsthand how important those resources and support were and we founded BEST with a simple mission: to ensure that families of young children with blindness and low vision in Tennessee were empowered, equipped and encouraged. We wanted the next words for families to hear after an often devastating diagnosis to be, “but there is a place to turn and that place is called BEST.”

Now almost two years in, we are proud to say we are well on our way to accomplishing that mission. With the generous support of our state's early intervention system, grants from charitable foundations, and private donors we have been able to reach hundreds of families, increase awareness in our community, build relationships with schools and medical eye care professionals, and most importantly, impact outcomes for young children who have vision impairments.

We have done so much, but there is more work to be done. There are children with vision impairments throughout our state who are yet to be identified; there are families and providers who do not yet know that a vision-specific early intervention agency is now here in Tennessee; there is a shortage of specialized providers across the country and limited resources to ensure they are compensated appropriately. We charge on and keep these factors top of mind as we continue to grow our organization, reach and impact. We are so grateful for your support and hope you will continue to charge on with us every step of the way. The BEST is yet to come!

All the BEST,  
Alison & Stacy

Alison Clougherty  
Co-Founder  
Executive Director Programs & Development

Stacy Cornwall  
Co-Founder  
Executive Director Finance & Administration
Our Story So Far

Our Mission

BEST was co-founded in 2020 by two moms on a mission. When our boys were born one year apart in Nashville with visual impairments, we each found ourselves looking for answers. What does the future look like for our sons? How do we raise a child with sensory loss? Who can help us ensure the best outcomes for our children? Unfortunately we then learned that despite vision impairment being listed under IDEA Part C, the support of a vision certified early intervention specialist was not currently available through our state early intervention system or even private agencies. We have since learned exactly why - there is a nationwide shortage of Certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired (CTVIs) and it is costly for CTVIs to contract directly with early intervention. Determined to find a lasting solution for families like ours in Tennessee, we founded BEST modeled after agencies in other states who successfully provide vision-specific early intervention services to families. We wanted to be THE agency to which families are referred for comprehensive support, services and high-quality resources as soon as they learn of their young child’s vision loss or impairment.

“Low incidence should never mean left out, left behind or left to fall through the cracks”
Our 2021-22 Goals

1. Support families of children ages 0-3 with blindness or low vision in the Greater Nashville area with individualized, direct support services.

2. Create a team of certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs), certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) and VIISA-trained developmental therapists, Early Interventionists of the Visually Impaired (EIVIs).

3. Build a comprehensive and customized program that includes parent connections, access to resources and empowerment through educational opportunities.

4. Increase awareness of our organization and build relationships within the educational and medical communities while demonstrating our value.
Our Strategy & Programs

To achieve our goal and to provide the BEST possible services to families, we created a service model that combines the expertise and experience of CTVIs with the passion and child development knowledge of early interventionists. We brought VIISA (Vision Impaired Inservice In America) training and certification to already established early interventionists and supported them through the collaboration, ongoing training and supervision of a master’s level CTVI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAMS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEST Start</td>
<td>In-home early intervention services by CTVIs, COMS and DTs/EIVIS</td>
<td>• Established a 3-year grant EIRA contract with Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) followed by a vendor contract for vision services&lt;br&gt;• Served 186 families in 2021-22</td>
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<td>BEST Together</td>
<td>Family / Caregiver support, connection and resources</td>
<td>• Offered 6 in-person gathering opportunities&lt;br&gt;• Launched the BEST Together podcast&lt;br&gt;• Provided information through a monthly newsletter and social media&lt;br&gt;• Created a lending library of braille books, tactile toys and free sensory spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEST Advocate</td>
<td>Caregiver training and transition support</td>
<td>• Launched our quarterly transition webinar training called, “What Happens After Early Intervention” with the help of parent, advocate and special education attorney, Erin Richardson&lt;br&gt;• Attended transition meetings and supported the writing of IEP goals</td>
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</tbody>
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The Year in Numbers

