**Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired Meeting Draft Minutes**

**March 16, 2023**

**Members Present Al Sylvestre, Chairman, Eileen Akers, Katherine Guzman, Beth Rival, Stephan Thal, Mary Silverberg**

**Members Absent Andrea Guidice, Samuel Pride**

**Others Present Carol Jenkins, Director; Mary Burgard, Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor; Catherine Summ, Children Services Supervisor; Tyrell Sampson, Vending Facility Supervisor; Chris Lassen, Adult Services Supervisor; Andrew Norton, ADS Legislative Liaison; Lori St. Amand, Adult Services Volunteer Coordinator; LaTonya Major, Administrative Assistant**

**Public Present**

**None**

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Chairman Sylvestre called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.**

**Public Comment**

**Eileen Akers reported that she received a request from the incoming Governor of District 23C and Director Carol Jenkins. This request resulted in a meeting with Director Jenkins, Adult Services Supervisor Chris Lassen, Children Services Supervisor Catherine Summ and representatives from the three Lion Districts. One of the key issues discussed was how the lack of transportation is causing a barrier for attendances to children’s events.**

**Ms. Akers shared that the lack of transportation was also discussed during a cabinet meeting in her district. Ms. Akers is unsure if the transportation issue was discussed at meetings held by the other two districts.**

**Ms. Akers stated that there are numerous issues to be resolved. Those issues include the interest of the Lions providing background checks.**

**Ms. Akers revealed information pertaining to contests being offered by the Lions. The audience involves BESB children between the ages of eleven and thirteen. She indicated that information should be announced early enough to raise awareness for the Children’s Services Program.**

**Ms. Akers indicated that this could be a very valuable experience for the younger population in Children’s Services.**

**Ms. Akers also shared that there are eighteen Connecticut Low Vision Centers supported by the Lions. These locations are primarily operated by hospitals and Hartford Healthcare Group.**

**It was agreed that The Lions affiliate, Tom DePalo, would be the designated contact to achieve information relating to The Lions Low Vision Centers.**

**Ms. Akers shared that there were discussions on how to use flyers and social media to share information.**

**Ms. Akers announced that these discussions are in the early stages but is hopeful that the outcome will strengthen the alliance between BESB and the Lions clubs for low vision services and transportation.**

**Beth Rival questioned the acceptable age group and stated that this was a narrow criteria.**

**Ms. Akers responded that this decision was made by The Lions and the same criteria applied to the peace poster contest.**

**Catherine Summ requested to be informed of the contest information so that she can share the information with staff and itinerant teachers.**

**Steve Thal inquired if this information pertains to Blind Americans Equality Day.**

**Ms. Akers responded that this is ongoing and repeated that transportation is a major issue.**

**Beth Rival requested information relating to the Lions.**

**Ms. Akers suggested that district leadership reach out to the Lion Clubs and offer support. She also stated that these are the preliminary stages, but she will disclose the information once it’s available.**

**Mr. Thal requested contact information for the three districts because only email addresses are available on the website.**

**Ms. Akers stated that she has limited information and the new Governors for the districts will enter on July 1, 2023. Ms. Akers will disclose all information once it becomes available.**

**Mary Silverberg inquired if anyone was aware of the Vision to Learn Early Childhood Vision Screening Program. She stated that this program is currently being used in East Hartford Public Schools.**

**Ms. Akers responded that she is not familiar with the program but shared information on the KidSight Program that is being offered by The Lions.**

**Ms. Silverberg suggested that the Superintendent of East Hartford assist with promoting the effectiveness of this program to other schools.**

**A discussion ensued regarding ways to successfully promote the program.**

**Old Business**

**Minutes from the December 22, 2022 Meeting**

**MOTION: A Motion was made by Eileen Akers and seconded by Mary Silverberg to approve the draft minutes from the December 22, 2022, meeting.** **Motion passed unanimously.**

**Ms. Akers noted a correction for the BEP report. The minutes state “He has also received references from Stamford’s NFB President regarding the Bridgeport mental health conception opportunity. It should state “He has also received referrals from Stamford’s NFB President regarding the Bridgeport mental health concession opportunity”.**

**New Business**

**Work Group Reports**

**Low Vision**

**Chairman Sylvestre shared a report prepared by Chairman Steve Thal. There were six meetings conducted by this workgroup between May and December of 2022. Accomplishments include an updated Low Vision Provider list. This list was upgraded by Mr. Mark Rafferty and Shelley Rockcliffe.**

