



Annual Report

STATE INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL
for EarlySteps

a year in review



2017-2018 ANNUAL REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNOR

Dear Governor Edwards, Louisiana Legislators, and Community Partners:

It is my pleasure as the Chairperson of Louisiana's State Interagency Coordinating Council (LA-SICC) to submit the 2017-2018 LA-SICC Annual Report. The federal statute, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C, requires that each state assemble an interagency coordinating council in order to advise and assist the state's IDEA, Part C early intervention system. In Louisiana, the EarlySteps Program is administered by the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD), Louisiana Department of Health (LDH).

EarlySteps provides early intervention services to one of Louisiana's most vulnerable populations, infants and toddlers with disabilities. The members of the SICC have the responsibility of ensuring the successful implementation of those services and take this responsibility very seriously. Our stakeholders: the families we serve, state agencies, early intervention providers, legislators, also play an important role in carrying out the successful outcomes of this program.

In 2017-2018, EarlySteps impacted the lives of over 5,100 Louisiana children and their families. The challenges that these children and their families face are on a broad scale. This report includes just a few stories shared by parents about their family's journey with their children and the impact EarlySteps has on not only their child's development but also in assisting the family in their daily lives.

The number of families accessing EarlySteps services is continuing to rise and financial resources are strained. Early intervention services are critical in addressing the needs of infants and toddlers with developmental delays and/or disabilities. Providing high quality early intervention services can change a child's developmental trajectory and improve outcomes for their educational future and their lives overall. These positive outcomes not only save our state thousands of dollars, maybe more in later services, but also positively affect families and communities.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Louisiana's youngest and most vulnerable population. Together we can continue to improve the lives of Louisiana's children and families. Please review this report to learn about the successes and challenges of the EarlySteps program for 2017-2018.

Sincerely,

Shanida J. Mathieu

Shanida J. Mathieu

Chair

Early Intervention Services in Louisiana

EarlySteps provides services to families with infants and toddlers aged birth to three years (36 months) who have a medical condition likely to result in a developmental delay, or who have developmental delays. Children with delays in cognitive, motor, vision, hearing, communication, social-emotional or adaptive development may be eligible for services. EarlySteps services are designed to improve the family's capacity to enhance their child's development. These services are provided in the child's natural environment, such as the child's home, child care or any other community setting typical for children aged birth to 3 years (36 months).



Early Intervention:

- Enhances the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities, to minimize their potential for developmental delay.
- Services are provided year round in the child's home or childcare setting.
- Provides training, coaching, and support for families focusing on supporting the child with disabilities in the home.
- Specialists collaborate with families and caregivers to promote development and learning.
- Respects each family's strengths, values, diversity, and competencies and answers families' questions about their child's development.
- Helps prevent the need for more and costly intervention in the future.
- Maximizes the potential for individuals with disabilities to live independently in society.
- Enhances the capacity for families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers with disabilities.

"When my son was 18 months, I knew he was not communicating as he should be. When he first entered EarlySteps, he was not saying any words and simply babbling and cooing. After receiving many months of both OT and ST, his motor planning has gotten so much better, and he's able to say 3-4 word utterances! We love

THE LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH – OFFICE FOR CITIZENS WITH
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
ADMINISTERS THE EARLYSTEPS
PROGRAM

- Transportation (to and from an EarlySteps service only)
- Vision Services

Early Childhood Outcomes Data 2017-2018

Progress toward National Early Childhood Outcomes for Children with Disabilities or Developmental Delays

The Federal Office of Special Education Programs requires states to report on child progress by collecting data for three Early Childhood Outcomes indicators. Virtually all children in Louisiana’s Early Intervention Program continue to make meaningful progress in these outcome areas (listed in the chart to the right). Many children have closed the developmental gap. Many others will require less or no support and function more independently in school and the community.

Percent of Children who Have Received Early Intervention Services and Have Substantially Increased their Rate of Developmental Growth as Measured by Early Childhood Outcomes Indicators

	Development of Positive social Relationship Skills	Acquisition and Use of Knowledge and Skills	Use of Appropriate Behaviors to meet Needs
Infant/Toddler	43.2%	73.9%	87.2%

The Chart above includes information on the percent of infants/toddlers who have received Early Intervention services and have made more progress that would be anticipated through typical developmental growth alone. This percentage is based on the change in growth noted by comparing progress data gathered at their entry to and exit from the Early Intervention program.



