

**CITY OF TUKWILA
OFFICE OF HUMAN SERVICES
SERVICE REPORT**

Date Submitted: April 14, 2011

**Agency Name: Dynamic Family Services
Program Name: Early Intervention
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Month: Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec
(Please circle)

Have you met the above performance measure goals? Performance measurements have been met this quarter for all three cities.

Narrative:

Auburn: Today Zack was chatting up a storm with me about his friend Drew in class. This is kind of what he said :)

"Mama, do you remember when I didn't have a voice?"

My reply, "Yes."

"Drew, he is like me."

My reply, "Yes, he is."

"When do you think he will find it so we can talk together?"

My reply, "Honey, I am not sure, everyone is different."

"I hope it is soon, it is hard not to talk, people don't know what you want."

My reply, "I know honey, do you remember when you couldn't talk?"

"Yes, I didn't like it. I try and listen real hard to Drew but I can't hear cause, he has no voice, it makes me sad."

This is the end of our conversation, as he skips away to play with his Star Wars light saber, the worry he has for his friend slips to the back of his mind so he can play.

It makes me realize that he remembers a bit about the struggle of finding his voice and how far he has come. I just assumed that he would have been too young to remember how hard that was for him and us as a family. Things are still not always peachy, but we have come a long way.

It has already been a tearful morning reflecting on his journey, feeling blessed to have been helped along the way by so many people. I am lucky in a way that he does remember, and has compassion for those who struggle in some of the same ways. This boy, my son, Zack, he is amazing and I do think that he was given to me to teach me to have more patience and compassion for others. Even though things are not always easy, I celebrate even his smallest successes, because it hit me like a TON of bricks that 2 years ago he had only a handful of words. If it wasn't for early intervention we wouldn't be having this conversation. He will start full day Kindergarten in the fall and I am optimistic that this transition might go well...only time will tell.

Just another day in the life of a mother raising a son who blesses her with his "voice" even if sometimes it now grates my last nerve. Today, I am thankful that he can say my name 20 times in a row to get my attention, just for a glass of milk.

Covington: In the words of Zachery's mom. . .

Three years ago my husband and I had our fears confirmed. . .we would not be having a "healthy" baby. That day started what has been an amazing 3 year roller coaster ride. It has had its highs and lows. Just three hours after Zachery was born, he was transported to Seattle Children's Hospital, while I stayed at Swedish for my recovery.

Zachery was born with the diagnosis of Myelomeningocele (Spina Bifida). This is a birth defect in which the backbone and spinal canal do not close before birth, and as in Zachery's case, can cause partial or complete paralysis of the legs, lack of sensation in his legs, and a build up of fluid inside the skull (hydrocephalus).

Seeing his back, where the surgery (to close his spinal opening) was performed the first time was very difficult for me. Handing our child over to the surgeons for his initial shunt placement in April 2009, at not even a year of age, is a feeling I believe only a parent who has been through this can understand. Then there was a three day hospital stay for a bladder infection that started on Mother's day. Oct 2009, during a family vacation, his shunt failed for the first time. At first thinking it was the flu, Zach and I ended up at hospital as a precaution; he was in surgery within hours. Those are some of lows. But while he caused a bit of stress in 2008 and 2009, Zachery is now creating lots of smiles and tears of joy.

In Dec. 2009, Zachery decided he was ready to show this world what he was made of! Just before Christmas he sat up on his own for the first time. By the first part of 2010 he was army crawling all over the house. It didn't take long before he learned to four point crawl. In April he got his first set of "wheels" in the form of a wheelchair. While this might be a nightmare for most parents, we celebrated a new form of mobility! The next fall and winter were very exciting as well. In October 2010, Zachery learned how to spin himself in circles on the dance floor in his wheelchair at his uncle's wedding. On Dec. 3, 2010, our Zachery decided he was going to give his walker a try. Let me tell you, he loves his new found freedom and is always asking "where's my walker?"

Today, Zach is independent enough to walk with his walker all the way from the Covington Costco check stand to the exit door without help! He loves the encouraging attention he receives from the many caring Costco employees, and it helps him keep going even when it gets hard. He thinks it's even cooler to "drive" his wheelchair through Costco now, masterfully keeping up with his family through every aisle and obstacle! Zachery has come such a long way, largely because of the support system of our great family, many friends, and especially his big sister Zoey.

About our Early Intervention Therapy...

All along this roller coaster ride with our remarkable son, we have received Physical and Speech Therapy and Orthotic support from South King Early Intervention Program (SKIP) and Children's Therapy Center (CTC). Our SKIP physical therapist started coming to our home when Zach was just 2 months old and later a speech therapist joined our team as well. They helped us know what to expect and how to focus on his possibilities; not so much what he couldn't do, but rather what he could do. They helped us get Zach's walker and wheelchair for him, and referred us to the aquatic and hippo therapy (therapy on horseback) programs through CTC after he turned 2. He is excited for these appointments each and every week.

I don't feel that Zach would have reached his current status without the assistance of the SKIP program. While they have focused on Zach, it has been a family experience through and through. Having a child with special needs is a very emotional experience, a roller coaster ride as I mention above. SKIP has provided us with the tools to assist our child in our own environment; incorporating therapy in our daily routines. Our therapists always included our daughter Zoey. With their direction, Zoey would always find a way to make even challenging therapy activities fun for Zach. She is a special big sister, and this has made her feel so much a part of the "care" team for our son.