**Mr. Andrew Norton contacted the Department of Social Services regarding fee schedules for providers.**

**The findings made by the Low Vision workgroup included BESB being allowed to set its own LVE schedule which will result in providing better solutions for serving our clients.**

**The second finding was that the workgroup reviewed the state and federal policies and regulations. The current payment systems are excessive and discouraging to the LV Providers. This prevents them from applying to participate in the program of examinations and evaluations of prescription glasses and prosthetics. This implies that the agency needs to work making the process less burdensome to both providers and those who receive low vision evaluations.**

**Taking advantage of the state P-card payment system will increase efficiency in acquiring goods and services.**

**Assignment of a processing technician to oversee the acquisition and payment process will increase efficiency and encourage participation in the Low Vision Program.**

**Launching a pilot program to encourage one-stop shopping for prescription services is something that the agency should consider.**

**Committee members are Chris Lassen (ADS), Catherine Summ (CS), Mary Burgard (VR), Mark Rafferty (AS), Mary Silverberg (ABPBVI Board Member), Al Sylvestre (ABPBVI Board Member), Andrew Norton, Legislative Liaison**

**The Low Vision workgroup recommended its dissolution as an ABPBVI workgroup in favor of establishing a BESB staff workgroup. Chairman Sylvester and Steve Thal has offered to serve as ABPBVI Representatives to the staff workgroup.**

**A motion was made by Eileen Akers and seconded by Beth Rival.**

**Mr. Thal reported that a meeting was held on February 17, 2023, with Director Carol Jenkins which led up to this recommendation. It was discussed that one workgroup would be more efficient if served by staff.**

**Mr. Thal also shared that there are some providers that do not have access to prescription services. He also suggested considering Harvey & Lewis as alternative option.**

**Ms. Akers suggested developing a connection with the Lions as an option. She also suggested board representation as part of the planning committee.**

**An amendment was made to the motion to include at least one member of ABPBVI as part of the Low Vision workgroup.**

**Chairman Sylvestre suggested a roll call of voting members for record purposes.**

**Board Members in Favor: Chairman Al Sylvestre, Eileen Akers, Katherine Guzman, Stephen Thal, Mary Silverberg, Elizabeth Rival**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**Mr. Thal mentioned that it was a pleasure working with the group members and is looking forward to being a bridge to provide as much information as possible regarding the low vision group. Mr. Thal is thankful for the participation and is eager to move forward. He also thanked Director Jenkins for her leadership.**

**Mr. Thal indicated the need of low vision providers being represented across the whole state. He foresees serious issues if all providers are in one area.**

**Chairman Sylvestre also thanked Mr. Thal for his participation and leadership on this matter.**

**Education**

**No membership**

**Employment and Training**

**Beth Rival reported that a written report will be submitted.**

**She shared that Mary Burgard and five others were interviewed last year and the outcome was great. It was revealed that most employees are wearing extra hats because of vacancies in the program. Many positions are not filled, therefore, it was decided to put things on hold. They do not have a final report but will produce a written report for the board members. Ms. Rival stated that it will be impossible to give suggestions since there are so many vacant positions.**

**Ms. Akers commented that a report was issued in June and there is no need to issue another one.**

**Mr. Sylvestre suggested that the report be distributed with the meeting minutes.**

**Mr. Sylvestre thanked Ms. Rival and Ms. Akers for their leadership.**

**Ms. Akers suggested that Director Jenkins become more familiar with problems in this area as well.**

**Mr. Sylvestre responded that it will take some time for the Director to become familiar with the program. Mr. Sylvestre stated that this is a good start, and we are moving in a positive direction.**

**Technology**

**Mr. Sylvestre announced that we are still in need of a chairperson for this group.**

**Administrative Items**

**Progress on filling vacant and anticipated positions**

**Director Jenkins reported that there are still quite a few vacant positions at BESB.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Department posted positions that includes Vocational Rehab Counselor (Bilingual) and Two Transition Counselor positions. The next position on this list to be refilled is the Technology Rehabilitation Technologist position.**

**Adult Services have vacant positions that were posted and are now in closed status. They are currently awaiting the qualified applicants list. Hopefully, a job offer will be made by the end of the week for the vacant Rehabilitation Technology Teacher position. We are currently working on getting a Rehabilitation Teacher position reposted.**

**Children’s Services are fully staffed but we are examining the budget to see if we could add more positions to the program.**