A Family's Success Story

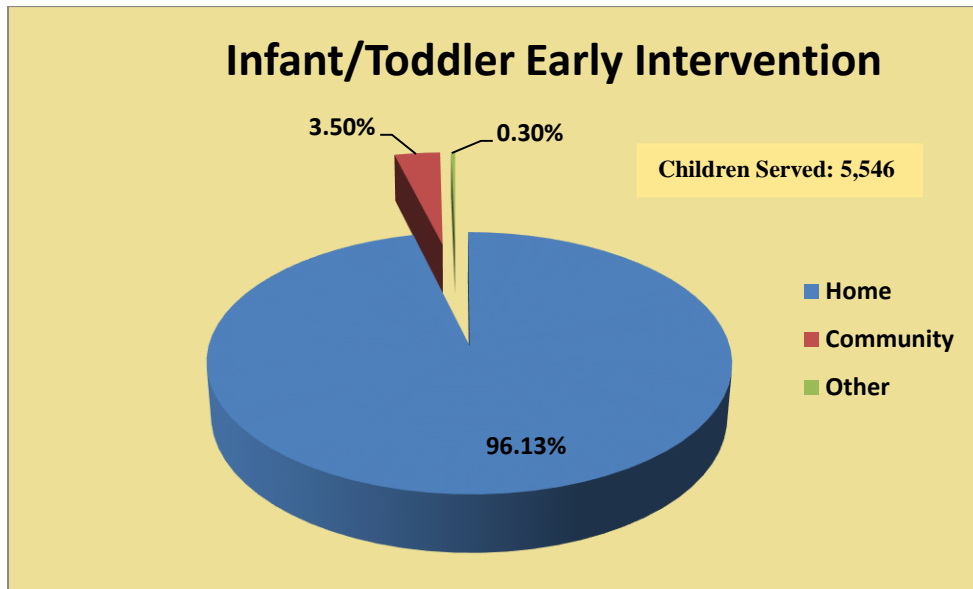
Meet Pheonyx Hardin



"We knew Pheonyx would have to be a fighter and rise above the challenges of a physical deformity to his right leg even before he was born. When he was born five weeks early with respiratory issues, we had to stand back and pray while we watched him fight his first battle for his little life. He was born with PFFD - Proximal Femoral Focal Deficiency, which in his case meant a malformed hip, a shortened femur and syndactyly of his toes mostly on his right leg, but also in his left toes. He struggled with Respiratory Distress Syndrome for the first four weeks of his life. While recovering at the hospital we also found out that he was not hearing properly, we later found out that he had Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder. This means that he can hear, but we're not sure if he's hearing everything. His A.N. has led to speech delays and a lot of frustration on his very intelligent and determined part. Thanks to partnering with EarlySteps and finding dedicated providers for the past two and a half years, Nyx's vocabulary has skyrocketed from mostly one sound yelling and pointing to being able to string a few words together. He's still got surgeries and more therapies in his future, but we feel so much more confident that he'll be able to communicate his feelings, wants and needs with us. His success story is about to take the next step as he's about to be evaluated to go into PreK3. We used to wonder how he'd manage, but now we're reassured that he's going to continue to grow and develop. He's strong and empowered thanks greatly to the programs and support he's received from the wonderful team at Easterseals EarlySteps."

- Heather & Jason Hardin, Parents of Pheonyx Hardin

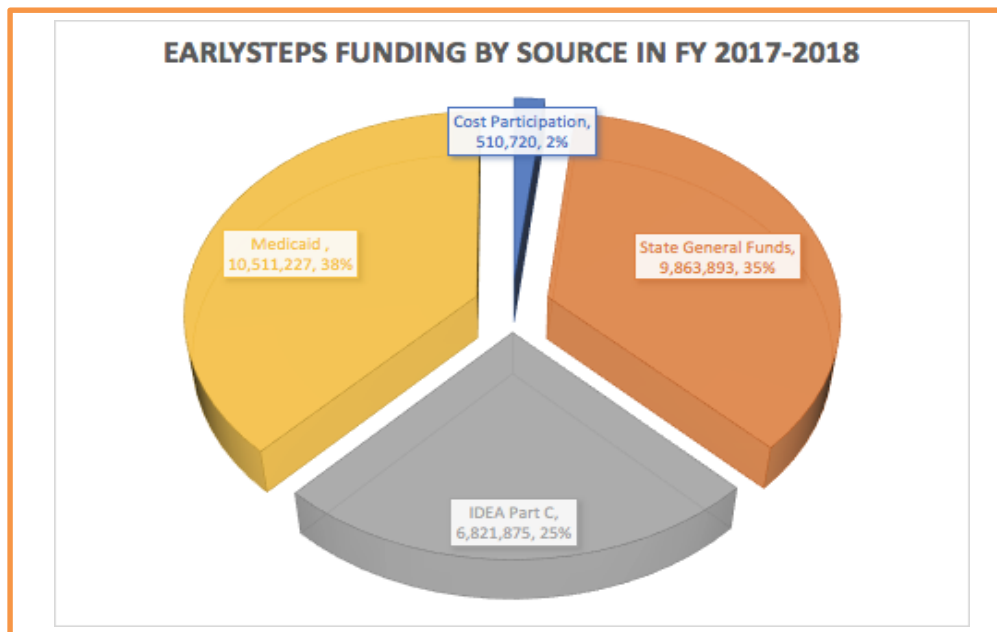
Location Where Services are Provided



Funding for Services in FY 2017-2018

EarlySteps Total Funding: \$27,707,715

Funding for Early Intervention services and supports is derived from a variety of sources, including federal, state, and local funds.



