



The Beacon

The Newsletter of the Wisconsin Deafblind Technical Assistance Project

Volume 13, Issue 3

September 2023



WDBTAP Family Day!

October 21st is WDBTAP family day at [Holiday Inn in Madison](#). Join us for a day of fun, friendship and learning.

We will begin the day with an accessible dance class for WDBTAP kids and their siblings. Lunch will be provided at the hotel while you have the opportunity to meet and talk with WDBTAP staff.

In the afternoon we will go bowling and enjoy pizza at Schwoegler Park Towne Lanes. If you still have energy enjoy an evening at the indoor waterpark where you can spend time with new friends and your family. The best part is the event is free for all families that have a child on the WDBTAP child count. To learn more or register for the event please use the QR code or the [google form located here](#).



Family Day at Lambeau Field

By: Jen Gettelman, WDBTAP Deafblind Consultant

The hottest day of the summer didn't stop WDBTAP families from having a great time at the Outreach for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind's Packer Event in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The day began with Packers players being escorted to the practice field by some of their youngest fans. Many of the players rode the kids' bikes or scooters while the kids walked or ran beside them carrying the player's helmet. Everyone was able to watch practice while trying to cool down with water and hand held Packers' fans. At the end of practice, families lined up to get the player's autographs.

Family Day Continued on Page 3

Midwest Transition Institute 2023

Four Wisconsin teens got the experience of a lifetime this summer at MTI in St. Louis Missouri. Check it out on pages 2 & 3

Medicaid and BadgerCare Renewals: The Public Health Emergency Has Ended

As part of the COVID pandemic relief efforts, the state has not terminated people from their Medicaid or BadgerCare coverage for the past three years, even if their eligibility had changed. With the end of the public health emergency in May, state and federal programs, like Medicaid and Medicaid Waiver programs (CLTS, Family Care and IRIS) are going back to their regular rules and policies.

Annual renewals and eligibility determinations have begun. In most cases, all those covered have been assigned a renewal month between June 2023 and May

2024.

Your child's CLTS Support and Service Coordinator can help you take the needed steps to stay enrolled. In March you should have received a letter from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) with your child's renewal month. If you did not receive a letter or it was misplaced:

Call Forward Health at 1-800-362-3002 (the number on the back of your card) or contact your county's consortium (information found online at dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/imagency/index.htm)

Approximately two weeks before your renewal month, you will receive a packet in the mail from DHS. Complete these prefilled forms and return them promptly or contact your county agency to have any questions answered.

Learn more / watch videos at: safetyweb.org/healthwatchwi/unwinding.html

Midwest Transition Institute (MTI) 2023

Four Wisconsin high school students and their mothers got the opportunity to attend MTI at Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri this July. The event was a full weekend of education, fun, presentations and resources revolving around young adults who have combined hearing and vision loss. Fourteen participants and their families from across the Midwest stayed in the dormitories of Webster University and walked the campus buildings where presentations and activities were offered.

The Missouri Deafblind Project collaborated with a local SSP-Support Service Provider

agency who provided the event with a team of SSP's, interpreters, a CDI -Certified Deaf Interpreter, and volunteers. In addition CART, braille and large print were available during presentations, so the attendees could experience and decide if one or all of these modes could be utilized in their MTI journey. In all more than 100 people were at the MTI. This included nine deafblind adult mentors who assisted the students and shared their stories of success and challenges. Working with the deafblind mentors, parents were able to see their success and how happy and fulfilled they were in their lives. Mentors modeled what is possible as deafblind students transition into the adult world. One Wisconsin mother stated it really changed her perspective on what her child's future could be.

Presentations included:

- a tour of the campus with orientation and mobility specialist
- a panel of professors from Webster University
- the American Printing House-APH showed products and assistive technology for transitioning into college or careers
- FAFSA and scholarships,
- a self-defense demonstration
- yoga each morning
- a presentation on the legal differences between the ADA/IDEA with adult transition, plus more!



The Wisconsin participants at MTI.

In addition, on Saturday evening, two buses arrived to transport the entire crowd to the St. Louis "MUNY," America's oldest and largest outdoor musical theater. The Muny provided two interpreters with a seating section near the stage for those who needed ASL access. The Muny also offered the group two different types of headsets. One was an amplification device to enhance the voices on stage. The other headset offered a descriptive version of what was happening on stage. It described the background, the costumes and the movements of the actors. Theatergoers encouraged each other to try either or both of the headsets. This opportunity was helpful to both the students and their families. Many had not had the opportunity to experience these

types of assistive technology.