**The Business Enterprise Program is currently fully staffed.**

**There are still vacant clerical positions.**

**The Secretary 2 position closed, and we are working on scheduling interviews.**

**The Secretary 1 position has been posted and we are coming up on a closed status date.**

**Director Jenkins shared that she is working with the Fiscal Department to determine if the budget can include hiring for other positions.**

**Mr. Thal asked if the two Transition Counselor positions are included in the funding for the Pre-employment Transition Services Program.**

**Director Jenkins responded that they are included in the funding for the program.**

**Ms. Akers asked Director Jenkins to inform her of the number of O&M staff and their geographic area.**

**Director Jenkins responded that there are three O&M staff in Adult Services and asked Mr. Lassen to provide location details.**

**Chris reported that Matt Cornelius reports to a duty station in Cheshire and covers Meriden, south of New Haven and the New York border, David Ferland covers Danbury, New York border, up to the Massachusetts line and Hartford County. Glenn Jablon covers interstate 91 to the Rhode Island border and the shoreline.**

**Eileen Akers inquired about hiring more O&M staff.**

**Chris responded that there was a fourth position for hire, but the team of mobility instructors believed that eliminating the position would allow other positions to be approved in Adult Services.**

**Chris stated that the three O&M staff are doing a great job providing services to Connecticut residents.**

**Ms. Akers inquired about O&M staff in Children’s Services.**

**Catherine Summs reported that there are three O&M Instructors in Children’s Services.**

**Debra Whitley is assigned to Central, Northern and Northwestern Connecticut. Kendra Jenness is assigned to Eastern Connecticut and Jianna Cho covers Southwestern Connecticut.**

**Bureau Program Updates**

**Adult Services**

**Chris Lassen reviewed the content of the update provided to board members prior to this meeting. The update provided by Mr. Lassen can be found in Appendix A.**

**Ms. Akers inquired if the ending date of the AIRA Program is March 2023.**

**Lori St. Amand responded that the final date for the subsidized program of AIRA will be April 30, 2023. In the upcoming weeks, they will be implementing a communications plan to gradually advise the current users that the free opportunity will be ending. They will conduct an exit poll for existing users and she’s hoping for a smooth transition from DOT’s subsidized grant into a private pay scenario.**

**Director Jenkins shared that she was contacted by AIRA and their intentions were to achieve total funding from BESB. She consulted with the Rehab Services Administration to gain clarity. RSA informed her that AIRA’s funding request is not reasonable due to having to spend such a large amount of money for a limited group of consumers. If the format changed, it could become a future possibility. RSA requested that they be a part of those full conversations about the potential use of AIRA. Currently, BESB is unable to fund the AIRA program.**

**Mr. Sylvestre inquired about the number of participants in the program.**

**Director Jenkins responded that there are sixty consumers, and it would cost approximately $105,000 in funding. If more consumers took advantage of this program, the cost would increase due to a variable rate.**

**Mr. Sylvestre stated that $2,000.00 for each consumer is expensive.**

**Director Jenkins responded that the amount is on a yearly basis and is based on their past usage rates.**

**Lori St. Amand stated that this program is not very popular in Connecticut and shared consumer usage information.**

**Ms. Akers communicated that she is a current AIRA member and shared usage details.**

**Ms. Akers also inquired about BESB staff returning calls to clients.**

**Mr. Lassen responded that there is an expectation of prompt response to messages left for employees. It has been discovered that messages are being left for staff that are no longer with the agency. Messages are also being left in the voicemail of the general mailbox number. Due to employees teleworking, there’s uncertainty that messages are being received promptly.**

**Mr. Lassen shared that there are no procedures in place regarding returning calls, but we do try and make contact with both existing and potential clients.**

**Ms. Akers stated that this issue should be resolved as soon as possible.**

**Ms. Akers also inquired about virtual and in-person services.**

**Mr. Lassen responded that mobility services are being provided in-person.**

**Mr. Lassen also stated that there are two Rehabilitation Teachers that are blind employees, and we are unable to get them out in the field four days a week.**

**Mr. Lassen reported that there are four Social Workers including one that is legally blind. The legally blind employee is unable to get out in the field more than three days per week.**

**Mr. Lassen stated that the ability to get the blind staff out in the field is an aspirational goal rather than something we are achieving on a regular basis.**

**Mr. Lassen stated that virtual services would be confined to rehab teaching and the intake process by Social Workers. He also stated that telephone intakes would be ideal for some clients.**

**Chairman Sylvestre inquired about hiring more Special Assistants to allow staff the option to go out in the field.**

**Director Jenkins revealed that one of the three Special Assistants is currently out on medical leave. The challenge is that the assistants are not being utilized on a full-time basis.**