Evelyn's Story:

by her Mother, Aimee Beard



When our daughter, Evelyn, was born in December 2017 she suffered a birth injury called Brachial Plexus Palsy. Evelyn's right arm was paralyzed, and we were told only time and intense physical therapy would tell if she would regain the function in her arm and it could be a lifelong obstacle for her.

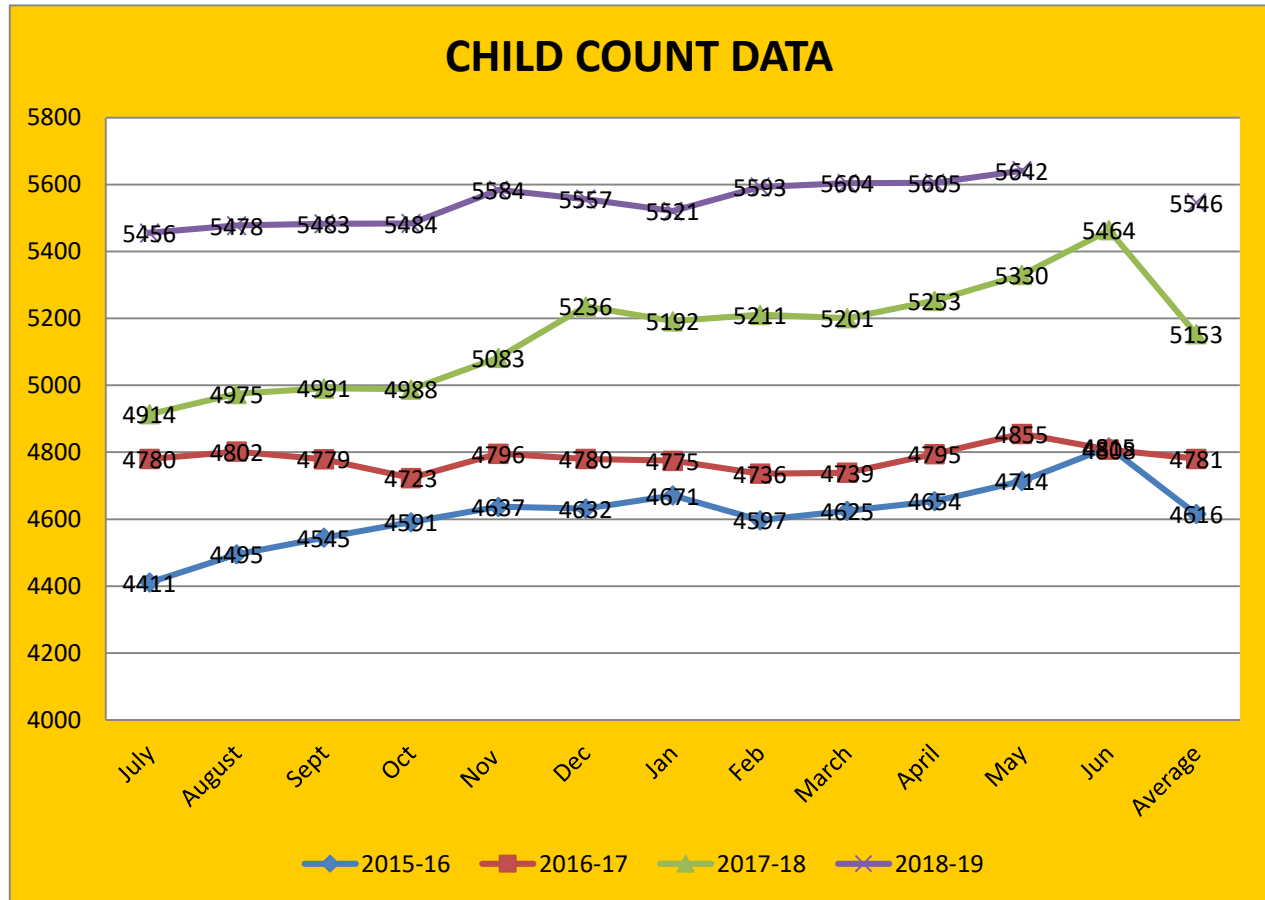
As second time parents my husband Jordan and I thought we knew what to expect but when we took Evelyn home we quickly realized there were many questions we didn't know the answer to this time. We questioned how to hold her properly and how to position her injured arm. We wondered if she would ever regain the use of her arm and worried if we were doing all we could to give her the best chance at a full recovery.

