

Fiscal Year 2012- BEST Program Update

The Texas Legislature originally authorized BEST in 1997, and its only source of funding is a voluntary \$1.00 donation when Texans apply for or renew their Texas driver's license or DPS-issued identification card. The program grew steadily through the first many years, but then donations were impacted by the recession in 2008. Over the past several years, donations have been on the upswing and the program donations are now holding steady

The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services/Division for Blind Services (DARS-DBS) **Blindness Education, Screening, and Treatment (BEST)** Program assists uninsured adult Texas residents with payment for urgently needed eye-medical treatment. The intent of the BEST Program is to prevent blindness, and the program serves qualified individuals with diabetic retinopathy or any other eye disease determined to be an urgent medical necessity by both the applicant's eye doctor and the DBS ophthalmologic consultant or designee.

Currently, there is no one on the waiting list and we are encouraging applications. Ophthalmologists serving areas of Texas that have historically underutilized the program, such as from North, East, West, and Central Texas, are especially encouraged to utilize the program. The application form has recently been simplified and updated to include intravitreal injections.

In fiscal year 2012, the BEST program funded medical/surgical treatment services to **100** individuals that were in immediate danger of losing their sight. Through the BEST Vision Screening program, screening services for **4,287** people were provided in 2012 throughout the state.

Individuals applying for BEST treatment services must apply through their physician. We welcome and encourage your participation in this important program to protect the eyes of Texas. The BEST application and guidelines can be found at www.dars.state.tx.us/dbs/best/index.shtml. If you have any questions about the BEST Program, please call 1-800-628-5115 or e-mail your questions to DARS.Inquiries@dars.state.tx.us