



Children's Program

FAMILY HANDBOOK

2025-2026

OUR MISSION

Empower, educate and enhance the lives of individuals impacted by vision loss through all of life's transitions.

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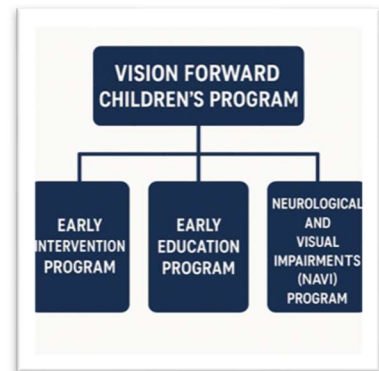


VISION FORWARD CHILDREN'S PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Vision Forward Association is a non-profit organization with more than 100 years' experience serving individuals of all ages who are blind or visually impaired and their families. Our mission is to **Empower, Educate and Enhance the lives of individuals impacted by vision loss through all of life's transitions.**

As the only agency in the state of Wisconsin providing services across the entire lifespan, Vision Forward is uniquely positioned to support individuals and families from birth through older adulthood. We are here to provide education, training, and support at every age and every stage of vision loss. Our goal is to ensure that children and families have access to consistent, connected, and cohesive services throughout life—so that no matter when or how vision loss occurs, the support is in place to meet each individual's evolving needs.

Vision Forward Association's Children's Program works with children who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities, and their families to help each child develop toward his or her full potential. The Children's Program consists of three comprehensive, multi-disciplinary services: 1) Early Intervention Program, 2) Early Education Program, and 3) Neurological and Visual Impairment Program.



The Children's Program believes that children who are blind or visually impaired can learn the same things as sighted peers in their own way with appropriate support. In addition, the Children's Program is committed to teaching children the special skills they require to compensate for their visual impairment at school, home, and in the community. The Children's Program will not only provide vision services but also educational and therapeutic services that promote the development of each child and are designed to achieve the following:

- Promote appropriate growth in all areas of development to ensure readiness for school and beyond.
- Maximize each child's visual and compensatory skills.
- Foster the highest level of independence within each child.
- Guide and support each family's understanding of their child's visual impairment and its impact on development.
- Partner with families and share in the joy and excitement of raising a child with visual impairment and/or additional disabilities.

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM

In partnership with the Wisconsin DHS Birth to 3 Program and Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Waiver Program, Vision Forward's Early Intervention Program provides vision services from Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Orientation & Mobility Specialists to support infants and toddlers who are blind or visually impaired and their families in the natural environment (i.e. home, daycare, or in their community). Individual vision services are available to children who are blind or visually impaired and provided on an individual basis, in person or remotely via a HIPAA compliant telehealth platform. Vision services are structured around the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) for children with visual impairments and address:



- Development of attachment and meaningful social relationships and communication skills (listening, turn-taking, personal expression, nonverbal communication, emergent literacy).
- Assessment of sensory capabilities and preferences in order to facilitate the effective use of all senses, including the use of low vision devices if appropriate.
- Adaptation of environments, toys, and learning materials to make them more accessible.
- Use of compensatory skills to accommodate vision loss (e.g., strategies for accomplishing tasks using touch rather than vision; learning to use all senses as effectively as possible).
- Cognitive development opportunities that are experienced-based and designed to teach concepts that are acquired primarily through vision (basic concepts, problem-solving skills).
- Facilitation of emergent literacy including pre-literacy for potential Braille and print readers through collaboration with families and other professionals.
- Gross and fine motor development (as well as the development of physical control and stamina) with special attention to prerequisite skills required for age-appropriate orientation and mobility, and Braille, print reading and writing if appropriate.
- Development of age-appropriate spatial awareness and concept development through orientation and mobility instruction (self-directed, independent movement in the environment, which may or may not include a belt cane, white cane, or other adaptive mobility device).
- Instruction in daily living skills typically acquired through incidental visual learning that must be taught using hands-on, step-by-step procedures to infants and toddlers with visual impairments in order for them to function independently within natural environments (e.g., self-care skills, ability to do household chores).
- Comprehensive family support includes emotional support and access to information and resources that will help families become life-long advocates for their children.

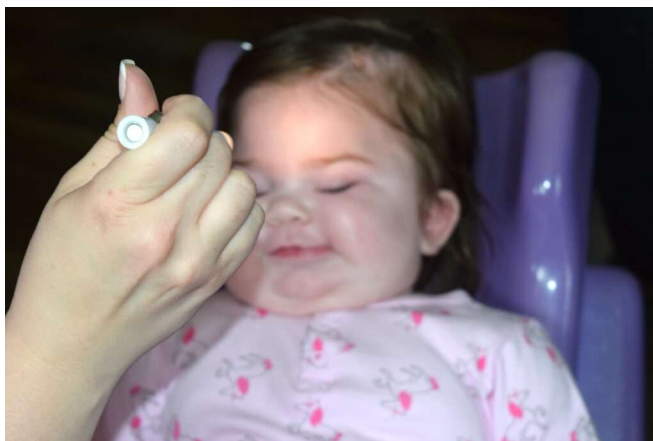
- Facilitate understanding of medical and visual conditions and their implications for early intervention and education services.
- Provide guidance on recreational opportunities that enhance creativity and enjoyment.

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM STAFF

Vision Forward Association is committed to hiring and retaining diverse, well rounded and competent staff who are best qualified to work with your child. All teachers and therapists are licensed by the state of Wisconsin in their respective profession. Our hiring and staff retention policies include pre-employment and yearly background checks and professional reference checks. Employees are required to complete yearly continuing education classes, many of which are reimbursable or provided to staff by the agency. Training topics include best practices and the latest research in the vision field and working with children's unique vision conditions.

Teacher of the Visually Impaired

A Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) is a specifically trained educator who supports children who are blind or visually impaired ages from birth to twenty-one. TVIs provide early intervention and ongoing vision services specific to the needs of infants, toddlers and children, such as conducting functional vision assessments, educating children and their team on pre-Braille and Braille, implementing visual interventions specific to ocular or brain-based visual impairment, and enhancing development of ECC skills (see page 6 *ECC for Children with VI*). Our TVIs have a teaching license with additional visual impairment certification through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. In addition, some of our TVIs are trained as Developmental Therapists or EI Educators with a specialization in vision.



Orientation & Mobility Specialist

An Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialist is a trained professional who teaches a person with a visual impairment the skills needed to navigate safely and independently in a variety of environments. An O&M Specialist can help the family of an infant, toddler,

or child modify the environment, learn strategies to promote movement and safe exploration, and determine if a white cane, belt cane, or other adaptive mobility devices is required. In addition to a WI teaching license through the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), our Orientation and Mobility Specialists are certified in Orientation and Mobility (COMS) through ACVREP (Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals).



*Photo (above): Katie Griffin, Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS) and Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) with CVI Range Endorsement



*Photos (from left to right): Tina Mekeel (TVI, COMS, CATIS), Dana Lien (TVI), and Colleen Kickbush (TVI, Director of Children's Services)

ECC FOR CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

The term expanded core curriculum (ECC) is used to define concepts and skills that often require specialized instruction with students who are blind or visually impaired in order to compensate for decreased opportunities to learn incidentally by observing others. In addition to the general education core curriculum that all students are taught, students with visual impairments, starting at birth, also need instruction in the ECC. The ECC areas include (A) needs that result from the visual impairment that enable the student "to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and (B) other educational needs that result from the child's disability" as required by IDEA (34 CFR 300.320 (a)(2)(A)(B)). Texas Education Code (TEC) 30.002(c)(5) and (e)(5) require the flexibility of school districts to make arrangements for services to occur "beyond regular school hours to ensure the student learns the skills and receives the instruction" in the ECC.