Occupational therapy was recommended as well as potentially one or more surgeries with specialists in other states. The pressures of not only making the right choices for Evelyn but also the financial implications were overwhelming, and we didn't know who to go to for guidance. Thankfully, we were put in touch with EarlySteps and from the start we were guided through the evaluation process with kindness and compassion not only for Evelyn, but for our whole family. For the first time since her birth we felt like we had a team of professionals that would give us a care plan and help Evelyn get the best opportunities for recovery. Sherry Bunch, Evelyn's occupational therapist, has not only brought her prior experience with Brachial Plexus injuries but a compassion and dedication to Evelyn's progress that we will forever cherish. Sherry has educated us and empowered us to maintain a home program that supports Evelyn's recovery.

We are so grateful for the early intervention and guidance we have received from everyone involved with Evelyn's case at EarlySteps. In addition to the expertise we were provided, the financial burden of twice weekly therapy sessions was greatly reduced, allowing us to focus on our family. We are excited to report Evelyn is using her affected arm and although she may need surgery in the future, she has made tremendous progress. We are so thankful for EarlySteps and the impact it has had on our lives and Evelyn's future.

Meet the Beard Family












CHILD COUNT GROWTH 2015-2019






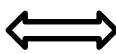




EarlySteps Family Story

"EarlySteps was a critical element in the development and continued development of my child who is now 4. We received a Down syndrome diagnosis 3 weeks after our son was born and placed with us for adoption. We immediately began our journey with EarlySteps therapists and coordinators at that time, and still have relationships with them today. I can't eloquently explain just how impactful to our family they were as we adjusted to our new life with Roman. They helped me learn how to feed Roman then transition him to feeding himself just prior to his 3rd birthday. They taught Roman how to walk- which took over a year and a half and they taught me patience through the process as well as how to appreciate the small steps and celebrate the wins. They taught me how to play and educate my child and taught my son's daycare teachers how to communicate and work with him. I cannot say where we would be without them. We keep in contact with them now and value the impact they had on all of our lives. They taught Roman how to communicate, walk, feed himself, and interact with peers through play, and so much more. The EarlySteps program is critical for families of little ones with exceptionalities and the impact of this program can not be underestimated.

FFY 2017 APR PERFORMANCE DATA (reported in the FFY 2017-2018 APR due February 2019)

Indicator Descriptions	Measurable Target 2017-2018	Actual Data 2016-2017	Actual Data 2017-2018	Status
1. Percent of infants and toddlers who receive Early Intervention Services (EIS) in a timely manner (Compliance)	100%	91.58%	92.71%	
2. Percent of infants and toddlers (I/T's) who receive services in home/community based settings (Results)	98%	99.55%	99.63%	
3. Percent of infants and toddlers who show improvement in a. positive social emotional skills b. improved knowledge including communication c. use of appropriate behavior to meet needs (Results)	a. SS1: 22.0% SS2: 37.0% b. SS1: 43.1% SS2: 34.0% c. SS1: 29.6% SS2: 46.2%	a. SS1: 38.47% SS2: 59.4% b. SS1: 56.07% SS2: 36.19% c. SS1: 52.05% SS2: 49.85%	a. SS1: 43.2% SS2: 70.1% b. SS1: 73.1% SS2: 35.7% c. SS1: 87.2% SS2: 59.5%	a.  b.  c. 
4. Percent of families who report EIS have helped them a. know their rights b. Communicate child's needs c. help child learn and develop (Results)	a. 80.0% b. 85.0% c. 91.0%	a. 95.49% b. 94.64% c. 95.08%	a. 99.9% b. 98.61% c. 99.1%	a.  b.  c. 
5. Percent of I/T's 0 to 1 with IFSP's compared to: a. other states with similar eligibility Criteria b. national data (Results)	1.50%	1.30%	1.32%	
6. Percent of I/T's , 0-3 with IFSP's compared to a. other similar states b. national data (Results)	2.08%	2.62%	2.75%	
7. Percent of I/T's with IFSP in 45 day timeline (Compliance)	100%	100%	99.9%	

8. Percent of children exiting with timely transition a. with IFSP's b. with notice to local ed. Agency c. with transition conference (Compliance)	a. 100% b. 100% c. 100%	a. 98.54% b. 100% c. 98.86%	a. 99.15% b. 100% c. 96.18%	a.  b.  c. 
9. Percent of hearing requests that went to resolution sessions that were resolved through resolution session settlement agreements (applicable if Part B due process procedures are adopted. (Compliance)	Louisiana is not required to report on this indicator			
10. Percent of mediations held that resulted in mediation agreements. (Compliance)	Louisiana is not required to report on this indicator			
Indicator C-11: State Systemic Improvement Plan: SIMR—The EarlySteps system will improve child outcomes through supports that are focused on Family CPRs and provided through a team-based approach. (Results)	50.0%	48%	55.0%	
<p>Status Key:</p> <p>Made Progress/Didn't Meet Target </p> <p>Maintained Performance/Didn't Meet Target </p> <p>Met Target </p> <p>Had Slippage/Didn't Meet Target </p>				

