



Texas Parent to Parent

ECI Supports Families



For over 30 years, Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) has provided early intervention services to Texas families with children from birth to 36 months of age who have developmental delays or disabilities. ECI professionals and families members incorporate activities into the child and family's daily activities to promote the child's development.

At Texas ECI, we know that parents are the most important person in their child's life and they know their child better than anyone. Parents are their child's first and best teacher. ECI encourages parents to join in every step of the process, from deciding on what kind of support their child and family may need to working daily with their child to help him grow and learn. Read how the McDaniel family and ECI worked together to promote Kolt's development.

Going into their ultrasound appointment, J.D. and Shay McDaniel were focused on expectant parents' typical questions: "Who will he look like? His brother Seth or Luke?" But a few minutes into the appointment, they heard the devastating diagnosis for their third child, Kolt.

Kolt had congenital heart defects and at best, a 20 percent chance of living. "The doctors told us that we probably would never hear him cry," Shay said.

To everyone's surprise, when Kolt was born that February morning, his parents heard their son cry. "It was music to our ears," Shay said. Doctors performed an angioplasty and open-heart surgery within the first week of Kolt's life. Six months later he had a second heart surgery and was awaiting a third. While Kolt was in the pediatric intensive care unit, the hospital staff told the family about the DARS Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI). ECI professionals immediately stepped in to coordinate nutritional, physical, and occupational therapy for Kolt and his family.

Kolt's condition and medication made it hard for him to gain weight. During his first six months of life, he struggled to eat just six ounces of formula a day. Once he could eat solid food, an ECI dietician worked with the family and created techniques that helped Kolt with his eating habits. After a while, Kolt was out-eating his big brothers.

While Kolt advanced mentally, his physical development remained a challenge. The ECI physical therapist recommended practical suggestions and activities that the family could include in their daily routines to help Kolt. "They showed us how to use things from our home, which was very convenient," said Shay. The family filled a basket with toys and Kolt pushed it across the room as he learned to walk.

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1805 Rutherford Ln. ★ Suite 201 ★ Austin, TX 78754 ★ 866-896-6001 ★ 512-458-8600

website: www.txp2p.org ★ Email: info@txp2p.org

Providing ECI services at home helped reduce exposure to bad weather and infectious surroundings for Kolt, who was at higher risk for infection. Each of Kolt's ECI team members travelled more than 70 miles round-trip each visit to work with him and his family in the Lubbock area. "They always kept our family's best interest in mind, and we were so grateful for that," said Shay.

Now Kolt loves football and playing with his brothers. "We set big goals for him," said Shay. "ECI understood Kolt's fragility, yet pushed him to do his best. He met his goals through his hard work and his ECI team's hard work. We are so thankful to ECI."

If you would like to learn more about how ECI helps families, watch our ["Texas ECI: Family to Family" video](#) which offers several families' perspectives on ECI services. Families share their personal experiences and explain how ECI's approach strengthened their confidence to be active participants in their child's development.

Remember anyone can make a referral to ECI. Over 27% of our referrals come from parents, other family members and friends. To locate an ECI program near you, call the DARS Inquiries Line at 1-800-628-5115 or visit <http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/searchprogram.asp>.

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