

# Children Are Born to Thrive

An Early Intervention Success Story

It was a normal pregnancy, but a traumatic labor that ended with an emergency Cesarean section after the fetus showed distress. Baby \*Peter was less than minutes old, but he had a fractured arm, a dislocated shoulder, left facial nerve palsy, and neonatal depression & seizures. He was placed on a ventilator, and the left side of his body was tested as non-functional.

Peter was referred for Early Intervention (E.I.) Services at Family Support Services' Penn Early Childhood Program when he was two months old. His E.I. teacher Aurelia Martin remembers his critical first year; "He could get around, so it wasn't like he didn't have any use of his limbs on that side ... but he wasn't crawling."

Peter was missing critical developmental milestones, and his parents were worried. Without extensive therapy he might not run, jump, or learn to write like other children.

Martin explains that all children's brains develop as a result of key physical steps. For example, children must first learn how to grasp a ball, before they understand they can intentionally release it. Once they develop this physical-mental control, they progress to stages where they can construct things with blocks, and make strokes on paper. In time, strokes become the diagonal & horizontal lines, and circles that serve as critical precursors to numbers and letters.

But you are never going to master writing if you do not first learn how to grasp and intentionally release that ball.

With his parent's support, specialists at the Penn Early Childhood Program worked with Peter for almost three years in order to get him back on track. He needed occupational therapy for his limbs, and weekly work on his motor, speech, and problem-solving skills. One day in 2001, after much perseverance, Peter reached his developmental goals, and he was no longer eligible for E.I. Services.

Aurelia Martin smiles, "I wasn't sure what happened to him then, until last week, when I coincidentally ran into his father. He said, 'I think you did a wonderful job with him: Peter is a typical First Grader!' "

Children are born to thrive; Early Intervention Services just makes it a little easier.

***\*All names have been changed***

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*A non-profit child welfare agency registered in PA*