138
New referrals (combined DT and VS)

186
Families provided developmental therapy (DT and/or EIVI)

12
Counties served

21
Sensory spaces and resonances boards delivered to families

1,884
direct service hours / home visits

63
Families provided vision services (TVI/P&M)

4
Certified TVIs / O&Ms hired to serve families

3
Early Interventionists hired and VIISA trained to become EIVIs

850
BEST Together Podcast Episode Plays

4
Parent Advocacy Trainings / Webinars Conducted

12
BEST Together Podcast Episodes Published

6
In-person family gatherings held
Our Contributors in 2021-22

- Community Foundation of Middle TN
- Francis H. Clougherty Charitable Trust
- The Predators Foundation
- Richard and Anne Lafferty
- Anne and David Propst
- Corey and Ashley Lafferty
- Patricia Wright
- Barrett and Meredith Esarey
- Catherine Summers
- Joseph and Dorothy Clougherty
- Tim and Natalie Mohan
- Vicki Clark
- Gail Cathron
- Fran Lusby
- Michael and Kathleen Dooling
- Irene Williams
- Aaron and Christa Skotland
- Mark Immerfall
- Alex and Kellie Davie
- Patricia Greene
- Martie and Ed Weatherman
- Bruce and Julia Lawing
- Anita Henderson
- David Suchanik
- Adam Goodman
- Lori Schmidt
- Julie Carpenter
- Brandy Ehrif
- Adriane Wynn
- Coffi Bell and Brandon Corbin
- Annettee and Andy Poindexter
- Brandy Neely
- Tom and Kelsey Heeren
- Sandra Zaccari
- Jason and Mellissa Mitchell
- Franco Recchia
- Edith Propst
- Mark Rubino
- Kevin Barber
- April and Dave Wyatt
- Bob Brunner
- Patrick and Stefani Waters
- Bonnie and Eric Young
- Lindsay Stone
- Sarah Immerfall
- Amy McDonald
- Callie Boyette
- Cyrus and Anne Farhanfi
- Rip and Erika Young
- Kathy Thompson
- Jeffrey Phelps
- Lyndsay and John Hayden
- Kristen Camplin
- Yvonne Cheek
- Meredith and Marc Burns
- Kenneth Propst
- Angelica Ybarra
- Darren Pultney
- Christian Toone
- Lindsay Desautels
- Beth Soltow
- Judy Sperro King
- Max Reniers
- The Hynes Family Fund
- Kathleen Regan
- Mary Prescott
- Joseph and Annie Clougherty
- Irene Williams
- Kathleen White
- Josh and Cherise Clifton
- Karri Ellen johnson
- Grant Clark
- Katherine Buccarelli
- Trevor and Callie Wulke
- Amanda Brummett
- Alesha Williams
- Karin and David Beard
- Christine Carpenter
- Megan Piccini

We thank you for your continued support of our programs!
Staff and Board of Directors

Officers
- Alison Clougherty, President
- Stacy Cornwall, Secretary
- Brandy Neely, Treasurer
- Sandra Zaccari, Chairman

Board Members
- Anita Henderson
- Martie Lafferty
- Lyndsay Hayden
- Michelle Quinn

Advisory Board Members
- Dr. Robbin Sinatra
- Rebecca Davis
- Melisa Matthews

Staff
- Alison Clougherty, Executive Director of Programs & Development
- Stacy Cornwall, Executive Director of Finance & Administration
- LeeAnn McWhorter, CTVI
- Patience Piesecki, CTVI
- Genie Velasquez, CTVI / COMS
- Joanna Credeur, CTVI / COMS
- Amy Shore, CTVI / COMS
- Mandy Yates, COMS
- Rachel Pace, DT / EIVI
- Alycia Snowden, DT / EIVI
- Krystal Gilreath, DT / EIVI
- Catherine Saig, DT / EIVI