**We have incorporated a schedule that gives preference to blind field staff on certain days. A major issue is that we have blind field staff that repeatedly schedule only one appointment per day. There are some blind field staff that do schedule multiple appointments on their selected day.**

**Presently, there are no justifications to hire additional Special Assistants due to the current three assistants not being fully utilized.**

**Director Jenkins informed the group that this has been a difficult situation for many years, and she is currently working with the Commissioner on other options.**

**Presently, no definitive decisions have been made but it is recognized that this is a major problem.**

**Mr. Sylvestre commented that it is important that the legally blind staff have resources available to them that to allow them the opportunity to serve clients at their full potential.**

**Mr. Norton mentioned that Director Jenkins and LaTonya observed an issue with blind field staff selecting the same day to schedule appointments. This resulted in having excess appointments on one day and zero appointments scheduled on other days. They modified the schedule to offer a solution to improve the clustering of certain days designated for appointments.**

**Mr. Thal inquired about the processing time for referrals.**

**Mr. Lassen explained the process for Adult Services and stated that the process normally takes seven to ten days after the eye report is sent into the agency.**

**Mr. Thal also inquired about unfamiliar clients and job retention.**

**Director Jenkins responded that the process is the same but includes a referral to VR for job retention services.**

**Ms. Burgard responded that if a client is known to the agency, the process could be a little different. She stated that known clients, that have previous interaction with VR could contact her directly.**

**Ms. Jenkins shared that she is currently working on centralizing the intake process. She stated that she is interested in obtaining a team to assist with the intake process and coding of the eye reports. The goal is to relieve the department’s supervisor from completing this task. Staff shortage continues to be an agency issue.**

**Ms. Amand reported that she is working directly with the IT staff to identify the telephone numbers for staff that are no longer with the agency and to also identify obsolete fax numbers.**

**Children’s Services**

**Catherine Summ reviewed the content of the update provided to board members prior to this meeting. The update provided by Ms. Summ can be found in Appendix B.**

**Ms. Akers congratulated Ms. Summ on filling the vacant positions in Children's Services. She also inquired about recruiting resources.**

**Ms. Summ replied that new staff graduated from UMass(4) and Hunter College (1).**

**Ms. Akers also requested the percentages for students that are braille readers, low vision and legally blind with special needs beyond blindness.**

**Ms. Summ provided estimated data but will provide accurate information.**

**Ms. Akers also requested more information regarding the Rehabilitation Teacher in Children's Services .**

**Ms. Summs reported that Jesse Mabry’s focus is assistive technology training and daily living skills training. Most of her work is related to assistive technology.**

**Ms. Akers inquired if the annual education report is still required.**

**Ms. Summ responded that changes have been made to ensure that the report is beneficial to everyone.**

**Mr. Thal asked if Ms. Summ noticed any aptitude changes in the students.**

**Ms. Summ reported that there is an uptick in referrals and assumes that it is due to parents earlier being reluctant during COVID.**

**COVID-19 Updates and Safety Protocols**

**Director Jenkins reported that she receives monthly emails, from the Governor’s office, regarding current COVID numbers and information relating to high-risk counties in Connecticut.**

**Building mask-wearing recommendations has only been posted once since the last board meeting.**

**Budget Update**

**Director Jenkins stated that we currently have approximately $375,000 in surplus for Children Services. She is working on projects with Ms. Summ to assist with teacher equipment and to provide services to the schools.**

**BEP currently has $2.3 million in unassigned funds.**

**VR just completed the final report for the federal fiscal year 2021. We are currently using 2022 federal funds and are working on getting approved to carry over these funds over to the current fiscal year 2023.**

**She stated that VR Services gave back $1 million in federal funds for FY 2021.**

**We will have a maintenance of effort penalty assessed to us that will allow us to reset our match requirements. Spending comparisons were completed for before and after COVID which resulted in a penalty. Reallotment dollars were granted due to the penalty.**

**Ms. Jenkins announced that our fiscal department has been extremely short staffed and are working to get bills paid. Minerva Cisco is the new assigned fiscal person for BESB. Minerva is new to BESB and has great experience. They will hold monthly meetings to get a better grasp on the budget, spending and the service delivery process.**

**Mr. Thal inquired about client visits, COVID and if masks are being worn when they enter the homes.**

**Ms. Jenkins responded that masks are not required unless they are entering facilities like nursing homes, doctor offices and dental offices. We encourage everyone to be safe and make good choices. If a staff person or client is sick, the appointment can be rescheduled or completed virtually.**

