

BLIND BEGINNINGS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

***Our Mission** is to provide BC children and youth who are blind or visually impaired with the necessary opportunities, experiences, and family and community support to reach their full potential. We seek to challenge the limits of what is deemed possible for blind and visually impaired children and to establish a strong foundation on which to build rich and fulfilling lives. In partnership with organizations that serve blind children, Blind Beginnings carries out our mission through the following programs and services:*

Parent to Parent Support Program 🦋

This program involves training and matching experienced parents with parents who are new to raising a visually impaired child, in order to support and connect them with resources and opportunities available to help maximize their child's academic, social and career success.

Youth Leadership Network 🦋

Participating youth are trained in public speaking, community presentations, mentoring, active listening, organizational skills, time management, team building and leadership. They learn a 'no limits' philosophy to build self-confidence and set challenging personal goals. Youth are matched with younger blind children to provide mentoring and peer support.

FlashSonar/Echolocation Training Workshop 🦋

FlashSonar involves emitting a sound with a tongue click, hand clap or finger snap, and using the return sound that bounces off nearby objects to gather information about one's surroundings. This specialized training will help children and youth who are blind to become more confident and competent in their daily travel, achieving greater independence.

Life Skills Workshops 🦋

A series of workshops offer children and youth who are visually impaired with training in nonverbal communication, 'no-limits' philosophy, organization and time management, braille and adaptive technology, exploration and orientation, survival skills and employment opportunities. Another workshop provides new parents, extended family members and community volunteers with an overview of blindness issues including 'no limits' philosophy, braille and assistive technology, and the importance of exploration and self-discovery.

Community Discovery Outings 🦋

Regular family outings into the community offer blind children real-life, hands-on opportunities to learn about basic concepts and the world of work through visits to local fire stations, farms, and the symphony. A secondary benefit of this program is that it teaches the local community how best to interact with children who are blind or visually impaired.

Blind Beginnings Society
PO Box 42525, RPO Columbia Square
New Westminster, BC V3M 6L7
Phone: 604-434-7243
Website: www.blindbeginnings.ca

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES *continued*

Children, Youth and Family Camps

Blind Beginnings is contracted by the CNIB to plan and implement three summer camps:

- a literacy camp for youth to learn and perfect their braille reading/writing skills
- a camp for teens to learn independence and leadership skills, make new friends and be exposed to assistive technology
- a Creative/Performing Arts camp where children will be introduced to drama, music, creating writing and sculpture

Youth Group

Blind Beginnings is also contracted by the CNIB to provide a monthly drop-in youth group to adolescents with vision loss between the ages of 12 and 18. This is an opportunity for youth to practice some basic daily living and safe travel skills, participate in recreational activities, and share everyday challenges with their peers. Youth participate in activities such as bowling, ice skating, swimming, martial arts, theatre sports, woodworking, cooking, music, rock climbing.


Junior Explorers Club

This Club invites blind children and their sighted siblings to meet once a month to develop friendships with other children experiencing similar life circumstances to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness. At the same time, the unique learning and developmental needs of blind children are addressed to help them develop cognitive, social, creative and coordination skills through sports activities, creative arts, music and other recreation activities.

Counseling and Consultation

Blind Beginnings offers a toll free number to family members, professionals, and the general public in order to provide blindness-related information, resources, and support free of charge. We are also in the process of developing an interactive website, which will become a *virtual home* for children, youth and families to access information and training that will support them where they live, widening our reach at a significantly lower cost.

WHERE WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Any donation of time or money will help Blind Beginnings live out our mission. The programs above that are marked with  are not yet fully funded. We would appreciate any support you could provide. All donations are eligible for a tax receipt. Here are a few designation options...

Financial Opportunities

\$200 will enable a child to attend all 10 Community Discovery outings

\$240 will enable a child and his sibling to participate in the Junior Explorers Club

\$1,500 will enable 30 youth to participate in 'What happens after grad' workshop to be prepared for life after school



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES *continued*

Volunteer Opportunities *(for job descriptions please contact us at 604-434-7243)*

Youth Worker: 5 hours/month

Support Parent: 2-5 hours/month

Fundraising Event Volunteers: 3-5 hours/month

Board member: 3-5 hours/month

Marketing and Public Relations Assistant: 3-5 hours/week

Office Assistant: 8 hours/week