Nine Areas of the ECC*

1. **Assistive Technology**

Assistive technology is an umbrella term that includes assistive and adaptive tools as well as instructional services that can enhance communication, access, and learning. It can include electronic equipment such as switches, mobile devices, and portable notetakers; computer access such as magnification software, screen readers, and keyboarding; and low-tech devices such as an abacus, a braille, Active Learning materials (e.g., Little Room®), and optical devices.

2. **Career Education**

Career education will provide students with visual impairments of all ages with the opportunity to learn through hands-on experiences about jobs that they may not otherwise be aware of without the ability to observe people working. They also learn work-related skills such as assuming responsibility, punctuality, and staying on task. Career education provides opportunities for students to explore and discover strengths and interests and plan for transition to adult life.

3. **Compensatory Skills**

Compensatory skills include skills necessary for accessing the core curriculum including concept development; communication modes; organization and study skills; access to print materials; and the use of braille/Nemeth, tactile graphics, object and/or tactile symbols, sign language, and audio materials.



4. **Independent Living Skills**

Independent living skills include the tasks and functions people perform in daily life to increase their independence and contribute to the family structure. These skills include personal hygiene, eating skills, food preparation, time and money management, clothing care, and household tasks. People with vision typically learn such daily routines through observation, whereas individuals with visual impairments often need systematic instruction and frequent practice in these daily tasks.

5. **Orientation and Mobility (O&M)**

O&M instruction enables students of all ages and motor abilities to be oriented to their surroundings and to move as independently and safely as possible. Students learn about themselves and their environments, including home, school, and community. O&M lessons incorporate skills ranging from basic body

image, spatial relationships, and purposeful movement to cane usage, travel in the community, and use of public transportation. Having O&M skills enables students to acquire independence to the greatest extent possible, based on their individual needs and abilities.



6. **Recreation and Leisure**

Being unable to observe others reduces awareness of recreation and leisure options. Instruction in recreation and leisure skills will ensure that students with visual impairments will have opportunities to explore, experience, and choose physical and leisure-time activities, both organized and individual, that they enjoy. This instruction should focus on the development of life-long skills.

7. **Self-Determination**

Self-determination includes choice-making, decision-making, problem solving, personal advocacy, assertiveness, and goal setting. Students with visual impairments often have fewer opportunities to develop and practice the specific skills that lead to self-determination. Students who know and value who they are and who have self-determination skills become effective advocates for themselves and therefore have more control over their lives.

8. **Sensory Efficiency**

Sensory efficiency includes instruction in the use of vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. It also addresses the development of proprioceptive, kinesthetic, and vestibular systems. Learning to use their senses efficiently, including the use of optical devices, will enable students with visual impairments to access and participate in activities in school, home, and community environments.

9. **Social Interaction Skills**

Social interaction skills include awareness of body language, gestures, facial expressions, and personal space. Instruction also includes learning about interpersonal relationships, self-control, and human sexuality. Almost all social skills are learned by visually observing other people. Instruction in social interaction skills in school, work, and recreational settings is crucial. Having appropriate social skills can often mean the difference between social isolation and a fulfilling life as an adult.

**Developed by Texas ECC Committee 4-28-14, Retrieved on 7/21/2025 via TSBVI website <https://www.tsbvi.edu/programs/ecc>*

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM FEES

Early Intervention Vision Services are charged at a standard rate of \$110 per hour (session). Additional travel fees of \$90 per hour apply for staff to come onsite to provide services. Vision Services may also be provided on an individual basis for children ages

3 and older upon request. Birth to 3 Program and CLTS Program funding are accepted.
*For additional information, see page 28 *System of Payment*.

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY



EUGENE'S STORY

When Eugene was a baby, his family took him to a pediatric eye specialist who diagnosed him with a condition called Optic Nerve Hypoplasia, which affects his vision. At the time, Eugene wasn't using his sight much, which slowed down his development, especially in his motor skills.

Looking back on the progress Eugene has made in less than a year, his mother, Alex, shared how the Vision Forward Association and an early intervention teacher for visually impaired children helped their family learn ways to make things easier for Eugene to see, like toys and people's faces.

The teacher taught the family activities to help Eugene develop his vision, such as focusing on faces and later following lighted toys with his eyes. As Eugene got better at using his vision, his teacher and parents combined those techniques with his physical therapy to support his motor skills. One thing Alex remembers most is a simple yet powerful message: "Treat him like a normal baby." This advice meant that she shouldn't assume Eugene couldn't do things for himself or that he needed help with everything. She realized that he would learn in his own way, using his sight, touch, and hearing. Now, at 13 months old, Eugene is hitting milestones his mom and teacher were hoping for. He's crawling, pulling himself up to stand, and communicating with gestures, baby sign language, and words. He even looks around to see if adults are watching him do all of these things! Eugene's personality is really starting to shine, and it's clear he's a social little boy.

One of Alex's proudest moments came when Eugene started reaching for toys and crawling to get them. The look of pride on his face when he picked up the toys and brought them back to show Alex reflected how proud both he and his mom were. While many parents celebrate these simple milestones, Alex had been uncertain when Eugene would reach them because of the potential challenges from his condition, which could affect his physical growth, cognitive development, and vision.

NEUROLOGICAL AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS (NAVI) PROGRAM

Multidisciplinary Therapy and Vision Services for Individuals of All Ages

There are no other therapy programs in the United States that provide both medical and vision services for individuals of all ages with neurological conditions and visual impairments. At Vision Forward, we serve children and adults throughout their lifespan to help them achieve their desired level of independence. Our Neurological and Visual Impairment (NAVI) Program offers team-based therapy and vision services designed to support life-long independence. Based on individual goals—not age—participants receive coordinated medical and vision services from a multidisciplinary team. The NAVI Program empowers individuals with vision loss and neurological disorders by providing comprehensive, collaborative care that promotes independence at home and in the community. Recognizing the future needs of children who are blind or visually impaired, we are committed to ensuring they receive the highest quality services as they grow into adulthood—regardless of age, condition, or ability.



Program Goals:

- 1) Partner with an individual who has co-existing neurological and visual impairments and their family to reach desired outcomes through ongoing assessment, instruction, and therapy.
- 2) Provide comprehensive services in a clinic setting with carryover into the home and community based on the individual's goals, interests, and strengths.
- 3) Coordinate care across disciplines on a consistent basis by implementing a team-based approach from a variety of professionals who specialize in the complexities associated with co-existing neurological and visual impairments.

NAVI PROGRAM STAFF

Our Neurological and Visual Impairment (NAVI) Program provides team-based therapy and vision services that empower children and adults for life-long independence. Our multidisciplinary team may include PT, OT, speech therapy, optometry, TVIs, O&M, assistive tech, music therapy, and social work—based on individual goals. Following the evaluations, the team along with the family will meet to determine which services will be most beneficial for meeting the individual's goals. Consistent communication and coordination among team members will provide our clients with the most comprehensive services for enhancing their independence.