Sid, A Wisconsin student that attended MTI for the second time gave his perspective, "MTI is a great experience for hard of hearing and/or visually impaired teens to experience and learn about college. You will also be able to meet other people with a disability just like you and you will get to see first hand how a college works. If you need an accommodation for any reason, MTI has a handful of staff that can help you including: sign language interpreters, sighted guides, captionists, and other people. When you are at MTI, you will be staying in the dorm rooms as if you were going to college. They will pair you with another teen or with your parents. This is a great way to meet other people like you and to be more independent. You will learn about different dorms. I love this part because this tests me to see if I can do things by myself and become more independent."

Sid's mother provided her perspective, "I just wanted to say how very much we appreciate all the work that went into making MTI happen, and to you all at WDBTAP for encouraging us to go last year for the first time. Sid was absolutely in heaven talking to peers, and said "These are my FRIENDS, and they UNDERSTAND because they are just like me!"

MTI Continued on Page 3



A picnic dinner before the play.

And I can't say enough about all the great information and just the camaraderie being with other parents of deafblind kids; it's just like Sid said. No one else gets it, and it is so amazing just being with other people who do."Another student who attended MTI stated "My favorite part of MTI was learning to use a SSP (Support Service Provider). It was the first time I had heard of SSPs and the first time I was able to use one. The SSP helped me to know what was on the floor so I didn't trip and also helped lead me when it was hard to see. The SSPs don't let you get lost or get hurt. They help you

by seeing what you cannot see. I would like to be able to have access to using an SSP especially when it is dark. I am on the volleyball team and we have socials after some of the games against other schools. I have to walk in the dark in a place I don't know. No one leads me to where I need to go. I get lost, I trip and almost fall, I bang into things and get hurt. It would be nice to be able to use an SSP at school and in the community. I wouldn't feel so scared.

MTI was a very good experience. I was able to learn more about what I need to do to get ready to go to college and get a job. It was a really great opportunity for me. It was the first time I stayed on a college campus and slept in college dorms. I learned a lot about college. I also learned that I need to continue to improve my writing and reading. I am really glad I went to MTI."



Participants using tactile ASL.



Family Day Continued from Page 1

Many of the players came by to sign hats, footballs, jerseys, football helmets and more. The children and their families enjoyed interacting with the different players as their memorabilia was being signed.

After a pizza lunch and some cold water, families had a chance to go on an accessible

tour of Lambeau field and visit the Packers' Hall of Fame. The Packers provided two ASL interpreters for the tour. Additionally, WDBTAP staff provided audio description of what was being highlighted visually on the tour along with providing a sighted guide when requested. Along the tour, the kids enjoyed tactilely exploring football equipment including a player's helmet, shoulder pads and shoes. There was also an opportunity to feel a piece of the material the field is constructed out

of. On the tour the group had the chance to walk through the Packers players' tunnel to the field to look around and take pictures.

At the end of the tour, families were greeted by Derrick Coleman, the first deaf offensive player in the NFL, who is now the assistant to the Director of Player Engagement for the Packers. The children and families were able to visit with Derrick, ask their questions, take pictures and have memorabilia signed. All in all the families enjoyed their time.

One family shared, " We were very impressed with and appreciative of the Packer experience! My son was interested in football for the first time ever, and he had lots of fun!" Outreach for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind and WDBTAP hope to make this an annual event and we hope you can join us next year.



Dreams Come True

By Elizabeth Buhrke, parent of WDBTAP graduate



My son was interested in college until around 8th grade when he decided against it. I had hoped the peer pressure of his classmates might change his mind once they all got to that point in high school but he was still set against it. He had a fantastic guidance counselor though who advised that he make college visits just like his classmates when they were all in their junior year. The guidance counselor thought it was important for my son to know what he was saying no to.

I found a program at Edgewood college in Madison that was specific to students with special needs and integrated them into college life. Through that visit I learned of a similar program that was just starting up on Concordia University Campus in Mequon

and I think it was my son's guidance counselor who told us about Whitewater having world renowned disability support.

Edgewood in Madison is a more established program than Able Light College that runs on Concordia University's campus. My son liked Able Light College more than Edgewood while I liked Edgewood over Able Light. While we were on our visit to Whitewater, Boston College staff were also visiting specifically because of Whitewater's disability supports. They were coming to learn what makes it so fantastic. The size of Whitewater's campus as well as them not having degrees of interest for my son is why he quickly scratched them off his list. Since all of our visits 5 years ago we have also learned of Shepherds College in Union Grove and heard great things about it.

My son finally decided to apply to Able Light College last fall and was accepted earlier this year. He moved in last week and started classes this week. He didn't know what he was getting himself into but it's also a learning curve for them as they've never had a blind student let alone a deafblind one. He is adjusting quite spectacularly and we are really excited for this next chapter in life.

