



# The Beacon

## The Newsletter of the Wisconsin Deafblind Technical Assistance Project

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### 4th Annual WDBTAP Art Show



The 4th Annual WDBTAP Art Show will be February 21st at 6:00 PM. The art show is open to all WDBTAP students. Send us a picture or video of your art work and your artist to be included.

Art can include any school projects, performing arts video, fiber crafts, 2D or 3D art, whatever you can dream up! All participants will receive a viewing night prize package. Register by January 31st using this [Microsoft Form](#). Send your photos to [Jennifer.gettelman@wesp-dhh.wi.gov](mailto:Jennifer.gettelman@wesp-dhh.wi.gov)



### Register Now for WDBTAP Family Day

Registration is open for the WDBTAP Family Day, April 12, 2025 at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells.



Dr. Kasee Stratton-Gadke will be joining us with a special presentation on understanding and addressing challenging behaviors in children with deafblindness. Child care will be provided during the presentation and all WDBTAP families are eligible to have their meals, hotel room and water park passes covered for April 12th. To learn more and register visit the [WDBTAP website](#) or use the QR code. If you have questions or concern please contact us at 608-356-2023 or [wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov](mailto:wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov)



### Your Help is needed with the 2024 Child Count

WDBTAP is required by the Office of Special Education Programming (OSEP), to submit an annual child count. This information is reported using a unique code so no names are reported and no child can be identified. To participate in WDBTAP programming and training opportunities an annual child count does need to be on file for each child. You can submit a child count for 2024 using the QR code below or this link to a [Microsoft form](#). You can learn more about the [WDBTAP child count on our website](#). If you have questions or concern please contact us at 608-356-2023 or [wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov](mailto:wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov)



### Join the WDBTAP Teen Group

Are you a deafblind young adult between the ages of 14 - 21 wanting to meet new friends?

Join the WDBTAP teen club. The teen club meets on zoom the first and third Thursdays of ever month, come join the fun! Register using this link to a [Microsoft forms](#), the QR code below or text or call 608-356-2023 or [wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov](mailto:wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov)



# Things I Didn't Know About Guardianship (But I Wish I Did)

By Jodi Anderson, WDBTAP Family Engagement Coordinator

When I began the guardianship process for my child, there were many things I didn't know, here's what I learned:



**Cost of Guardianship:** Some counties in Wisconsin are able to assist with the guardianship costs based on you and your child's income and the county's resources. Unfortunately this was not an option for us, so we were responsible for the following fees.

## Estimated Fees

<b>Lawyer Costs</b>	\$250-\$350 per hour, \$3000 - \$6000 Estimated Total
<b>Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)</b>	\$75 - \$250 per hour (The GAL represents your child's best interest in court)
<b>Filing Costs</b>	\$35 Electronic \$70 in Person
<b>Certified Copies</b>	\$1.25 Per Page (They are needed for healthcare facilities, ADRC staff, and the Social Security Administration)



**Tip:** check with your employer to see if there are legal benefits you can sign up for at your open enrollment. My employer had a **Met Life Legal benefit** which covered the lawyer's fee, so we only had to pay for the GAL, filing fees, and copy fees.

**Guardianship Timeline:** You cannot start the guardianship process until your child is 17 years and 6 months old. Here's an overview of the process:



- 1. Examining Physician/Psychologist Report:** Your child's doctor will need to fill out the Examining Physician or Psychologist Report (Form GN-3130), which can be found on the [Wisconsin Courts website](#). For us, our rehab physician at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, who had known my child since he was 4, completed this form.
- 2. Legal Documents:** Your lawyer will need this report, and they will also ask many detailed questions about your child. There are several other forms to complete, some of which need to be signed in front of a notary (your bank is a good place to do this).
- 3. Waiting Period:** After submitting the forms, there's a waiting period of several months. About 2–3 months before your child turns 18, your lawyer will file the necessary paperwork, and a court date will be scheduled. Depending on your county, this could take 45–90 days.
- 4. The Hearing:** Your child may or may not be required to attend the hearing—this is up to the GAL. For our case, my child was present for his hearing. The hearing was brief and involved only the judge, a court stenographer, both lawyers, my husband, my child, and me. Our backup guardian, who lives in Eau Claire, attended the hearing via Zoom.

Because the case was uncontested, the hearing itself lasted only 15 minutes. I hope this breakdown helps you better understand the guardianship process. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out.

## Build Your Family Voice

By Jodi Anderson, WDBTAP Family Engagement Coordinator

Join us April 12, 2025 at Family Day to learn how to build your Family Voice story. Jodi Anderson and Rose Bandt will share their stories and help you create your story. Families are the experts of their children and need time to think about their journey. How can you benefit from sharing your story? It helps you:

- Reflect on your experiences and process what you have learned since your child's birth and diagnosis

- Connect with other families with deafblind children
- Share your expertise and knowledge with others.
- Build confidence in telling your story in various ways for various people (IEP meetings, school administrators, extended family, trainings for other families and professionals)
- Be a voice for other families that are not yet able to tell their story.

Never underestimate the power of YOUR story. Stories can change hearts and minds, don't underestimate the power of YOUR voice!