Vision Forward Association is committed to hiring and retaining diverse, well rounded and competent staff who are best qualified to work with your child. All teachers and therapists are licensed by the state of Wisconsin in their respective profession. Our

hiring and staff retention policies include pre-employment and yearly background checks and professional reference checks. Employees are required to complete yearly continuing education classes, many of which are reimbursable or provided to staff by the agency. Training topics include best practices and the latest research in the vision field and working with children's unique vision conditions.

Physical Therapist

Skilled and compassionate physical therapists help children with vision loss increase their independence. Vision Forward's physical therapist provides expert evaluations, highly individualized treatment plans, therapeutic interventions and one-to-one treatment sessions. Physical therapy is a part of an integrated team and specializes in the following areas:

- Therapeutic exercise and activities
- Range of motion, strengthening and endurance
- Visual motor skills and visual compensatory techniques
- Neuromuscular re-education
- Manual therapy and orthopedic alignment
- Body mechanics and postural instruction
- Balance, coordination and gait training
- Home exercise programs



*Photo: Physical Therapist—Jenna Zubella, PT, DPT, ATC

Occupational Therapist

Compassionate and specialized occupational therapists (OT) help children with visual impairments build the skills they need to engage in daily activities, play, and learning despite challenges related to vision loss. OTs foster independence, confidence, and participation across home, school, and community settings. Vision Forward's occupational therapist provides expert evaluations, highly individualized treatment plans, therapeutic interventions, and one-to-one treatment sessions. OT is a part of an integrated team and specializes in the following areas:

- Activities of daily living (like bathing, dressing, toileting)
- Therapeutic activities and home training
- Fine motor & visual motor skills
- Sensory processing & emotional needs
- Body & spatial awareness/orientation

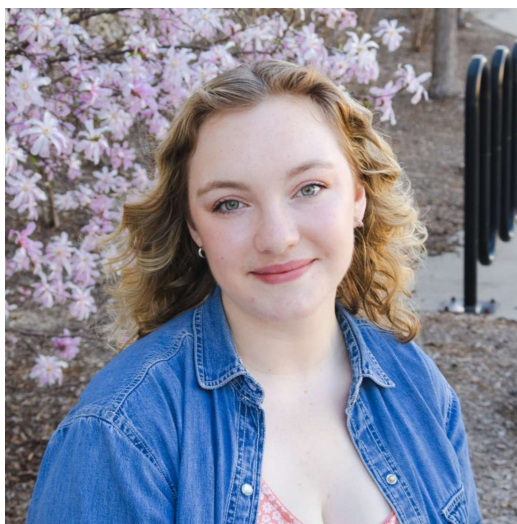


- Neuromuscular re-education
- Creation and implementation of compensatory strategies
- Introduction of adaptive equipment
- Creating home exercise programs for families

*Photo: Occupational Therapist—Philip Maio, MOT, OTR/L

Music Therapist

Music therapy offers children with visual impairments new ways to experience their surroundings. As part of an interdisciplinary approach, music therapy supports the development of physical, emotional, sensory, cognitive and social needs of people with vision loss. Our certified music therapist assesses client strengths and needs and uses music to target non-musical goals. Individual and/or group music therapy sessions for children or adults are available in-person and remotely. Children on the Children's Long Term Support Waiver (CLTS) or adults with Family Care or IRIS may receive funding for individual music therapy sessions.



*Photo: Music Therapist—Sage Shemak, MT-BC

Speech and Language Pathologist

Speech and Language Pathologists help children with vision impairment reach their greatest communication potential and set them on a course for success. Speech and language therapy helps build confidence, reduce anxiety and frustration, and can improve the overall quality of life for children with visual impairments. Vision Forward's speech and language pathologists provide expert evaluation and the latest, most effective therapeutic interventions.



Therapy is customized to each child's needs and provided in a fun, play-based context. Families are engaged in developing goals and objectives and are provided with ongoing feedback regarding progress. They are also provided with resources and ideas for activities at home between sessions. Feeding is a complex task and our providers work directly with families to increase input and variety and to make meal time a rewarding social activity. Speech and Language Therapy and/or Feeding and Swallowing Therapy are part of an integrated team and specialize in the following areas:

Speech and Language Therapy

- Language delays
- Articulation errors
- Motor sequencing/Apraxia
- Phonological disorders
- Fluency issues
- Voice disorders
- Differentiating developmental and organic conditions
- Pragmatic/social language
- Complex communication needs requiring the use of Alternative and/or Augmentative Communication Devices (AAC)
- Oral motor/swallowing problems
- Sensory Feeding Disorders
- Gastrostomy Feeding Tube issues (G-Tube)

Feeding and Swallowing Therapy

- Safe and effective feeding and swallowing skills
- Address reduced or limited intake, food refusal and food sensitivity

*Photo: Speech and Language Pathologist—Pam Grefsheim, MS, CCC-SLP

NAVI PROGRAM FEES

Services provided through the NAVI Program are billable through a variety of funding sources. Medical services, such as therapies (i.e. OT, PT, optometry, etc.) are billable through insurance. Vision services provided by TVIs and O&Ms are charged at a standard rate of \$110 per hour (session), which may be covered by the Children's Longterm Support (CLTS) Waiver Program. Additional travel fees of \$90 per hour may be charged for home/community visits. Private pay is an option, please let us know if you would like to support exploring available funding options. *For additional information, see page 28 *System of Payment*.

NAVI SUCCESS STORY

Judith's Journey: Walking Toward Independence with Vision Forward's Support *How collaboration, creativity, and courage helped one young girl thrive*



A Lifelong Connection Begins

When Judith first came to Vision Forward at just 9 months old, no one could have imagined the incredible journey she would take over the next decade. Now 10 years old, Judith—who has Cortical Visual Impairment—has grown into a determined, joyful, and active young girl who continues to make incredible strides thanks to a dedicated team, innovative solutions, and the unwavering support of her family.

A Full Team Behind Her

Over the past nine years, nearly every corner of Vision Forward has had the joy of working with Judith—from Early Intervention and Preschool to PT, OT, Speech, Vision/O&M consultations, and even Music Therapy. Each therapist and specialist who's been part of Judith's life has played a role in helping her move closer to independence.

A New Goal: Independent Family Walks

In August 2022, Judith's journey took an exciting turn. Though she had been walking independently for some time, she often leaned forward and didn't always stay aware of her surroundings. Her mom had one big goal in mind: to be able to go on walks as a family without having to hold Judith's hand the whole time. With that in mind, she reached out to the Children's Team for help.

Introducing the Pediatric Belt Cane

Together with Jenna (PT), Tina (COMS), and other specialists, Judith began learning how to use a pediatric belt cane—a mobility tool that helps children with vision

impairments detect obstacles and navigate more safely. As she grew more confident, it became clear she was outgrowing the standard cane sizes. That's when the incredible team at Safe Toddles stepped in, building Judith a custom-sized belt cane tailored just for her.

Tackling the Stairs—One Step at a Time

Jenna, who's worked with Judith since she was just 2 ½ years old, has also been helping her tackle stairs—a challenging skill for any child, let alone one with vision impairment. After two years of hard work, trial and error, and creative thinking, the team came up with an idea to add tennis balls to the cane. This simple but brilliant modification helped Judith improve her balance and gave her the ability to lift and move her cane more easily.

Success That Shines

And it worked! Judith is now walking up and down stairs on her own—with her cane—and beams with pride at every step. Seeing Judith succeed was a true team victory, not only for those of us at Vision Forward but also for her family and our partners at Safe Toddles.

