

# Early Intervention Works

My daughter Kate was referred to ECI Life Path Systems at 17 months by our pediatrician. At that time she had no words/sounds, no gestures, and often went silent all day. She would play independently, gave no indication of what her needs might be, and the majority of the time not respond to her name.

**Kate**



At the time my husband and I first came in contact with ECI we were lost as to what we should do next. It was a huge relief to find out we qualified for assistance and that the fees would be based on income. I remember thinking how incredible it is that the ECI testing team could spend such a short amount of time with Kate yet clearly see what our family experiences on a daily basis.

Over the next months ahead our speech therapist provided me and Kate's older sister with the tools and guidance to teach Kate in a way that worked for her. She began to use some sign language, developed baby babble, and discovered enjoyment with interactive play. ECI answered our many questions, provided listings of local providers, and sent additional therapists from different specialties out when needed.

Our physical therapist was able to accurately diagnose an issue with one of Kate's legs and demonstrated various exercises that we could do with Kate to help her. Our behavioral therapist became involved around 28 months when I noticed Kate began to get upset a lot and have major melt downs that were just not in her nature. Her suggestions made a world of difference in our day to day life. Today at almost 36 months we have a soon to be three year old that finally tells us what she wants or at least shows us when we don't understand. That is an amazing advancement for our household!

Each of the people on Kate's ECI team has played a role in changing not only Kate's quality of life, but our family life too. I have no doubt that had we not been involved with the ECI program Kate would not be the happy, independent, and eager to learn and play with others child she is today. Our family does not have the words to express the tremendous amount of gratitude we have for our ECI team.

*- Kristi, Kate'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.

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