

# Early Intervention Works

It was Meredith's day care provider that suggested we get an ECI evaluation. Through the evaluation, we learned she had gross motor and speech delays. She would cry through each therapy session, but my husband and I would work with her through the week and perform all the strength exercises and activities that the team recommended.

Even though she didn't crawl until she was a year old and didn't walk until 18 months, we continued with ECI and the physical therapy sessions, waiting on Meredith to be ready. One day, she started to run. Not walk. Run.

With the help of ECI and learning sign language, Meredith started to blossom and began to mimic, then she learned how to put two and three words together.

Through the 18 months in the program, Meredith has transformed into a running, jumping, chatty girl that lets you know exactly what she wants. If it weren't for the strong ECI program and the professional therapists, Meredith wouldn't be the confident two-year-old she is today!

## Meredith



- Carrie, Meredith's mom

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Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is a statewide program for families with children, birth to three, with disabilities and developmental delays.

Families and professionals work as a team to plan appropriate services based on the unique needs of the child and family.

Research shows that growth and development are most rapid in the early years of life. Early intervention responds to the critical needs of children and families by:

- promoting development and learning;
- providing support to families;
- coordinating services; and
- decreasing the need for costly special programs.

For more information, visit <http://txchildren.org/ECI>.

**ECI focuses on working with the child and family in their natural environment, such as at home or in a child care center.**

**ECI Services must be fully funded in order to sustain a quality system that reaches children with developmental delays who are in need of services.**

**It is crucial that ECI continues to receive adequate funding to give families the support they need:**

- Without increases in funding, ECI services will not keep up with growth in the number of children needing services, or even maintain current service levels.
- If ECI service levels are not sufficiently funded, children in ECI will not receive the hours of service they need each month.

**If the ECI system is not strengthened:**

- Young children and families will not receive services in time to significantly change the child's trajectory, requiring they access additional, more costly services as the child ages.
- Other systems—such as schools, child welfare, and juvenile justice—will be called on to deal with unaddressed problems that may become more entrenched, difficult, and expensive to treat.
- Texas taxpayers will spend more on interventions later in life, which have less of an impact on a child's future success.

**Ensure families' access to developmental services that adhere to ECI's family-focused model by:**

- Preserving the ECI model—one that is developmental, evidence-based, family-centered, and cost-effective. Movement towards a medical or clinical service model must be avoided.
- Ensuring ECI is appropriated necessary funds to provide services to all children who are eligible.
- Avoiding further restricting of ECI eligibility by funding the ECI Exceptional Items in the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Legislative Appropriations Request. Ensuring that ECI services keep up with caseload growth and provide children with the hours of service they need is key to making sure children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families can access services shown to alter their developmental trajectory.

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