More Than Just Mobility

This story isn't just about mobility—it's about the joy that comes with independence, the power of teamwork, and the unstoppable spirit of a young girl who continues to amaze us all.

EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM



Vision Forward's Early Education Program is comprised of a variety of playgroups, sensory clubs, and other small groups designed to provide holistic support to children with vision loss ages 0 to 6 and their families. In addition to incorporating all areas of development, infants, toddlers, and young children with visual impairments and their caregivers receive comprehensive, disability-specific support targeting compensatory (tactual and auditory) skills, cognition and play skills, and social interaction skills. Children with visual impairments and/or other disabilities, as well as typically developing peers, are welcome! These small groups which take place on-site at Vision Forward and at partnering agencies, such as local community centers, foster community inclusion, specialized skill development, and emotional well-being, ensuring that every child with a visual impairment is equipped with the support and tools needed for independence and success. Our small groups are tailored to the developmental needs of each child and enhance school readiness, independence, and social engagement. Our developmentally appropriate playgroups include caregivers, siblings, and extended family, to create a supportive network that enhances the entire family's ability to thrive.

All Early Education Program staff are knowledgeable about developmentally appropriate practices. Learning occurs through a child-centered, exploratory approach. Play is a major component of our program. Sufficient time, materials, and space will be provided for children to actively explore the world around them. Children will have an opportunity to use a variety of art materials, manipulatives, sensory exploration, music, movement, nature and dramatic play. Some forms of technology, such as specialized apps, smart boards, assistive technology, etc., may be used to support learning. All staff have specialized training in ocular and brain-based vision diagnoses.

Each child's chart and medical history are reviewed to create adapted learning opportunities and strategies that facilitate independence according to each child's abilities. Because children served by the Early Education Program have unique needs,

individualized plans for the child's care and developmental needs are created with each family. These plans ensure that the educational and therapeutic goals are consistent with the family's goals and reflect each child's unique needs. Please note that children enrolled in the early education program, who receive therapy may only be in the classroom for a portion of the weekly hours depending on their time receiving Medicaid funded therapy services (OT, PT, SLP) or separately funded CLTS vision services and/or music therapy services. These separately funded services may occur within the classroom or in a separate environment. We encourage multi-disciplinary teamwork and collaboration between our professional staff and parents/caregivers.

Our Early Education Program provides a wide array of collaborative services that promote preschool readiness and the development of each child. Our small groups combine developmentally appropriate activities with the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) for children who are blind or visually impaired to ensure they learn the skills essential to succeed in school and life. The ECC is used as a framework for assessing children, planning individual goals, and providing instruction to learn the foundational skills necessary for future educational success. Children learn through play and exploration. Since caregivers stay on-site at all times, they are also invited into the classroom, so they can practice carryover skills into the home. Caregivers will also have the opportunity to learn more about the curriculum at parent meetings or at conferences.

The ECC is used to define concepts and skills that often require specialized instruction with children who are blind or visually impaired to compensate for decreased opportunities to learn incidentally by observing others. For additional information of the ECC, see page 6 *ECC for Children with VI*.

EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM STAFF

Our Early Education Program is comprised of licensed Special Education Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Orientation & Mobility Specialists, Therapists, and other providers who have extensive training in working with children who are blind or visually impaired. In addition to small group classroom time, especially if your child is enrolled 4 days per week, their schedule may include time with a physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, music therapist, teacher of the visually impaired and/or an orientation and mobility specialist. Therapy, education, vision and/or orientation and mobility sessions may occur within the classroom, playground or in a therapy room depending on the activity or goal the provider is addressing. Keep in mind that educators, therapists, and vision staff may rotate or change periodically due to caseloads, schedules, days your child attends programming, and/or to offer new insights or treatment approaches. Exposure to more than one provider allows for a more comprehensive approach to therapy and education.

Vision Forward Association is committed to hiring and retaining diverse, well rounded and competent staff who are best qualified to work with your child. All teachers and therapists are licensed by the state of Wisconsin in their respective profession. Our hiring and staff retention policies include pre-employment and yearly background checks and professional reference checks. Employees are required to complete yearly

continuing education classes, many of which are reimbursable or provided to staff by the agency. Training topics include best practices and the latest research in the vision field and working with children's unique vision conditions.



*Photos (from left to right, top to bottom): Johanna Guzman (Early Special Education Teacher, Bilngual), Janet Fox (Early Education Teacher, TVI), Danita Wendorf (Early Education Paraprofessional, OTR/L), and Katie Griffin (TVI, COMS)

EARLY EDUCATION GROUP OPTIONS

EYE Grow

Schedule: 1 Hour, 2 Days Per Week (Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday)

Time: 9:00 – 10:00 AM

Ages: Approximately 0–18 Months (developmentally)

Group Size: 4–6 Children, Accompanied by Caregiver

Location: Vision Forward Association

Program Overview:

EYE Grow is a thoughtfully designed early development program tailored for infants aged 0 to 18 months and their caregivers. Offered twice a week in small-group sessions, this 1-hour program nurtures foundational growth through sensory-rich experiences and intentional parent-child bonding activities specifically created for young

children who are visually impaired. Each group is guided by an experienced facilitator and includes structured and unstructured components that promote exploration, interaction, and developmental milestones. The program prioritizes a calm, engaging environment that allows infants to grow at their own pace while strengthening the caregiver-child connection.

Program Focus Areas:

- **Sensory Experiences:** Tactile play, visual stimulation, gentle sounds, and age-appropriate movement help stimulate the senses and support cognitive development.
- **Early Development:** Foster early developmental milestones in a supportive environment. Activities support fine and gross motor skills, social interaction, language exposure, and early emotional regulation.
- **Parent-Child Bonding:** Through shared play, songs, and routines, caregivers gain tools to deepen attachment, understand developmental cues, and build confidence in their role as a caregiver for a child with visual impairment.

Whether you're a new parent, grandparent, or caregiver, *EYE Grow* provides a nurturing space to connect, learn, and grow—together.



*Photo: Janet Fox, Early Education Teacher and Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)

EYE Play

Schedule: 2 Hours, 2 Days Per Week (Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday)

Time: 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Ages: Approximately 18–36 Months Developmentally

Group Size: 4-6 Children per Session, Accompanied by Caregiver

Location: Vision Forward Association

Program Overview:

EYE Play is an engaging and developmentally enriching program designed for toddlers with visual impairments aged 18 to 36 months and their caregivers. Held twice a week in small-group sessions, this 2-hour program supports toddlers through purposeful play that fosters sensory exploration, milestone development, and early learning in a supportive, social environment. Led by skilled early childhood facilitators, each session combines guided activities with open-ended play, giving toddlers the freedom to explore

while gently introducing structure. With caregivers actively participating, *EYE Play* helps strengthen the bond between adult and child while promoting social interaction among peers.

Program Focus Areas:

- **Developmental Milestones:** Support toddlers through key developmental transitions. Sensory-rich activities are designed to support speech and language development, motor coordination, social-emotional growth, and emerging independence.
- **Multi-Sensory Play Skills:** Children engage in hands-on experiences that integrate movement, music, textured materials, environmental sounds, and pretend scenarios to build cognitive and physical skills.
- **Parent-Child Relationship:** Caregivers strengthen their understanding of child development and carryover at home through shared play, songs, and routines,

EYE Play offers a dynamic space for toddlers to discover their world through play—building confidence, curiosity, and connection every step of the way.

