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Success Story

PARTNERING WITH PARENTS HARBOR AREA EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

A few years ago, their pediatrician referred twins Henry and Annetta to Harbor Area Early Childhood Services. “At 18 months, Annetta wasn’t crawling and speaking, and Henry wasn’t crawling,” explained their mother, Elizabeth. The twins were given a developmental assessment which measured their motor and language skills, among others. It turned out that both of them met the eligibility requirements for enrollment in the program.

Harbor Area Early Childhood Services (ECS) provides early intervention to families with children, ages birth to three, experiencing developmental delays, behavioral difficulties, problems resulting from birth or medical conditions, or special conditions such as Down Syndrome, spina bifida, or cerebral palsy. Home-based services include developmental screening and assessment, home visits, service coordination, resources and referrals, parent support and education, and assistance with transitioning to other services beyond age three. ECS also provides community and center-based services including playgroups for infants and toddlers and a specialized day care program.

ECS teaches, trains, and supports families how to promote their children’s speech, motor and social skills. “It is the family that drives the services,” explained Deborah Eccelston, Community Coordinator. “Everything we do depends on what they want and need.” ECS staff members see the children relatively infrequently compared to the time they spend with family members. Helping a child overcome delays depends on the degree to which parents and other caregivers partner with early intervention specialists. Each week, an ECS Service Coordinator and development educator visits Henry, Annetta and Elizabeth at their home in Charlestown. The family also participates in a weekly parent and child play group at ECS’s East Boston headquarters. Annetta works with an ECS occupational therapist twice a month around sensory issues. “She wouldn’t let anyone touch her, and wouldn’t even sit in my lap. She has come a long way. Now she goes up and gives the teachers hugs,” said her mother.

All ECS youngsters receive annual developmental evaluations to assess their progress and re-determine eligibility. Elizabeth intently explained how Annetta was able to pair up yellow and red circles with the matching size and complete a puzzle of different shapes. “I didn’t think she knew how to do these things. But she did it. I am really happy with both of their progress. And the parent group meetings have helped me a lot with discipline, potty training, CPR. There’s a lot of nice to stuff that we are doing.”

(names and details about this family have been changed to protect confidentiality)