



Best News

Blind Early Services TN - Newsletter for Caregivers and Providers



August Spotlight: Children's Vision Awareness Month

August is a month dedicated to raising awareness about children's vision. It is recognized both as **Children's Vision & Learning Month** and **Children's Eye Health & Safety Month**.

Children's Vision & Learning Month was first proclaimed in 1995 by President Bill Clinton to spotlight the vital connection between vision and learning. Today, alongside Children's Eye Health & Safety Month led by Prevent Blindness, both observances continue to remind us how important it is to stay aware of children's vision needs.

This means recognizing, diagnosing, and addressing vision issues early. The goal is always the same: to help children thrive with whatever level of functional vision they have.

Celebrate this month by...

- Talking with friends and family about the importance of child visual health and screening.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

September 17th (3:00 PM - 6:00 PM)

BEST VIISA Training Session 1

Learn more in the newsletter below!

[Register here!](#)

November 8th (6:00 PM - 10:00 PM)

BEST Fest 2025

Our Annual Gala Supporting BEST Programs

[Get your tickets today!](#)

- Sharing BEST as a community resource for families who may be navigating vision concerns, vision loss, or blindness.
- Encouraging regular vision checkups for children in your community.

By keeping vision awareness at the forefront, we can ensure children receive the care and support they need —no matter the **level of functional vision**.



Hybrid VIISA Certification

September 2025- April 2026

Participants will meet virtually and in person approximately once a month. Two, two-day in-person sessions will take place in Nashville, TN.



WHAT IT IS

Project VIISA (Vision Impaired In-Service America) began in 1990 to meet the unique needs of young children with blindness or vision impairment and their families. This VIISA training course is a professional development opportunity to expand your knowledge of working with blind or visually impaired infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers in early intervention home- and community-based settings.

WHAT IT ISN'T

VIISA training and certification does not replace the need for a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) on a child's IFSP team, and does not provide participants with the credentials or specialized course-work required to serve as a vision services provider.

Last Chance to Register for VIISA Training

Want to better understand the needs of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are blind or visually impaired and their families? **BEST's annual VIISA training program** offers a hands-on learning experience for providers and caregivers.

Explore how children's vision needs tie into IFSPs and IEPs, and gain strategies to support development in communication, motor skills, daily care, play, cognition, and early literacy. Training combines virtual evening sessions once a month with in-person full-day sessions in Nashville (October and February), plus "make-it, take-it" hands-on activities and guided assignments.

Build your skills, gain practical strategies, and connect with a community dedicated to supporting children and any **level of functional vision they may have**. Please contact Alison Clougherty at aclougherty@blindearlyservices.org with any questions.

See Full Schedule & Register Here





BEST Fest 2025

November 8th at City Winery!

We're excited to announce that **BEST Fest 2025** is set, and the website is now live! **Tickets are available**, and sponsorship opportunities can be explored by contacting our Development Director at dstewartfreeman@blindearlyservices.org.

This annual celebration brings together families, friends, and supporters for an evening of connection, entertainment, and fundraising to support Tennessee children who are blind or visually impaired. Our **silent auction items are constantly being updated**, so keep checking back for new offerings you won't want to miss.

Join us in celebrating and supporting **BEST** children and the families and providers who love them!

[Get Your Tickets Today](#)

Advocacy Spotlight: Supporting the EDVI Act

The **Early Detection of Vision Impairments for Children (EDVI) Act**, H.R. 2527, is a bipartisan bill introduced by Congressional Vision Caucus Co-Chairs Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Rep. Marc Veasey (D-TX). If passed, it would create the first federal public health program dedicated to children's vision and eye health, offering grant funding and technical assistance to states and communities.

The Act's goal is to ensure children with possible vision concerns are identified early, connected to appropriate care, and supported with updated, evidence-based screening and referral practices. **Nearly 100 organizations**—including leading medical and professional groups like the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Optometric Association, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology—have already endorsed the bill.

BEST is proud to soon add our name to the list of endorsing organizations, standing alongside our neighbors at VIPS in Kentucky, and lending our voice to this vital effort.



**Early Detection of
Vision Impairments
for Children Act**

You can help too—reach out to your local Representatives and encourage them to co-sponsor the EDVI Act, ensuring children's vision and eye health receive the national attention they deserve.



Learn More about the
Recently Reintroduced Act



**Last Chance! Join us for Mindful Melodies with Empower
Music Therapy LLC**



BLIND EARLY SERVICES TN

present Mindful Melodies

a FREE, 8-session
group music therapy program!



Only a couple spots remain! Families able to travel to our Brentwood office are invited to join **Mindful Melodies**, a free, in-person group music therapy program for BEST client (and former client) children and their families. Led by a board-certified music therapist from Empower Music Therapy and a BEST Teacher of the Visually Impaired or Orientation & Mobility Specialist, the program uses music to promote developmental skills across the nine areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)—from orientation and mobility to social interaction, self-determination, and sensory efficiency.

Sessions include evidence-based interventions such as songwriting, drum circles, expressive instrument playing, and improvisation, helping children learn and practice adaptive skills while creating a safe, fun space for self-expression, social engagement, and family connection.

This group is ideal for children **birth–6 years** who are motivated by music, multi-sensory exploration, and adaptive learning. Sessions meet **twice monthly on Saturday afternoons, Aug. 30–Dec. 6, 2025**, at BEST's Brentwood office.

[Register Here!](#)



Weekend Respite for Middle TN Families

A new weekend respite program will be launching this fall at KidPro in collaboration with Carehack. Designed for children ages 2–10, the program will provide engaging activities in a supportive environment while parents have time to recharge. Sessions will be staffed by trained team members, with small groups and a staff-to-child ratio of 1:1 or 1:2.

Click the button below or the flyer to access the interest form. As a new program, they are eager to get feedback from families to help shape the program to best meet caregiver needs.

[Fill Out the Interest Form Here!](#)



What We're Loving This Month



Many of our families love **Roshambo Baby & Toddler Sunglasses**, designed especially for little ones' sensitive eyes. These nearly unbreakable, chew-safe shades provide 100% UVA/B/C protection while staying comfy and stylish for everyday wear. They've quickly become a parent favorite for sunny days and outdoor adventures!

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[Links](#)

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