**Ms. Akers suggested a discussion regarding the need for COVID-19 Updates and Safety Protocols and if it should remain as part of the agenda.**

**The group decided that the COVID-19 Updates and Safety Protocols be eliminated from future agendas.**

**Legislative Update**

**Mr. Norton reported that there were three bills introduced that dealt specifically with blindness but those bills have not advanced.**

**The first bill introduced was to provide and mandate health insurance for service dogs. This bill did not move forward.**

**The second bill was to allow service dogs to accompany someone during an ambulance ride.**

**The last bill was to provide monetary penalties to someone falsely representing a dog as a service dog.**

**A bill last year bill redefined guide dogs in our statues as service animals and to make it apparent that they are distinct from emotional support animals . This bill did not resurface this year.**

**There are a few bills pertaining to deafness that are not advancing.**

**The proposal of teaching ASL in schools did not progress.**

**A bill requiring a study of the availability of interpreters Tin healthcare settings did not progress.**

**A bill that has moved forward would require ADS to provide hearing tests and aids to older people who lack insurance.**

**Mr. Norton reported that it is the policy of all agencies to oppose legislation that adds spending to the Governor’s budget.**

**He also announced that the Appropriations Committee’s proposed budget will be available in about five weeks and so we will know if the legislature has chosen to change the budget for ADS by the end of April.**

**Mr. Norton shared information regarding bills associated with Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), the hiring of a Dementia Services Coordinator, and bills on the prevention of elder abuse. Other proposed bills include long term care matters and research of senior needs.**

**Mr. Sylvestre asked if any of the bills received a public hearing.**

**Mr. Norton replied that the three bills pertaining to blindness did not receive a public hearing.**

**Points to the Good and Welfare**

**Ms. Akers announced the passing of former board member Chris Kuell. She shared that Mr. Kuell was the author of one of the most poignant pieces on blindness called “I think I Cane”. Ms. Akers will make the information available to board members. She suggested using the article as part of the observation for Blind Americans Equality Day in October.**

**Mr. Thal asked if anyone was aware of a program being held in June at the NEAT Market. He shared that he received a flyer that only included the date of the event.**

**Mr. Thal also shared that he was asked to conduct a program on his radio show called “Focal Point”. He is requesting help from Ms. Akers and Ms. Guidice due to having limited information pertaining to Steve Famiglietti.**

**Ms. Akers stated that she will try and work with Ms. Guidice on this.**

**Adjournment**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Eileen Akers, and seconded by Ms. Mary Silverberg to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously. Chairman Sylvestre adjourned the meeting at 11:56 a.m.**

**The next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 15, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.**

**Appendix A: Adult Services Program Update**

**The Adult Services Program staff now consists of Social Workers Johnny Vega, Lindie Gatling, Jaime Ortega, and Margie Santos, Rehabilitation Teachers Jonathan Gansfried, Mark Rafferty, and Pat Tavares, and Orientation & Mobility Instructors Matt Cornelius, Dave Ferland, and Glenn Jablon. We expect that a Rehabilitation Technologist position will be offered to an applicant imminently; if the candidate accepts the offer, Adult Services will have the services of such a Technologist for the first time. There remains a vacancy for a Rehabilitation Teacher which we hope to fill with another Technologist. Additionally, Lori St. Amand continues to serve as the Volunteer Program Coordinator, and Chris Lassen as the AS Supervisor.**

**The 7-OB Report was filed timely with the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration in late December. It showed that nearly 600 clients were served during Federal Fiscal Year 2022 (through 9/30/2022), and AS served nearly 400 additional current clients of the agency. The program has instituted safeguards to ensure that every client served is in active status with an IL (Independent Living) or VR (Vocational Rehabilitation) plan in place.**

**AS staff continue to conduct outreach activities whenever possible at health fairs and other events throughout the state. There has been a renewed effort to educate the staff of eye doctors’ practices in the state, and AS continues to collaborate with the staff of group homes funded by DDS and DMHAS to explain the mobility needs of their residents with legal blindness.**

**O&M staff are seeking to resume training sessions for new Connecticut Transit bus drivers.**

**The staff of Adult Services have just begun a yearlong intensive consultation and training program provided by the Older Individuals with Blindness Technical Assistance Center (OIB-TAC), with the aim of further refining and improving services to the roughly 70% of our client population aged 55 or older. These training services are provided free of charge by our federal funder.**

