

Early Intervention Works

My sweet Caleb was diagnosed with Autism at 19 months of age. I am forever grateful that our pediatrician took concerns I had about Caleb's development seriously and made the necessary referrals to ECI and Fort Worth Child Study Center.

Caleb

At the ECI intake/screening session, the nurse, Occupational Therapist, and Service Coordinator let me know the things Caleb was doing that weren't on target, and the things that were. I'll admit, it was hard to hear that my little TRex (he always kept his arms drawn close to his chest) wasn't supposed to be keeping his arms drawn like that, that he should be making eye contact with me, that he should know I am "momma," that he shouldn't have lost his vocabulary completely, and so many, many other things that he should or shouldn't be doing.



When Caleb was admitted in the ECI program, I wondered how I was going to make it to ALL of the appointments. I was incredibly relieved when I learned that the therapists would work with Caleb at his childcare location and/or in our home. This was FANTASTIC news!

Over the next year and a half, Caleb had visits at his childcare location as well as in our home and he made tremendous progress! The heartbreaking realities of my little boy's delays were softened by the care and concern of his team. Our ECI Service Coordinator was with me for Caleb's meeting to transition into Keller ISD, which was so comforting for me. I really felt that Caleb's ECI therapists partnered with me for his success, and that they didn't judge me for how delayed my baby boy was.

When Caleb was doing well enough to be back in school and I could return to work, my very first thought was "Is ECI hiring?" And wouldn't you know, I checked the community center website and there was a clerk spot open. As an advocate for Special Needs Adults and Children, I was thrilled to come on board with ECI and am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the team! Now I can help others benefit from Early Intervention and the wonderful program at ECI.

- Lori, Caleb's mom



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.

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