Our therapists have also helped keep us grounded when we were feeling down and most importantly celebrated the highs that a parent with a “normal” child might just not understand. While we are excited to see our son move to the next chapter of his life, as he ages out of the SKIP home-based program, it is going to be very difficult to leave behind this caring group of people who have touched our lives in a way that cannot be described in words.

We are very fortunate however, to know that when Zachery turns 3, he will begin attending the special education preschool through the school district, and will be able to continue with clinic-based physical therapy, aquatic and hippotherapy through Children’s Therapy Center!

Renton: When we found out during my pregnancy that our daughter, Kaetlyn, would be born with Down Syndrome, we struggled with what that would mean for her. I wish I could go back to those early, dark days of worrying and stressing over what a diagnosis of DS meant and tell myself not to worry...that we would be fine...that SHE would be fine - better than fine actually. Fast forward to our now 10-month-old little girl who is into EVERYTHING, is happy and playful, at times willful, and certainly developing her own personality that draws everyone to her like a moth to a flame. She is a dynamo and I credit more than a little bit of this to her Early Intervention Therapy, which we started when she was 3 weeks old, through the Children's Therapy Center's SKIP Program.

From the beginning, we were given the opportunity to set goals for Kaetlyn. Having no benchmark against which to work, we quickly told the therapists and advocates at SKIP that we wanted to work with Kaety as if she were a “typical” child until proven otherwise. We worked on tummy time, moved on to facial recognition and socialization, graduated to rolling over, moved on to sitting up...and all along the way, our therapists and advocates have helped us understand what each milestone has meant and what we could do to work with Kaetlyn outside of therapy to help her achieve these milestones. Without Early Intervention, I would not have known how to teach her to “track” her eyes correctly or to work with transitioning from side to side to build muscles needed to help in sitting up. Most of us just take for granted how “easy” these items are; most of us learn these things on our own without help. For Kaety, she needs some help along the way and has to work a little harder at all of it. The wonderful thing about the way Early Intervention operates is that the extra work to meet milestones and achieve successes is made into fun play that challenges her and enables her to grow and learn while building on each new achievement. 10 months in, Kaetlyn is tracking more “typical” than not; she met all her 6-month milestones and is on track to meet most of the milestones we set for her with our therapist for 12 months. We’re learning and growing with Kaetlyn; without Early Intervention, all those scary thoughts we had at the beginning may have materialized. She certainly wouldn’t be nearly as close to meeting “typical” milestones as she currently is, and we would have been much more lost in how to best help her to achieve her greatest potential.

Seatac: Dinaol’s family was connected with SKIP around his second birthday. His mother was very concerned with his language development as he was typically very quiet and unable to use gestures or words to communicate at home. She also expressed concerns with his ability to do things for himself and engage and interact with others. Dinaol received weekly in-home speech therapy services through SKIP over the past year. He is now using a variety of words to communicate his needs with family members. Dinaol also uses gestures and signs to request help when needed and to label everyday items in his environment. Dinaol’s play skills have changed significantly, as he is now able to play with a variety of age appropriate toys and objects. His favorite thing to do continues to be playing with cars, but he now enjoys looking at books, completing puzzles, drawing and navigating preschool computer games. Dinaol enjoys being around familiar people and will initiate play routines with loved ones. He has become much more independent, helping to dress himself, eating with utensils and drinking from a cup rather than a bottle. His family is very proud of the fact that he is completely potty trained, no longer using any diapers!

Dinaol’s mother states, “Dinaol wasn’t talking and we were scared and needed help to teach him. Now we have seen him make big changes. I am happy because now he can tell me or show me what he wants. I’m happy for Dinaol, his therapist and the SKIP program has helped us so much.”

Tukwila: Chrystian came into the SKIP program in May 2009 for a developmental assessment as his family and doctor were concerned with his development. Chrystian began weekly physical therapy visits in his home. His mother was very concerned with the fact that he could not hold himself up on his hands or crawl. Chrystian made nice changes and began walking about 6-7 months later. Once Chrystian was moving safely around his environment, his mother expressed concerns with his language skills. At that time, Chrystian was described as very quiet, not using any words and frequently crying due to frustration. Speech therapy services were added to his plan and have continued on a weekly basis. Chrystian's mother also enrolled him in a weekly structured playgroup through SKIP to help him work on his social skills.

Chrystian has made huge gains in all areas of development over the past year. His mother and teacher had noted significant changes within the social settings, stating that he seems to be flourishing in that environment. Chrystian enjoys playing with peers and will use words to get his needs met in group. At home, Chrystian calls family members by name and labels a variety of items to request them from parents. Chrystian is now using simple phrases to let his family know what he wants and what he is thinking about.

His mother stated, "I think the SKIP program has helped him a lot because I see him as very smart now. He learned a lot from this program. I learned exercises to help him get strength in his stomach and get stronger. I see his talking really well and using lots of words in Spanish and English. It surprises me so much and makes me happy that he is like other kids. I am thankful for this program."