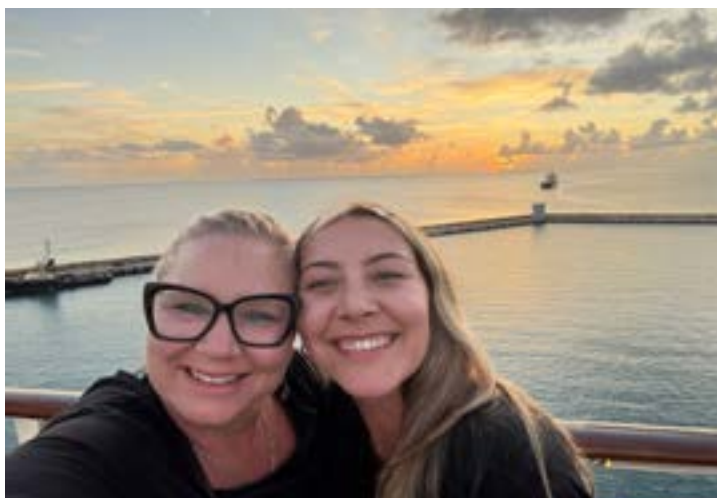
# Cruising with the Deafblind Community

By Marcy Jo Morford-Esmili, WDBTAP Office Associate

This fall I had the opportunity to be an interpreter for deafblind adults on a cruise. This experience was incredibly rich and eye-opening expanding my perspective on the deafblind community and highlighted the importance of providing tailored accommodations to meet the diverse needs of individuals.

On this cruise, each deafblind adult had two deaf interpreters and a hearing interpreter available for all shows, excursions, and events. The accommodations were customized to meet each person's specific needs, based on their individual level of vision impairment, which ranged from Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) to low vision or complete blindness. For example, one of the accommodations requested was protactile communication, which involves tactile sign language and other touch-based methods to ensure effective communication.

Participants had the option to sign up for a wide range of excursions, including strenuous hiking to a waterfall, zip-lining, taking an open lift up a mountain, enjoying a beach day, visiting botanical gardens, participating in a chocolate workshop, wine tastings, and riding a catamaran. On board the ship, some people also joined in activities like bingo, gambling, learning to dance, water volleyball, enjoying the spa, and attending comedy, magic, and vocal performances. Deaf and hearing interpreters worked together to provide accommodations during travel and transit between destinations, ensuring that deafblind participants were fully informed about the journey, the surroundings, and any points of interest.



Every night at dinner, deafblind individuals had the option to meet in groups where the interpreters would provide information about the evening's menu. This allowed them to make informed choices about their meal options.

Many deafblind individuals traveled with a co-navigator, someone who assisted them in navigating the cruise and engaging in various activities. A co-navigator helps by offering mobility assistance and real-time information, while also fostering independence and engagement in activities.

If you are planning a cruise with your family, it's important to remember that you can request specific accommodations for your child or loved one. This might include protactile communication, ASL interpreters, or haptic feedback, depending on their needs. It's best to request these accommodations at least 90 days in advance to ensure everything is arranged properly.

On the last day of the cruise, our role was to meet with each deafblind participant in their room and guide them off the ship, ensuring they didn't get lost and had all the information they needed as they disembarked.

I was able to share this experience with my daughter who went as a hearing interpreter. Working with the deafblind population was new for her also. We would both jump at the chance to do this again. This experience has sparked a strong desire for me to learn more about the accommodations available to deafblind individuals. I am now pursuing training in Braille, Internet accessibility, and protactile interpreting. This experience has not only been enriching for me professionally but has also deepened my understanding and respect for the deafblind community.

## Lending Library Resources

The WDBTAP Lending Library provides toys, learning aids and training materials for students, parents and professionals. These items can be loaned for up to 3 months at no cost to you. Visit [the WDBTAP Website](#) to see these or any WDBTAP materials. Send us a message at [wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov](mailto:wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov) or call 608-356-2023 to make a borrowing request.

### Storyboxes

Storybox kits come with a copy of the book, the book in braille, link to ASL vocabulary videos, activity guide, objects from the story and more. Available titles include Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus, If You Give a Mouse a Cookie, Dragons Love Tacos and more. To get a box mailed to you email [Jennifer.Gettelman@wesp-dhh.wi.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Gettelman@wesp-dhh.wi.gov)



## Resource Corner

### National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled

The National Library Service For the Blind and Print Disabled Library of Congress (NLS) offers a free braille and talking book library service for people with a disability that prevents them from using regular print material. NLS circulates books and magazines in braille and audio formats that are instantly downloadable to a personal device or delivered by mail free of charge. Learn more by visiting their [website](#).



We have enjoyed working with you this past year. We wish you all a wonderful holiday season and look forward to serving you in 2025. Happy Holidays from the WDBTAP team

## What Types of Technical Assistance does WDBTAP provide?

- Parent/Family trainings and assistance in connecting families with one another
- Statewide and regional workshops for service providers and families
- Observation, support and coaching in programming for children
- Intensive deafblind training series for paraprofessionals who work one on one with children and youth who are deafblind
- Assistance in identifying children and youth who are deafblind
- Referral to relevant local, regional and national agencies
- Lending library with materials, equipment and toys to benefit deafblind children/youth on the child count

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WESP-DHH  
**Wisconsin Deafblind  
Technical Assistance Project**  
WDBTAP

### Connect with WDBTAP

#### Phone

608-356-2023

#### Email

[wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov](mailto:wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov)

[wesp-dhh.wi.gov/wdbtap](http://wesp-dhh.wi.gov/wdbtap)



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You can view this version of The Beacon, along with past issues on our website at [wesp-dhh.wi.gov/wdbtap/newsletter](http://wesp-dhh.wi.gov/wdbtap/newsletter) or by scanning the QR code.