Celebrating Community and Success at the CHARGE Conference

By: Brooke Fula, WI CHARGE liaison & WDBTAP Mom

July marked the 15th biannual CHARGE syndrome conference, where a vibrant community comes together united to celebrate progress and unity. The event illuminated inspiring narratives, fruitful connections, and invaluable insights, reaffirming the collective dedication to understanding and supporting individuals with CHARGE syndrome.

This year's conference served as both a reunion with old friends and a platform to forge new connections. The camaraderie shared among attendees underscored the enduring strength of these collective experiences, extending far beyond the conference itself. A notable highlight was Nicholas, my son, who actively engaged in research, embodying the conference's fundamental mission to advance knowledge about CHARGE syndrome.

Aimee Gruber, another Wisconsin mom and myself achieved a remarkable feat with our 4th bowling



fundraiser, successfully raising over \$10,000. This achievement vividly showcased the potency of collective dedication and its tangible influence on furthering the cause.

As the Wisconsin state liaison, I also have the pleasure of serving the CHARGE community in this capacity. The WDBTAP's invaluable support alleviated financial barriers for Wisconsin families, exemplifying the conference's inclusive spirit. By rendering the event accessible, a larger number of individuals could

partake in its wealth of insights and connections. Workshops, seminars, and discussions provided attendees with fresh perspectives on CHARGE syndrome, fostering a collaborative learning environment that continues to propel the ongoing journey toward enhancing lives.

In essence, the 15th biannual CHARGE syndrome conference emerged as a triumph, uniting a diverse community around shared aspirations. Through connections, fundraising efforts, learning opportunities, and prospects for the future, attendees departed feeling motivated to sustain their positive impact within the CHARGE syndrome community.

Lending Library Resources

The WDBTAP Lending Library provides toys, learning aids and training materials for students, parents and professionals. These items can be borrowed for up to 3 months at no cost to you. All items are cleaned and sterilized before being mailed to any location. Visit wesp-dhh.wi.gov/wdbtap to see these or any WDBTAP materials. Send us a message at wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov or call Jenny at 608-356-2023 to make a borrowing request.

Positional Seating



WDBTAP has different seating options to use in the classroom or at home. The Kinder Kaye Chair, and Go To Seat can all be borrowed for up to three months from the lending library. By borrowing the seats you can see what works best for your child or student before making the invest for yourself.

Total Life Learning: Preparing for Transition



A wonderful curriculum published by the Perkins School for the Blind. The curriculum is for all students with sensory impairment to assist with developing transitioning skills. You can check out the book from us or download a [PDF here](#).

How To Request a Consultation From WDBTAP?

The start of the school year can be overwhelming for everyone and WDBTAP is here to help! WDBTAP supports students at home and school from birth to age 21 who have a combined vision and hearing loss. The best place for questions and answers is to visit our website at wesp-dhh.wi.gov/wdbtap. On our website you can start a consultation request on our homepage by clicking the request for [services or training button](#). The request for service will explain the referral process, what to expect and how to get your student connected with WDBTAP.

If you are not sure your student or child qualifies you can explore the [deafblindness area](#) on our web page which offers the WDBTAP consideration checklist, eligibility chart for services and the Wisconsin definition of deafblindness.

Otherwise just give us a call or send us an email we are always here to talk and love hearing from you, (608)356-2023 or wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov

The Beacon Online

You can view this version of the Beacon along with past issues at our website at wesp-dhh.wi.gov/wdbtap/newsletter or by using this QR code:



WDBTAP Receives OSEP Grant



We are happy to announce that WDBTAP has received another five year grant from the Federal Office of Special Education Programming (OSEP). This grant supports the majority of WDBTAP's work which includes family engagement activities and events, staff positions, supplies, training programs for parents and educators, lending library equipment purchases, deaf mentor, school visits and so much more. We are excited to continue our programming and expand our opportunities. Watch the [WDBTAP Facebook Page](#) and check your email so you do not miss out!

The IEP Snapshot

The online [WDBTAP resource page](#) is a fabulous area to explore. One of the many useful tools you can find there is the IEP Snapshot. The Snapshot is a form that can be filled out by you and your child to share with your school team to help them better understand your child and future goals. You can find the IEP Snapshot by using this link which will take you to the [Google document IEP Snapshot](#).

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 Registry

The contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, H326T230035. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.
Project Officer, Rebecca Sheffield, PhD.Rebecca.Sheffield@ed.gov

WDBTAP TEAM

Ryan Gollner
Project Director

Jolene Gruber
Grant Coordinator

Jen Gettelman
Deafblind Consultant

Jodi Anderson
Family Engagement Coordinator

Jennifer Hudson-Stanek
Office Associate

Marcy Jo Morford
Office Associate

To access active weblink for this newsletter and image descriptions please reference the digital version located at wesp-dhh.wi.gov/wdbtap/newsletter

Page 6



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

WDBTAP
P.O. Box 701
Baraboo, WI 53913