EYE Learn

Schedule: Half Days, 4 Days/Week (Monday–Thursday)

Session Times: AM (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM) or PM (1:00 PM – 3:30 PM)

Ages: 2–6 Years (Grouped by Developmental Level)

Group Size: 6–8 Children, Accompanied by Caregiver

Location: Vision Forward Association



*Photo: Johanna Guzman, Early Special Education Teacher (Bilingual)

Program Overview:

EYE Learn is a comprehensive early education program focused on preparing children with visual impairments ages 2 to 6 for a successful transition to school. Designed with school readiness at its core, this program supports every area of a child's development through structured routines, intentional play, and hands-on learning experiences. Children are grouped by developmental level, allowing facilitators to tailor activities to best meet individual needs and outcomes. Sessions are offered in the morning or afternoon, with caregivers participating alongside their children and/or waiting nearby to encourage learning, promote bonding, foster independence, and support skill-building in real time.

Learning in the *EYE Learn* classroom happens naturally through play, exploration, and everyday experiences. Children are encouraged to use their senses as they explore a variety of materials—manipulatives, music, movement, nature, and dramatic play—within a developmentally appropriate and inclusive setting. Daily living skills are

integrated into routines, reinforcing independence in a practical, supportive way. Special field trips to community locations, such as grocery stores and local parks, provide children with opportunities to generalize their skills in multiple environments.

Each child's goals are developed based on their unique strengths, needs, and interests. This individualized approach allows children to grow at their own pace, building a strong foundation not only for school, but for lifelong learning and development.

Program Focus Areas:

- **Pre-Academic Skills:** Early exposure to literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, and classroom routines helps children build confidence and readiness for formal education.
- **Social Interactions:** Small-group settings with peer models encourage communication, cooperation, and relationship-building.
- **Self-Regulation:** Children learn emotional awareness, transitions, and daily routines to support focus, flexibility, and independence in a group setting.

The *EYE Learn* classroom is a place where curiosity is encouraged, abilities are celebrated, and every child is supported in reaching their fullest potential—ready for school and ready for life.

Sensory Club

Schedule: 1 Hour, 1 Day per Week (Fridays; Other days based on interest)

Ages: 0–6 Years

Group Size: 4–6 Children per Session, Accompanied by Caregiver

Location: Vision Forward Association and/or Community-Based Settings (Community locations, such as community centers, based on family interest)

Program Overview:

Sensory Club is a welcoming, play-based program designed for children with visual impairments ages 0–6 and their caregivers. Offered once a week in small group settings at Vision Forward Association and/or various community locations, this 1-hour group provides a calming and engaging environment where young children can explore sensory-rich activities, build developmental skills, and strengthen bonds with their caregivers through play. Each group is led by an experienced Vision Forward staff member and held in accessible community locations to encourage comfort and participation for all families. Groups are limited to 6-8 children to allow for individualized attention and inclusive participation. Sensory Club is open to children of all abilities, with a focus on supporting developmental growth in a low-pressure, social setting.

Program Focus Areas:

- **Sensory Experiences:** Activities are centered around touch, sound, movement, and visual exploration to help regulate and stimulate the senses in a developmentally appropriate way.

- **Early Development:** The program promotes fine and gross motor skills, communication, and cognitive growth through age-appropriate, play-based engagement.
- **Parent-Child Bonding:** Shared experiences foster strong relationships, build trust, and give caregivers ideas and tools for connection beyond the session. Caregivers can also build a sense of community among families.

Sensory Club is a gentle, joyful introduction to group activities for young children—a space to connect, explore, and grow together, one Friday at a time.

EARLY EDUCATION BACKPACK NECESSITIES

Although a caregiver will be with their child in the Early Education Program at all times, it is important to be prepared. Please bring all items LABELED with your child's name:

- Complete change of clothing (shirt, pants, socks, underwear)
- Diapers and wipes
- Snack (only for EYE Learn)
 - Snacks are not provided by the Early Education Program. It is the family's responsibility to provide nutritious snacks each day for their child.
 - If your child has a special diet or allergy, please ensure that you notify Vision Forward staff, fill out the intake paperwork completely and, if necessary, the Emergency Care Plan provided at intake.
- Any special feeding supplies or special therapy equipment (i.e. AFOs, hand splints, vests, wheelchair or adapted seating).
 - If a child has wearable therapy equipment, please have them arrive with the items on, so they are ready to learn.
 - Speak with your group facilitator and/or therapy team prior to enrollment if support for adapted seating or other equipment is needed.
- Medications (Prescription and Non-Prescription)
 - Please note that no medications or items labeled "keep out of reach of children" can remain in a backpack or cubby. Please notify staff immediately and they will place the medication in a locked cabinet for the safety of all children.
 - Prescription medications must be in original packaging labeled with the pharmacy label and not expired.
 - **Only caregivers can administer medications; Vision Forward staff cannot.**



Our staff plans outdoor activities throughout the year. Weather permitting, the teachers and therapists will take the children to our outdoor play area and on short excursions in the nearby community. To ensure your child's comfort, please dress him/her accordingly. In addition, we ask that you bring the following items:

- Sunscreen
- Insect Repellent
- Sunglasses/Hat
- Change of Clothing
- Sweatshirt/Jacket
- Weather Appropriate Shoes/Boots

Early Education Program Fees

We continue to advance our practices and ensure the highest level of quality care for your child. To help cover the costs of our services, Vision Forward will charge tuition bi-monthly (every other month; i.e. September, November, January, March, and June), due within 1 week of the 8-week session start date. The rate charged varies depending on the number of days per week a child is enrolled and considers center closures, absences, therapies**, and holidays. Any changes to enrollment and rate level requires that a new contract be signed. Upon request, your family will receive a year-end tax statement. Our tax ID number is: 39-0808506.

We are committed to ensuring success for children who have visual impairments. We will work with each family individually to explore all options, and financial assistance to find a plan that works for their individual situations. Scholarships may also be available for families in need. *For additional information, see page 26 *System of Payment*.

Early Education Group	8-Week Session Rate
EYE Grow	\$800
EYE Play	\$1,000
EYE Learn	\$2,000
Sensory Club	\$500

**Please note that children enrolled in the early education program, who receive therapy may only be in the classroom for a portion of the weekly hours depending on their time receiving Medicaid funded therapy services (OT, PT, SLP) or separately funded CLTS vision services and/or music therapy services. These separately funded services may occur within the classroom or in a separate environment. For example, if a child is enrolled in the EyeLearn classroom (M-Th 9am-12pm) and they receive OT, PT, SLP, Music Therapy, and vision services from a TVI and/or O&M, the child may only be in the classroom or receiving early education services for 8-10 hours per week (not the full 12 hours of programming). We encourage multi-disciplinary teamwork and collaboration between our professional staff and parents/caregivers.

EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY



Jaylee's Journey of Growth and Confidence

Jaylee, a bright 4-year-old girl diagnosed with septo-optic dysplasia and optic nerve hypoplasia, began her journey with us in 2021. Initially enrolled in our Birth to Three program for vision therapy, Jaylee faced additional challenges that led her to begin speech therapy as well. As her time in the program was nearing its end, her family was unsure about what the next step would look like for her.

Our dedicated vision teacher recognized their concerns and suggested they explore our preschool program to see if it would be a good fit. Like many parents, Jaylee's family had no prior experience supporting a child with visual impairment, and they were looking for guidance and reassurance on how best to help Jaylee thrive. They took a leap of faith and decided to join our program in 2023.