**Social Worker Margie Santos provides case management and grant expenditure tracking for the clients receiving community inclusion and technology assistance through the DeafBlind Advisory Committee.**

**State funding totals $240,000 annually, and qualifying clients can receive electronic and telecommunications devices with additional funds provided by the Federal Communications Commission for the Access Through Technology program.**

**Social Workers Jaime Ortega and Johnny Vega continue to provide translation services for clients speaking only Spanish, both within Adult Services and in the Vocational Rehabilitation program; they have also translated for parents who speak only Spanish and whose children are applying for assistance in Children’s Services.**

**The Adult Services budget now provides only about $35,000 annually for equipment and outside services for clients of any age and $20,000 per year for clients age 55 or older. With the guidance of new Director Carol Jenkins, AS is judiciously serving clients with significant and extraordinary needs by using bequest funds. Additionally, AS has begun to collaborate with the Vocational Rehabilitation program to assist clients active in VR in preparing them for the world of work.**

**Outreach is underway to investigate expanding our collaboration with the Lions Low Vision Centers to assist clients found by BESB to be Visually Impaired/Progressive (or VIP). The O&M Instructors are considering how best to work with clients who seek a long one-piece mobility cane from the National Federation of the Blind’s Free White Cane Program. AS is also seeking to find a partner to share the cost of the popular BESB Large Print Calendar in coming years.**

**The BESB Volunteer Program continues to recruit volunteers and match them with clients in need, bouncing back from the latest COVID-related dip in activity. We are working on collaborating with the Senior Companion Program in Waterbury to assist our clients in need in that city.**

**Chris Lassen, Adult Services program supervisor**

**Appendix B: Children’s Services Program Updates**

**Staffing updates:**

* **Children’s Services hired five Education Consultants and one O&M instructor in September and October of 2022. They are: Michelle Castro, Alicia Tucker, Danielle Valente, Lydia Randall, Kimberly Pultz and Debi Whitely (O&M). The new staff are an excellent addition to the Children’s Services team.**
* **There are currently 29 Education Consultants, three O&M instructors, and one Rehabilitation Instructor in Children’s Services.**
* **Laurie McCrewell, the Children’s Quality Control Reviewer who retired this past summer, is working under a second 120-day extension.**

**There are currently 949 active Children’s Services clients. At the September Advisory Board meeting there were 915, so we have experienced an increase in enrollment of 34 children.**

**Past Student Events**:

* **Cane Day/Shoppes at Buckland Hills: 2-27-23; 2 students**
* **BESB annual ski event at Ski Sundown: 2-21-23; 10 students**
* **Cane Day (Bennett Academy/Filomena’s Pizza Manchester): 1-27-23; 2 students**
* **BESB Virtual Music Group/School Age: 2-1-23; 7 students plus family members**
* **Dinosaur State Park: 1-17-23; 8 students plus additional family and siblings**
* **BESB Virtual Music Group/Pre-School: 1-18-23; 3 students plus caregivers and siblings**
* **BESB Virtual Music Group/All Ages: 12-07-22; 10 students plus caregivers and siblings**
* **Leap into Life Ridgefield Holiday Stroll: 12-03-22; one student**
* **Friendsgiving: 11-30-22; 7 students**
* **BESB Virtual Music Group/All Ages: 11-09-22; 6 students plus caregivers/family**
* **Leap into Life College Day: 11-08-22; 6 students**

**The BESB Buzz:**

**Twice yearly Children’s Services newsletter published electronically and in print. The newsletter is also translated into Spanish.**

**Link to the fall 2022 English edition:** [**https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/AgingandDisability/BESB/BESB-Buzz-Fall-Winter-2022.pdf**](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/AgingandDisability/BESB/BESB-Buzz-Fall-Winter-2022.pdf)

**Link to the fall 2022 Spanish edition:** [**https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/AgingandDisability/BESB/BESB-Buzz-Fall-Winter-2022Spanish.pdf**](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/AgingandDisability/BESB/BESB-Buzz-Fall-Winter-2022Spanish.pdf)

**The spring edition will be published soon.**

**Past in-service events:**

* **Children’s Services conducted its annual series of fall in-services for education team members in-person this past fall at the Sheraton Hartford South Hotel in Rocky hill. Due to limited staffing some of the days were combined into one. The trainings were virtual during COVID.**
  + **Para and B-3/P-K/K: 9-27-22**
  + **Braille and Large Print: 9-28-22**
  + **MI/VI Day (teachers and paras): 10-04-22**
  + **CVI Phase III (Held at BESB): 10-18-22**