The Reynolds' Family

I have used EarlySteps in the past with my daughter and currently with my toddler. They are great about having your child evaluated and getting them help they need in a timely manner. Both of my children have trouble with behavior and communicating. A simple trip to the grocery store would be a emotional break down, for me and my child! I love that their therapists come to our house. I believe it is a more comfortable, familiar environment for children to learn, especially those with sensory problems. With Early Step's help I have seen amazing progress with my children overall. I have learned many technique's during their therapy sessions that I apply on a daily basis to help continue their progress. We are grateful for everyone at EarlySteps who have helped us along the way.

EarlySteps - State Systemic Improvement Plan

To meet Federal requirements regarding improving child outcomes from participating in early intervention, each state has developed a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) that includes a statement of its intended measurable result. Louisiana's plan focuses on improving child outcomes through supports that are focused on family concerns priorities and resources provided through a team-based approach. EarlySteps has selected the Division of Early Childhood Recommended Practices as its evidence-based practice to address this improvement. The EarlySteps SSIP outlines 3 practice components *Family Assessment, Service Delivery Supporting Family Priorities, and Team-based Practice Supports* that represent the measurable result:

Practice Component 1: Family Assessment a process that results in functional Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) reflecting family concerns, priorities, and resources (CPR).

Family Assessment SSIP Outcomes:

- Family Assessment completed through a series of conversations with families through the development of the IFSP.
- IFSPs have family CPRs embedded in the IFSP outcomes.

Practice Component 2: Service Delivery Supports Family Priorities – early interventionists address the IFSP outcomes using intervention strategies, where both the child and family are actively engaged, focused on familiar everyday routines and activities.

Service Delivery Supports Family Priorities SSIP Outcomes:

- Early Intervention System providers are using evidence-based practices to support caregivers in early care and education settings.
- Early Care and Education staff and early interventionists report improved relationships supporting children in child care/Early Head Start settings.
- Families report that their CPRs were addressed in the IFSP process.
- Families reported that they were actively engaged in the IFSP process.
- Early interventionists feel confident and competent in working with families using EarlySteps practices.

Families have supports and services to meet needs as identified in the CPR and IFSP, **Practice Component 3: Team-Based Practice Supports:** a team-based approach where early interventionists and families collaborate with each other to address the family CPRs.

Teaming Practices SSIP Outcomes:

- Families report improved competency in meeting child needs following participation in team-based decision process.
- All EarlySteps early interventionists use the teaming model to address family CPRs with families.

The format for defining and addressing these improvement areas is through the use of stakeholder workgroups coordinated jointly through LDH and the SICC. Approximately 45 SICC members, state staff, providers, agencies and family members have guided the improvement work resulting in improvements both in key infrastructure areas as well as in practice improvements. The results of Indicator 11 shown in the previous table indicate a 15% improvement since 2016-17.

Jordan's Story

My son, Jordan, had some issues from the time he was born. During the first 4 months of his life, we had several lengthy stays in the hospital. We struggled to figure out what was wrong. He had failure to thrive and GI issues. He spit up blood. He stopped breathing after feeding when you burped him. It was a rollercoaster. At 3 months old, we finally got a diagnosis of severe reflux, Tracheomalacia, Bronchomalacia, and Laryngomalacia. His voice box also doesn't close completely. He had to have a major surgery as well as having a feeding button put into place to assist us in his feeding issues. These procedures resulted in him no longer taking anything orally and relying solely on the feeding tube. He also had a gross motor delay resulting from the failure to thrive and having his stomach muscles cut in five places.



We began private therapy when he was 7 months old. He began to gain a little strength with PT but still wasn't sitting up at 9 months. We were also seeing OT for feeding issues. We began working on exercises to strengthen his oral motor skills. After only small successes in both areas, both our doctors and our therapists recommended that we look into EarlySteps.

I had never heard of EarlySteps, but I was willing to do whatever I could to help my little guy. We officially entered the EarlySteps program when he was 10 months old. We started both PT and OT (focusing on oral motor and feeding).

We were in EarlySteps PT with Jessica Gunning for around 7 months. He had just started sitting up when we started EarlySteps PT. Within weeks, he was sitting up more confidently and for much longer periods of time. He began pulling up, standing. He skipped crawling all together. At 15 months, he was walking. Very quickly after, he was running. Even OT was helping in this area. I attribute much of his success physically to his therapists, both PT and OT!