When Jaylee arrived at the preschool, she faced some struggles, including eating difficulties and a reluctance to engage with toys. She was picky about textures and often refused to explore toys for more than a few seconds. Transitions were also challenging for her. At first, Jaylee would lower her head while eating and meticulously crumble her food, eating only a fraction of what was on her plate. She had little interest in using utensils and needed extra support to navigate daily routines.

However, with the support of our dedicated team, Jaylee began to make remarkable progress. She developed strong, trusting connections with her caregivers through tactile interactions and gradually began holding toys for longer periods of time, exploring them more thoughtfully. Jaylee learned to hold a cup with minimal support and started moving around the classroom with more confidence, exploring her environment with just a little help. Her ability to communicate also grew, as she began babbling sounds and producing simple words like "No" and "Ma".

One of her biggest victories was learning to manage transitions more smoothly. With the help of tactile cues, Jaylee began to understand what would happen next, which led to fewer meltdowns and more emotional regulation. Her family was especially proud of her progress with eating – Jaylee now uses utensils with ease, separating larger pieces of

food rather than crumbling them, and she can tolerate and enjoy different textures, like noodles and meatballs, at the same time.

Jaylee's journey wouldn't have been possible without the incredible support of our dedicated team of therapists and educators. We work not only in the classroom but also collaborate with families to ensure Jaylee's success continues at home. The transformation we've seen in her is a testament to her perseverance, the love and dedication of her family, and the holistic approach we take to empower children and their families to thrive.

Today, Jaylee's family is full of pride and joy, seeing their daughter grow stronger, more confident, and more capable each day. The future is bright for Jaylee, and we are honored to be part of her incredible journey!

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Vision Forward does not discriminate against any eligible client because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or veteran status. Vision Forward shall take action to ensure that eligible clients are served without regard to the above-named characteristics. Upon request, support will be given to assist families who do not speak English so that we can ensure full understanding of their child's progress throughout the program.

HOURS OF OPERATION

General hours of operation are Monday through Friday 8am-4pm. Please see individual programs for specific program hours. If Vision Forward will be closed, or classes cancelled due to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances, please watch for school closing information on Channel 4 or 12 or listen to WTMJ 620 AM. Cancellation information may also be available through phone call or text at **414-403-6178**.

All Staff are encouraged to use their paid time off time throughout the year. Missed sessions for vacation or illness will be rescheduled whenever possible.

ENROLLMENT

Caregivers and Early Education Program staff will determine which small group is right for each child. Group enrollment may vary depending on a variety of factors, such as child's developmental level, family goals to be addressed, desired number of days per week, tolerated length of group time, and other reasons.

Vision Forward staff will conduct an orientation with our new families and arrange a tour of the classrooms and meet our team. Within 1 week of orientation, all required intake paperwork must be filled out, including consents for all medical records and outside professionals your child sees. We request these records to ensure carryover and to monitor for any medical conditions that require additional specialized care. If you are not comfortable with sharing this information, we reserve the right to assist with an alternative placement, as these records are very important for the wellbeing of your child.

Each family will be given a yearly contract to sign that designates the cost of services. Any changes to enrollment and/or rate require that a new contract be signed. All Early Education sessions will continuously run every 8 weeks. There are six, 8-week sessions per year. When an annual contract is signed, all children are automatically enrolled in all 6 consecutive sessions for the year. If a family wishes to discontinue services or skip a specific session within the year, a **written notice one month in advance** is requested.

If your child is receiving therapies, please bring the most recent copy of your insurance card. If your child has CLTS funding, please request funding prior to enrollment in our

Early Education Program. Failure to pay session fees within the first week of enrollment may result in suspension of contract and holds on services. All registration materials must be received at least 4 weeks prior to enrollment.

Children enrolled in the *EYE Learn* program are given priority for any available spaces in the therapy/NAVI program, providing an added opportunity for continued support and therapeutic intervention when appropriate.

SYSTEM OF PAYMENT

Insurance

To keep our records current regarding insurance coverage for your child, we need to make a copy of your insurance card twice a year. ***If there are any changes in your insurance coverage, please let Cindi Gutbrod, Financial Specialist, know as soon as they occur.*** Occasionally, private insurance companies will send reimbursements directly to the parents. Should you receive a check, please contact Cindi Gutbrod at (414) 615-0105 or cgutbrod@vision-forward.org to discuss options for getting the payment(s) to Vision Forward. Any bills for services that you receive payment for directly from your insurance company become your responsibility. For further details, please review and sign the Assignment of Insurance Form included in the enrollment packet.

Children's Long Term Waiver Support

The Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Waiver Program is a Home and Community-Based Service (HCBS) Waiver that funds community supports and services for children who have substantial limitations in their daily activities and need support to remain in their home or community. Eligible children include those with developmental disabilities, severe emotional disturbances, and physical disabilities. Funding can be used to support a range of different services based on an assessment of the needs of the child and his or her family. Contact the county agency where you live and let them know you are interested in services for your child. Vision Forward can also assist with helping to get your family connected with these services. See page 33 *Community Resources for Families* for additional information.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers that assist in our early education and therapy programs are interviewed and carefully screened before serving under the direct supervision of the classroom teachers and therapists. We follow the same background check and fingerprinting procedures for volunteers as we do with staff. Parents or guardians are welcome to inquire about volunteer opportunities.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Any program participant who has reason to believe that she/he has been mistreated, denied services or discriminated against, may file a grievance.

We realize that differences of opinion or concerns will occasionally arise and we encourage you to share this information with us so we can work cooperatively to find a resolution. All concerns or complaints will remain confidential and shared only with the parties involved.

Definition of a grievance:

- Matters pertaining to physical or mental wellbeing.
- Matters involving the violation of any stated client right.
- Matters involving the right of any client to humane care and treatment.

If you have a concern, you may talk directly to the staff member involved. Select a mutually agreed upon time to discuss the situation. Present your view point clearly. If your matter is not resolved directly with the staff member, please address your concern with the appropriate supervisor for the staff member or see the Program Director. If resolution has not occurred through the informal process, you may take your grievance to the formal stage.

Formal:

If your concern is not resolved, you may complete the Grievance Form, available on the parent bulletin board or with the Human Resources Director and turn it into the Human Resources Director. Your form will be reviewed by the Human Resources Director and other appropriate Directors and a member of the Vision Forward leadership team will respond to your concern within five (5) business days. You will be asked if you discussed the concern with the staff member that was involved prior to making an appointment with the Human Resources Director. If you have not, you will be referred to the staff member, unless you can clearly identify a reason to not speak to the staff member directly involved. The Human Resources Director will make every attempt to solve this matter between all parties.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

All personnel are trained on child abuse and neglect identification, reporting and prevention. As Mandated Reporters, we are required by law to report any suspected child abuse to Child Protective Services with or without consent from a parent or guardian. Reportable child abuse can be in any form: physical, emotional, sexual, verbal or neglect. If your child has an injury, please notify the teacher when he/she arrives. All injuries are documented in the medical log by law.

SMOKING POLICY/PARKING

Vision Forward is a smoke free campus. There is no smoking in any areas of the building or parking lots.

Parking is available in the front of the Vision Forward building. If the lot is full, you may pull in front of the building to drop off your child. Please see a staff member for information about additional parking.

