

FEBRUARY 2026

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Blind Early Services TN - Newsletter for Caregivers and Providers

February is Low Vision and Rare Disease Awareness

February is a meaningful month for our community. It is both **Low Vision Awareness Month** and **Rare Disease Awareness Month** – two observances that shine a light on children and families who are too often overlooked simply because their diagnoses are uncommon.

At BEST, we believe something deeply and without hesitation: **low incidence should never mean left to slip through the cracks.** Every child with vision loss – no matter how rare the condition – deserves expert support, tailored resources, and a community that understands.

This month, we also celebrate and uplift the incredible work of partners and advocates who are advancing awareness and support for rare vision-related conditions. Organizations like the **Coats' Disease Foundation, Kat6 Foundation, Usher Syndrome Coalition, and Charge Syndrome Foundation**, and more, embody the kind of leadership and compassion our families need.

Together, we are part of a growing movement that refuses to let rare be relegated to “rarely seen.” We honor the children whose diagnoses are uncommon, support the families who work tirelessly on their behalf, and stand alongside allies who are pushing

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

February 26 (12:00 PM - 1:00 PM)

Vanderbilt TRIAD Families First Toilet Training
(Rescheduled from Jan.; Re-registration required)

February 26 (4:30 PM - 6:00 PM)

Empower Music Therapy Open House

February 28 (5:30 PM - 8:30 PM)

Flip for Function Parents Night Out

March 9 (1:00 PM - 2:00 PM)

Perkins: CVI for the TVI

March 13 (11:00 AM - 12:00 PM)

Perkins: Q&A on CVI & O&M

March 18 (5:30 PM - 8:30 PM)

Flip for Function Parents Night Out

for research, resources, and recognition. Every family deserves support. And every rare condition deserves our collective attention and action.

April 9

High Hopes: Touch a Truck



Early Intervention Caregiver & Provider Support Services (CAPSS) Available Through TRIAD

We're grateful to share an additional support opportunity available through our friends at TRIAD at Vanderbilt Kennedy Center.

The Early Intervention Caregiver and Provider Support Services (CAPSS) program offers six one-hour telehealth coaching consultations for families who may benefit from targeted behavioral support.

There are two pathways for referral:

- A child has concerns related to autism and has been referred for an evaluation (an autism diagnosis is *not* required, and the child may still be on a waitlist), **or**
- Autism is not a primary concern, but the child is engaging in unsafe behaviors and the family and Developmental Therapist would benefit from additional support and strategies.

To qualify, children must:

- Have at least three months remaining in TEIS
- Be receiving in-home Developmental Therapy during regular business hours (Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.)
- Have a caregiver who is actively participating in developmental therapy sessions

If you believe your child — or a child on your caseload — may benefit from CAPSS services, we encourage you to check with your Service Coordinator about eligibility and next steps for referral.

We're thankful for partners like TRIAD who expand access to meaningful, practical support for families navigating early intervention.



Go Baby Go looking for Families!

Our friends in Belmont's Occupational Therapy and Vanderbilt's Biomedical Engineering programs are

once again seeking families interested in participating in their Go Bay Go Program.

What is Go Baby Go? Belmont students adapt ride-on cars for young children with mobility challenges so they can explore, play, and grow in their environment with confidence.

Child Criteria

- Under 4 years old
- Weigh less than 35 lbs
- Have a mobility impairment
- Require any postural support
- Are willing to work with a group of students

Event Dates:

Virtual Meet-n-Greet: Thursday March 12th

Primary Event: Friday, March 27th

Alternative Event: Friday, April 17th

Express Interest Here!



Share your experience with researchers at FSU!

This research, led through Florida State University, is examining:

- Parent experiences with early assessment and diagnosis
- Barriers to identifying dual diagnoses (ASD + VI)
- Educational impact and service access
- Gaps in intervention systems

Your Voice Matters: Research Survey on Autism and Visual Impairments

Exploring Co-Occurring Autism and Visual Impairment

We invite parents and caregivers of children with both autism and visual impairments to participate in a research survey.

Purpose of the Study

To better understand the experiences of families navigating the co-occurrence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and visual impairments (VI). Your input will help identify barriers to early diagnosis and improve educational and intervention services.

How to Participate

Visit the survey link:

- Click [Here for English](#)
- Click [Here for Spanish](#)

Complete the survey on a computer for easier navigation.

Contact Information

Questions? Contact the principal investigator, Saurym Quezada:

- Phone: (954) 833-9754
- Email: Squezada@fsu.edu

We encourage you to share this survey with other eligible parents or caregivers.
Thank you for your time and participation!

[SHARE](#)

Families navigating both autism and visual impairment are frequently siloed – viewed through one lens or the other, but rarely both. That fragmentation has real consequences for early identification and educational planning.

This study centers parent-reported experiences to better understand where systems are working – and where they are not.

Survey details:

- 10–15 minutes to complete
- Anonymous
- Available in English and Spanish
- Open until March 11, 2026

Take the Family Experience Survey by clicking [here!](#)



What We're Loving This Month

In celebration of new releases this month, we're sharing Little Dandelion Press!

Their titles feature *high-contrast visuals, clear layouts, and tactile-friendly designs* that make exploring colors, animals, and environments accessible and engaging for young readers. From the lively animals in *What Lives in the Ocean?* to the playful peek-a-boo fun of *Hide & Seek Silly Snowman*, each book is thoughtfully crafted to spark curiosity and delight while supporting early literacy and sensory development.

Check out their books!



About Us

BEST ensures that families are empowered and equipped to provide children with blindness or low vision their BEST start.

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