When we began EarlySteps OT with Sherri Bunch, Jordan was still refusing to put anything in his mouth – no food, toys or even fingers. He resisted everything oral. He would allow private therapist to do a few things, but we weren't seeing much success. In walked our God-send, Sherri! She is by far the best thing that has ever happened for Jordan. She was (and still is) his biggest supporter. Sherri has been working with Jordan for 2 years this month. At this point, she has him successfully eating most foods. My little guy is very stubborn. He only does what he wants to do, and it is typically in his own time. Sherri has made Jordan work extremely hard to find success while making him believe that he is only there to have fun with her. She works with him on manipulation of foods, strengthening his muscles to allow him to eat normally, his bite, his chewing, etc. We have also received several new diagnoses in the time we have been seeing Sherri. She has helped immensely in figuring out how these newly diagnosed issues can be dealt with in order for Jordan to get where he needs to be. When Jordan fell behind a bit on "normal knowledge" for a 2 year old, Sherri jumped in immediately to work with him to become "pre-school ready".

Sherri has not only been helping Jordan, but she has been someone that I can rely on to help when I need it! I am absolutely blessed to call her my friend! When we found ourselves admitted to the hospital again last summer and started with an extreme feeding set-back, Sherri was the first person I called. She jumped in immediately. She recommended things to do or try. When it had been several days without Jordan eating a single thing, Sherri showed up at the hospital. She even called to check on him when she was out of the country with her family. She is so giving of herself and her time. She is the most kindhearted person I have ever met, and she genuinely loves her job and the kids she treats. She celebrates all successes – big and small. She makes sure that I understand and remember that even the little successes build up to the big ones.

Jordan will age out of EarlySteps next month. I am so proud of the successes he has had thanks to the EarlySteps program and therapists! We would never be where we are today without it! I am forever grateful for Sherri and all of the hard work she put in trying to figure Jordan out! She singlehandedly has been the person out of all of our medical team (and there are a ton of people) that has contributed the most to making Jordan better/more normal, making his life easier, and teaching him that with hard work all things are possible.

Thank you for all that you do for these little people!! It takes a village to raise a child, I am just blessed that our village includes you all!!

-Sarah Smith Sickler
Jordan's mom

More Success Stories...

"My name is Tamera Kleinpeter and I am the mother of Lauren Kleinpeter. Lauren is an 18 month old baby girl who has both a Trach and a G tube. The challenges for her care were exhausting once we left the hospital after living there for 4 months since birth. With no nursing or therapies, the days turned into weeks and into months of no sleep, round the clock care and little improvement for my little one. I could keep her alive and nourished but the development of her skills were severely lacking. She was between 6-8 months old and could not sit up or crawl and could not intentionally hold toys to play. She was falling more and more behind. The day I connected with Melissa was the day everything changed. She set up the evaluations and meetings. She guided me through selecting an agency and therapist. Help me determine what therapies would be needed. She gave me the tools to make the decisions I needed to make for my child. It can be overwhelming when you don't have any extra time. Melissa and each person she connected me with worked around my schedule and made it work without making me feel like an inconvenience. Lauren's therapists, Sherri Bunch and Stephanie McGowan, have poured out Love and patience for my little Lauren and have made a difference I could not have made on my own. I spend lots of time reading and educating my children but this level of expertise was something Lauren needed in order to be at a level I could nurture farther. She has come so far in the past 6 months. She is sitting and playing independently, saying "dada" and making hand and head gestures. Blowing kisses and giving hugs. Crawls, pulls up and stands assisted. Also walks assisted. She is quickly approaching a non-delayed status and it brings tears to my eyes. This organization has become a part of our family, partnering in the care and development of Lauren. I don't know how I could ever begin to truly show the appreciation I have for this program. It has given me pieces of her childhood I thought I may miss out on forever. I highly recommend this program and its staff. I've seen so many horror stories of moms on this journey. Thankfully, that wasn't our story. Our story is Learning. Our story is Progress. Our story is not over.... Because our story is Hope. Thank you so very much from the bottom of my heart."

All about Baby Ross

"Our son was born blind. After 3 months of trying to sort things out, a friend recommended the EarlySteps program. My husband and I were amazed at all the service offered and especially being offered in the home. Everyone who came to do the eligibility, the intake and writing his plan was wonderful. It was evident that they were there to help baby Ross and supportive to my husband and me. Having the providers coming in not only to work with him but to show us what we could do to help him develop into a normal healthy baby. One of our most memorable experiences... EarlySteps arranged for us to tour the School for the Visually Impaired. This was an eye opener for all the opportunities available for children who are visually impaired."