MEDICAL RECORDS

The team of professionals at Vision Forward want to be informed about your child's health status. Before your child was enrolled, we asked for your written permission for medical records. To keep up to date on current medical treatments and recommendations, we may again request your permission to obtain records on an ongoing basis to provide the best services possible. If permission is not granted we reserve the right to discharge from any and all services. In accordance with HIPAA (the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) Vision Forward has established a privacy policy. All families received a copy at the time of enrollment. A copy is always available upon request.

Please inform your child's teacher, therapist, and/or the center director of any changes in your child's medical status and of any planned medical procedures or appointments you have scheduled for your child.

The staff will also want to keep your child's doctors aware of goals and progress. At times, it will be necessary for a therapist to speak with your child's doctor by telephone. Therapists will send progress notes to your child's pediatrician. Reports completed by teachers will be sent to CLTS (if used by the family as a funding source). If you would like any other physicians or providers to receive information, contact Colleen Kickbush, Director of Children's Services, at (414) 615-0160 to make this arrangement.

MEDICATION (Prescription and Non-Prescription)

At Vision Forward, the safety of every child is our highest priority. For this reason, medications or any items labeled "keep out of reach of children" may not be stored in a child's backpack or cubby. If a child arrives with medication, families are asked to notify staff immediately so the item can be secured in a locked cabinet.

All prescription medications must be provided in their original pharmacy-labeled packaging and must not be expired. This ensures both safety and accurate identification.

Please note that only a child's caregiver is permitted to administer medication. Vision Forward staff are not able to administer prescription or non-prescription medications under any circumstances.

Please do not leave any form of medication in your child's backpack or cubby.

ABSENCES

Please call or text **414-403-6178** if your child will be absent. You are welcome to call us outside of regular business hours to leave a message. Please note that this may go to voicemail but will be checked at least three times a day.

Your child's schedule has been developed to best meet his/her developmental and educational goals. Teachers and therapists count on your child being present as planned and set schedules accordingly. Although we recognize that every child will be absent from time to time due to illness or unforeseen circumstances, please try to make medical and other appointments on days when your child is not scheduled to be at Vision Forward. Do take time off to spend with your family as needed; however, please notify us in advance so that we may coordinate our education and therapy schedules.

If your child is absent and we are not notified of the absence, we will contact you to determine the reason for the absence.

ILLNESS

The safety and wellbeing of all staff, children, and the families at Vision Forward Association continues to be of utmost importance to us. We always commit to taking all precautions toward keeping children and staff safe and healthy. ***Please notify Vision Forward at 414-403-6178 within 24 hours if your child has a contagious illness, including COVID-19, or any of the listed communicable diseases. Vision Forward staff will notify you if your child has been exposed to a contagious illness by phone or in writing.***

Children will be monitored for signs or symptoms of illness daily. **If your child exhibits any of the following, please have your child stay at home until symptom free (and/or on antibiotics) for 24 hours. Children will be asked to stay home or return home if any of the following applies:**

- Fever of 100.4 or higher
- Diarrhea or vomiting (one or more in a 24-hour period)
- Unidentified rash
- Any other potentially contagious illnesses or infections as outlined in the Wisconsin Communicable Disease Chart (below)

Communicable diseases include, but are not limited to:

Chicken pox	German Measles	Infections Hepatitis	RSV
Measles	Lice	Poliomyelitis	Pink Eye
Ringworm	Scarlet Fever	Whooping Cough	Strep Throat
Diphtheria	Meningitis	Hand/Foot/Mouth	Thrush
Impetigo	Mononucleosis	Mumps	

HOLIDAYS AND CLOSURES

In addition to holidays, our program will be closed on the following days:

2025-2026 Children's Program Calendar

2025-2026 Program Year begins Tuesday, September 2, 2025

EVENT	DATE(S)
CLASSROOM PREP DAYS	August 25-28, 2025
LABOR DAY	Monday, September 1, 2025
THANKSGIVING	Thur, November 27, 2025 & Fri, November 28, 2025
HOLIDAY BREAK	December 24-26, & Thur, January 1 and Fri. January 2nd 2026 Return 1/5/26
MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY	Mon, January 19, 2026
MEMORIAL DAY	Mon, May 25, 2026
CLASSROOM PREP DAYS	August 26-28, 2026

COMMUNITY OUTINGS AND SCHOOL EVENTS

Exact dates and times will be communicated through our family folders, email, and/or text message.

EVENT	DATE(S)
FAMILY ORIENTATION	September 3, 2025
OPEN HOUSE & HOLIDAY PARTY	December 31, 2025
SPRING FESTIVAL	April 11, 2026
JCC RAINBOW DAY CAMP	July 27-30, 2026
EARLY EDUCATION GRADUATION	August 20, 2026

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Routines are very important in our lives. Children do their best when they know what is expected and what is coming next. We encourage families to arrive on time and put on any orthotics or Spio vests before coming to school. This allows your child time to become acclimated and sets up routines to ease transitions into the classroom. If your child uses a wheelchair or special seating, please bring it each day and take it home every evening.

Because children served by the Children's Program have unique needs, individualized plans for the child's care and developmental needs are created with each family. These plans ensure that the educational and therapeutic goals are consistent with family's goals and reflect each child's unique needs. We encourage multi-disciplinary teamwork and collaboration between our professional staff and parents/caretakers.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Communicating with each other helps us best serve your child. It is important that we communicate daily concerning the needs and interests of each child. Each child is given a daily note to help us stay in touch with you. The daily note contains basic information about your child's day.

If there are issues or concerns that need to be discussed, parents are encouraged to arrange a convenient time to discuss the matter in detail with the appropriate teacher, therapist or other Vision Forward Association staff member. To foster communication on a regular basis, our program provides scheduled parent/caretaker/family conferences, resources, workshops, service provider direct contact information and opportunities for daily conversations. Virtual meetings are also available.



FAMILY CONFERENCES

Conferences will be held in March and October. Once a year each family will have a full team meeting and one with the teacher and family. Progress will be discussed, new goals set and information about the Wisconsin Model Learning Standards and Unique Curriculum that we use will be given. You will receive an invitation inviting you to the conference along with suggestions for how to prepare to participate in this meeting. Please be sure to contact us if you have any questions prior to your family conference.

VISION FORWARD RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

VISION FORWARD FAMILY MATCH

We understand that there are some areas in which talking directly to a family or caregiver who is facing similar experiences to yours may be beneficial. If you would like more information on our family match program or if you would like to be a mentor to a family, please call our Director of Children's Services, Colleen Kickbush at (414) 615-0160.

VISION FORWARD FAMILY CONNECTIONS: DISCUSSION, EDUCATION and SUPPORT

Our family support group gives you the opportunity to make connections with other parents and caregivers. This group meets in-person and/or virtually every month. You'll find support, encouragement, and a safe place to share not only concerns, but joys and successes as well. In addition to our support group are also family education topics, like Adaptive Toys, Transitions, Intro to Braille, Orientation and Mobility and more. For more information about the parent meetings or to suggest topics for discussion, please contact our Director of Children's Services, Colleen Kickbush at 414-615-0160.

VISION FORWARD FAMILY FACEBOOK GROUP

This Vision Forward Parents Facebook Group is for families of children in Vision Forward Association's Children's Program or alumni of our program. Look for upcoming event and class information, as well as valuable resources. This group will also welcome questions and comments related to your child's development and family networking. If you have any concerns about Vision Forward or the services we provide, we ask that you contact our staff directly. We can then follow up with you privately to find out more about how we can remedy the situation and find a positive solution.

