

Growth Through Early Intervention: A Story of Communication and Connection

At approximately 18 months old, this child was referred to Early Intervention by a hospital Child Find Specialist due to concerns about potential hearing loss and limited expressive language -- only using about three words.

During the assessment process, several developmental concerns emerged. The child avoided eye contact, cried or became upset when the TV was turned off, did not point or use hands to complete tasks, and often screamed to communicate. There was little interest in toys, and the child was not consistently leading family members to desired items, relying instead on crying as the primary form of expression.

An Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) outcome was developed to support the use of single words to communicate wants during play. A developmental specialist began working closely with the family and the child's grandmother, focusing on strategies such as reducing screen time, offering choices and redirection, and building word associations through play.

With consistent intervention and the family's commitment to practicing strategies between sessions, the child has made remarkable progress over the past six months. He is now pointing to desired items, making eye contact, responding to his name, and beginning to use words such as "mama," "go," and "car." He has also begun engaging in pretend play and no longer cries when the TV is turned off. He interacts positively with the developmental specialist, actively participating in both leading and following activities.

The parents and grandparents have remained engaged in the process joining activities during visits, observing strategies in action, and applying them consistently to support ongoing development. To further promote social and communication skills, the family accessed family support funding to participate in community-based leisure activities. The child now enjoys outings and has even begun leading his parents to the door to signal when he wants to go out.

With this progress in mind, the Early Intervention Service Coordinator has begun discussing transition planning with the family. A transition planning conference is being scheduled for the spring, as the child will age out of Early Intervention in late summer.

This story highlights how responsive, family-centered Early Intervention services and strong caregiver involvement can foster meaningful developmental growth, helping children build the foundational skills they need for future success.