Baby Ross will age out of EarlySteps in December, 2019. Presently he is receiving OT, Speech and Vision therapy. He is now crawling, trying to walk, saying a few words, feeding himself finger foods and his vision has gotten a lot better. He can explore any room independently and can find any toy he desires and play with it as normal."

Meet Tucker Denison...

On February 25, 2018, Kyle and I were anxiously awaiting for Tucker's neurologist to come in and give us the answers we had been longing for. We had been waiting since February 25 for this day to come. Those five days felt like an eternity as we had no clue what the future held for our son. We will never forget the fear we felt that day. A feeling so indescribable-a parent's worst nightmare.



For the first three days of Tucker's life he was sedated and placed on a cooling blanket. We were unable to hold him and had to limit touching him because we could not stimulate his little body. We were left feeling completely helpless. All we knew at this point was that Tucker had severe brain damage, and the cooling blanket was saving his life by lowering his body temperature, stopping any further damage.

On day three, late that night, they started warming his body up to normal temperature and weaning him off of sedation. Day four was spent with us just talking and getting prepared for neurologist. Kyle and I went home at midnight that night to regroup and rest before meeting with the neurologist the morning. As you can imagine, we did not sleep, we did not regroup, but what we did do was call his room all night just to talk with his night nurse. She reassured us that he was doing great, and that we needed to go to sleep because tomorrow was a big day.

We finally made it to day five after what felt like a year. We were in the room waiting on the neurologist to come in; waiting for answers. We were warned that the doctor we were meeting with was very impassive and to the point. Kyle was all for it, but I on the other hand was hoping for a doctor that would sugar coat things for us. Everyone that warned us was right. She came in, introduced herself, and got straight to the point. She told us that Tucker had severe brain damage to both sides of his brain in the cerebral area caused by two massive strokes and that things were not good. She explained that he wouldn't be able to eat without feeding tubes, we would be in the NICU for a while, and that he was high risk for Cerebral Palsy.

Most people would have thought we were just given the worst news, but we remained positive because he had already shown us he wasn't giving up and neither were we. As the days went by, we watched our miracle baby thrive in ways we were told would be impossible. The tubes and machines were slowly vanishing before our eyes and every step of the way we were there, cheering Tucker on and praising God that he was proving everyone wrong. We went from hearing the words "relying on feeding tubes" several days ago to feeding him his first bottle. Hitting various milestones in between and then came the words that brought us to our knees, "It's time to take your sweet boy home!" The amount of prayers, support and faith we had through those trying days is something we will never forget. The only true statement we were given in that room a year ago was that Tucker would have Cerebral Palsy. One year later and Tucker is a Rock star! He kicks butt at therapy four times a week and is the happiest baby ever!!


Kyle and I wanted to share our story because Tucker is a true miracle and has made us the parents we are today. And let's be honest, we wanted to brag a little bit on our little boy because that's what parents do. Additionally, we were given Tucker's diagnoses in March of last year and ironically, March is Cerebral Palsy awareness month. God's plan for us is greater than we ever could've imagined!

Kyle and I would not have made it through this difficult time without GOD, our amazing family, friends, and all of the NICU nurses! God is so good and we are so happy he chose us to be his parents! Today, Tucker Jude is a walking MIRACLE. He is now 14 months and is walking on his own. He is working hard towards eating solid foods and talking!! – Amber Dartez (Tuckers mom)

Thanks for Everything...




JOHN DAVID'S STORY:



I wanted to reach out to convey the importance of the Early Steps program in my son's life. John David was born with Down syndrome, stage 4 kidney disease, and failure to thrive among other complications. These medical conditions severely stressed both our family and John David's development. At a time when so much was unknown for not only John David but his twin Charlotte it was very assuring to have a wonderful team at Early Steps to further advance both my children's development. I was able to focus on my son's health and get guidance from Early Steps with their mental and physical development. I look back now at the great services I had and wonderful team that developed my son. I now realize the importance of early development. I know I will always have to advocate for my children. It was nice to have a group of people who were there not only for my children but there for all of us.

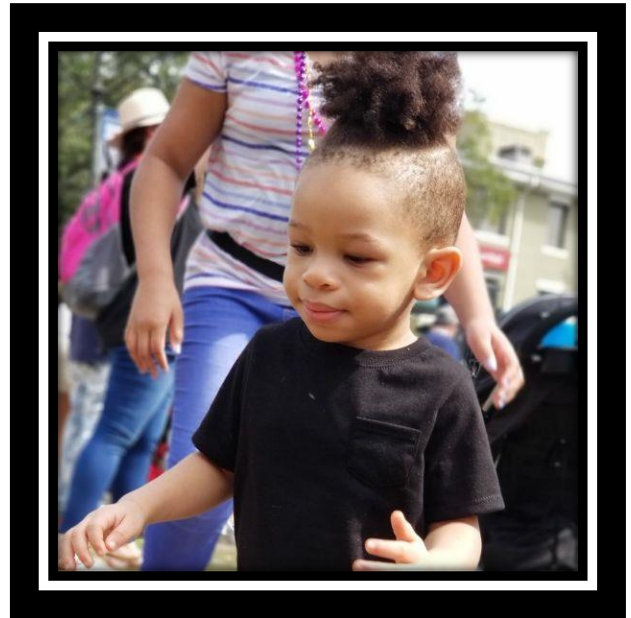
--John Malinski (John David's dad)