Please email Rachel Green at rgreen@vision-forward.org if you would like to join our group.

VISION FORWARD SOCIAL MEDIA

You can stay connected to Vision Forward via social media in the following ways:

<https://www.instagram.com/visionforwardmke/>
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXEVOemUjD2YESISLzC0uA>
<https://www.facebook.com/VisionForwardAssociation>
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/vision-forward-association>

VISION FORWARD TOYS & TOOLS FAMILY LENDING LIBRARY



Finding the right toys and tools for children with visual impairments can be challenging—and expensive. Many store-bought toys don't meet the needs of children with vision loss, especially those with additional disabilities. That's why Vision Forward offers a Family Lending Library filled with specially selected and adapted toys, tools, and resources to support your child's learning, play, and independence.

Families can borrow items to:

- Try out adapted toys and tools before purchasing
- Support motor, sensory, and independent play skills
- Access specialty resources that may otherwise be hard to find or costly

Our lending library makes it easier for families to explore the right resources at the right time, without the financial stress. To learn more or check out what's available, please contact our Children's Program Support Specialist, Barb Larson-Waldrop, at (414) 615-0146 or bwaldrop@vision-forward.org.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

PUBLIC BUS TRANSPORTATION

Vision Forward is accessible by bus on the Milwaukee County Transit System on the Gold Line and Route 64. For more information about bus routes and schedules please call the Milwaukee County Transit System at (414) 344-6711 or check out their website at www.RideMCTS.com.

MEDICAL TRANSPORT

A family may use Medical Transport or mileage reimbursement to transport their child to and from Vision Forward for services and/or medical therapies. A child must be enrolled in Medicaid. To determine eligibility and learn more, visit [Medicaid: Non-Emergency Medical Transportation | Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#)

CHILDREN'S LONG-TERM SUPPORT (CLTS) WAIVER PROGRAM

[Children's Long-Term Support Program | Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#)

Children who have a severe physical, developmental, or emotional disability may be eligible for the CLTS program. Vision Forward Staff can assist with contact information and application for this program in your county. The program can provide assistance as a payer of last resort for supports your child may need as a result of their disability. Children must meet the following criteria to be eligible for the program:

- Child has a disability determination from SSI Medicaid, Katie Beckett Medicaid or State Waiver Medicaid
- Child meets financial requirements in accordance with Medicaid guidelines
- Child must meet a level of care as determined through an assessment and functional screen. Children who are diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, which includes Autism, Pervasive Developmental Delays or Asperger's, must meet additional requirements to be eligible for specialized treatment programs.

Family Connect

www.familyconnect.org

Brought to you by the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) and the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI), the Family Connect site contains a wealth of information including articles, message boards and links to further resources.

Hadley School for the Blind

www.hadley.edu

The Hadley School for the Blind promotes independent living through courses and on-line seminars for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, their families and service providers. Topics include child development, the human eye, Braille instruction and parenting children with multiple disabilities.

Perkins School for the Blind Webcasts

www.perkins.org/resources/webcasts/

These free recorded webcasts offer you the opportunity to tune in to topics of interest at your convenience including raising a child with disabilities, good sleep strategies, CHARGE Syndrome, mealtime skills, social skills and more.

WonderBaby.org

www.wonderbaby.org

WonderBaby.org, a project funded by Perkins School for the Blind, is dedicated to helping parents of young children with vision impairments as well as children with multiple disabilities. Here you'll find a database of articles written by parents WHO share with others what they've learned about playing with and teaching a blind child, as well as links to meaningful resources and ways to connect with other families. It also has an on-line newsletter and offers frequent opportunities to register for free giveaways

Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

<https://www.tsbvi.edu/>

Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) has an array of programs and resources for students who are blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind. We also provide support for families in the form of online courses, consultations, publications, and in-person trainings.

TRANSITION TO PUBLIC/PRIVATE SCHOOL FROM VISION FORWARD

Transitioning from Vision Forward to another school may seem like a daunting process. Because each child is unique, school readiness looks different for each child and their educational plans must reflect that. We would like to be there to assist you in making those plans. Beginning at enrollment and continuing at each family conference, your family will have the opportunity to create goals that move your child towards their version of school readiness. This transition can happen at any time you feel your child is ready but must take place by September 1st in the year your child turns 6. Families can choose to remain connected after leaving Vision Forward through school age programming. Transition services include:

- Referral to public school and the IEP process
- Attendance at IEP meetings, if applicable.
- Compilation of records for the IEP process and/or other school requirements
- Transition to private/charter school and continued services
- Future Vision Forward school age programming options or events



CHILDREN'S PROGRAM STAFF

Colleen Kickbush, Director of Children's Services
Early Intervention Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)
(414) 615-0160 • cell (414) 403-8683 • ckickbush@vision-forward.org

Barb Larson-Waldrop, Children's Program Support Specialist
(414) 615-1146 • bwaldrop@vision-forward.org

Cindi Gutbrod, Financial Services Coordinator / Billing Specialist
(414) 615-0105 • cgutbrod@vision-forward.org

Johanna Guzman, Early Education Teacher (Bilingual)
(414) 615-0167 • jguzman@vision-forward.org

Danita Wendorf, Early Education Paraprofessional
Occupational Therapist (OTR/L)
(414) 615-0100 • dwendorf@vision-forward.org

Katie Griffin, Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)
Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS)
(414) 405-6228 • kgriffin@vision-forward.org

Dana Lien, Early Intervention Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)
(414) 391-8448 • dlien@vision-forward.org

Janet Fox, Early Education Teacher
(414) 403-8437 • jfox@vision-forward.org

Tina Mekeel, Early Intervention Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)
Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS)
Certified Assistive Technology Specialist (CATIS)
(414) 331-9712 • tmekeel@vision-forward.org

Jenna Zubella, Physical Therapist (DPT, ATC)
(414) 405-9750 • jschroeder@vision-forward.org

Pam Grefsheim, Speech & Language Pathologist (MS, CCC-SLP)
(414) 405-5332 • pgrefsheim@vision-forward.org

Philip Maio, Occupational Therapist (MOT, OTR/L)
(414) 615-0100 • pmaio@vision-forward.org

Sage Shemak, Music Therapist (MT-BC)
(414) 405-5332 • sshemak@vision-forward.org

Robin Ekstrom, Early Intervention Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)
rekstrom@vision-forward.org

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Early Education Attendance Line
(414) 403-6178 (Text/Call)

Vision Forward Children's Services
(414) 615-0160 • FAX: (414) 238-2261

Vision Forward General Information
(414) 615-0100



Monday-Friday: 10:00 am–3:30 pm or by appointment

Phone: (414) 615-0111

E-mail: info@vision-forward.org

www.vision-forward.org/store

Stop by the Vision Forward Store at Vision Forward Association and discover hundreds of products designed to help people of all ages adapt to vision loss.

Our product selection is constantly changing and includes items especially geared toward children such as:

- **Adapted toys and games**
- **Talking watch with Velcro band**
- **Bar magnifiers**
- **Talking penguin clock**
- **Braille books**
- **Adapted utensils and cups**

RECEIPT OF HANDBOOK

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and will abide by the policies and procedures in the Vision Forward Family Handbook.

Caregiver Name: _____

Caregiver Signature: _____

Date: _____