EASTON'S STORY:



At an early age, my wife Danielle and I (Adam) notice our first-born son was having trouble speaking and communicating. In fact, Easton only had a vocabulary of about 5 words. Through research and word-of-mouth at his daycare we learned about EarlySteps. An amazing program full of wonderful professionals who over a year increased Easton's speech vocabulary to around 100 words. Their expertise even led to him now using short sentence phrases! EarlySteps also was able to recognize a sensory processing disorder in Easton as well. Through weekly occupational therapy Easton was also able to not "shovel" food in his mouth anymore during meals and snacks. Through this program's altruism he would receive a weighted blanket that would provide sleeping comfort and relaxation during daytime naps and at-home night-time sleeping. EarlySteps has been an amazing adventure for our entire family over the last year. Watching the amount of progress Easton has made from ages 2 – 3 years old gives us the hope and optimism going forward with his therapies and education. And for this, we will forever be happily indebted to the services and good will of EarlySteps! --Adam Crosby (Easton's dad)

Sean Matthews, Jr.'s Success Story



“When Sean was about 15 months old we started noticing that he was having difficulty meeting some of his milestones. Communication for him was the hardest. We decided to bring our concerns to his pediatrician, who introduced us to the Early Steps program. At the time we had never heard of this program, we started researching information and watching videos of other experiences with Early Steps, which gave us an idea of what we were about to embark on. Once we met our intake coordinator (Liz Owen) we knew our son was in great hands. Early Steps makes everything so convenient for us, they have helped us in so many ways, and have opened our eyes to so many opportunities for our son. Sean has some of most loving and dedicated therapists; they treat him as if he was their own. The therapy Sean receives not only helps him but is very therapeutic for us. As parents seeing your child struggle in areas of development and most likely be a beautiful butterfly on the Autism Spectrum, can be heartbreaking and overwhelming, but having a program like Early Steps is so comforting. Sean still has a long road ahead, but since starting the program we have noticed him being more attentive, he's able to sit and focus on one task at a time, giving eye contact and saying more words. We truly appreciate Early Steps for everything they have done for our family.”

Sean's success is our success and we can't wait to see him take on the world!

State Interagency Coordinating Council Members 2017-2018

Representation	Member	Representation	Member
DOE Rep-Coordination of the Education of homeless children and youth	Tasha Pulley Anthony	State Agency Rep, DCFS-Foster Care	Charmaine Jarvis Magee
Appointed by the Governor, Private Provider of Early Intervention Services, Chair – (resigned)	Sandra P. “Sam” Beech	Parent of an infant or toddler with disabilities (interim chair)	Shanida J. Mathieu (Appointed to Chair position by Governor on 7/27/18)
Parent of a child with Disabilities	Charles “Mike” Billings	Private provider	Joy J. Pennington
Agency Representative; Insurance	Rebecca DeLaSalle	Agency Representative-LDH-Office of Public Health	Dionka C. Pierce
Agency Representative – Preschool	Anna “Kaye” Eichler	At-large	Bambi D. Polotzola
At-Large	Marc F. Garnier	Agency Representative; LDH-Medicaid	Michelle Renee’
At-Large	Gwendolyn M. Gene	Parent of a child with Disabilities	Michelle S. Roberie
At-Large	Darrin L. Harris	Parent of a child with Disabilities	Nina S. Seneca
Private Provider of early intervention services	Soundra T. Johnson	Agency Representative – LDH/OCDD-Lead agency representative	Brenda Barron Sharp
Personnel preparation	Colleen Klein-Ezell, Ph.D.	At least one member of LA Legislature	Patricia Haynes Smith
Agency Representative, LDH-Office of Behavioral Health	Danita A. Leblanc	Representative of a Head Start Agency (DCFS)	Kahree A. Wahid
Parent of child with disabilities age twelve or younger	Angela G. Lorio	State Agency Representative; LDH; Developmental Disabilities Council	Sandra “Santee” Winchell
		At-Large	Allison J. Young

The State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for EarlySteps is an independent board that advises EarlySteps. A state that desires to receive financial assistance under Part C of IDEA must establish a State Interagency Coordinating Council. In drafting the original legislation, Congress recognized the need for a group outside of the Lead Agency to “advise and assist” in the development of this comprehensive system of coordinated early intervention services. The

