

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION Is Worth A Pound of Cure

Or so the saying goes. In the case of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities, years of research and resulting data supports this old adage.

Neural circuits, which create the foundation for learning, behavior and health, are most flexible and able to be re-directed during the first three years of life. Therefore, regular and targeted therapy has the greatest chance for success in infants and toddlers. As a child ages, the brain is not as receptive to "change".

Family and the environment play a critical role. Stable relationships and a safe and supportive environment with appropriate nutrition are essential for healthy brain development. Therapeutic intervention in very young children is known to contribute to later success in school, the workplace and society.

developmental delays and disabilities during the critical developmental stage of birth to age three. When intervention is available to infants and toddlers, it is more effective and cost efficient than the same services later in life. Further, Part C supports the right and benefit

any child under the age of three who is identified as affected by illegal substance abuse or who is involved in a substantiated case of neglect or abuse. Statistically, less than half of children in this category receive post-investigative services. Part C is not a stand-alone program. It is intended to facilitate interagency partnerships all working for brighter futures for our youngest residents. In 2009, 348,604 children were served nationally through Part C funding. MDS provided early intervention services to 205 children during the past year thanks to Part C and state funding which is supplemented locally with United Way funding, private donations and foundation grants.

Anyone with concerns about an infant or toddler's development can contact Mesa Developmental Services' Infant and Toddler program at 241-5403 for a free developmental assessment.



of each child in need to have these services provided free and in the family home or other typical settings to assure that learning takes place during every day activities with familiar people.

Families play a crucial role in optimizing their child's development and are supported in these efforts beyond the therapy sessions. This is done by educating the parents to continue the developmental intervention in the course of daily interactions with their child.

High quality early intervention services can change the course of a child's life. Services have been shown to positively impact outcomes, including health, language and communication, cognitive development and social/emotional development. This in turn leads to less economic burden for communities because early intervention can reduce future problems in learning, behavior and health.

In addition to children born with a developmental delay or disability, IDEA recognizes the role environment plays and requires referral to a Part C program for



An Investment In Our Communities

Early Intervention services are funded in great part with federal tax dollars through what is known as Part C of IDEA, which is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Part C was established in 1986 to reduce educational costs by reducing the need for special education services by minimizing

Source of Information: The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center.

GUARDIANSHIPS:

How to Balance Support and Protection with An Individual's Right to Self-Determination

Part 1 of a Two-Part Series

By Marilee Langfitt

Many people with developmental disabilities have guardians. In fact, many of you reading this newsletter may be a guardian for an individual receiving services from one of the eight local service providers. Guardianship is a big responsibility that is taken very seriously by those who assume the role, but the greatest challenge is balancing the tendency to shelter and protect with an individual's right to choice. Good guardians encourage their ward to make their own decisions. Along with this comes the duty to educate the individuals to assure he or she truly understands consequences and risks involved with making decisions. A guardian's "power" is limited to areas where the ward has limitations preventing making an informed decision. When a guardian does make a decision on behalf of their ward, it needs to be the least restrictive option.

A Guardian's Duties:

Except as otherwise limited by the court, a guardian shall make decisions regarding the ward's support, care, education, health and welfare. A guardian shall exercise authority only as necessitated by the ward's limitation, and to the extent possible, shall encourage the ward to participate in decisions and act on his or her own behalf, and assist the ward in developing or regaining capacity to manage his or her own affairs.

Ethical Duties

- Always act in the best interest of the ward
- Maintain close personal contact with the ward to know of the ward's capacities, limitations, needs, opportunities, and physical and mental health
- Know the ward's desires and personal values and consider the expressed desires and personal values of the ward in all decisions
- Make efforts to include the ward in decision making and encourage self-sufficiency
- Avoid transactions that cause a conflict of interest (especially in money management issues)
- Take care and prudence in every decision without imposing your values on the ward
- Take reasonable care and protection of the ward's personal property

Administrative Duties

- Reporting to the Court and interested persons annually with information that requires familiarity with the individual – well-being, health, growth, finances, life changes, etc.
- Handle accounting and taxes if so directed to by the court and if a conservator is not appointed
- Make distributions for care and expenses if so directed by the court
- Consent to medical care, treatment or services for the ward; or, if reasonable, delegate to the ward certain responsibilities affecting the ward's well-being
- Inform the court of changes in address, change in condition or death

Information provided by the Colorado Bar Association.

In the Fall issue of Mesa Advocate, we will address: guardianship vs. conservatorship; guardians' authority; personal liability; compensation; and risks, such as abuse of power.

ROSA'S LAW

A milestone in establishing dignity and respect

It was a long journey for Rosa's family but thanks to their efforts U.S. President Barack Obama officially signed bill S. 2781, more commonly known as Rosa's Law, into federal law last fall. Rosa's Law, which takes its name and inspiration from 9-year-old Rosa Marcellino, a young lady with Down Syndrome, removes the terms "mental retardation" and "mentally retarded" from federal health, education and labor policy and replaces them with people first language - "individual with an intellectual disability" and "intellectual disability." The signing of Rosa's Law is a significant milestone in establishing dignity, inclusion and respect for all people with intellectual disabilities.

The bill, championed by Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) and Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wy.), garnered unanimous support in passing both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

"Respect, value, and dignity – everyone deserves to be treated this way, including people with intellectual disabilities," said Dr. Timothy P. Shriver, Chairman and CEO of Special Olympics. "The President's signature and the unanimous support of both the House and Senate show that our elected officials understand and embrace this ideal. I congratulate Sen. Mikulski and Sen. Enzi for their vision and sensitivity to people with intellectual disabilities everywhere."

"For far too long we have used hurtful words like 'mental retardation' or 'mentally retarded' in our federal statutes to refer to those living with intellectual disabilities," said Sen. Mikulski. "Rosa's Law will make a greatly-needed change that should have been made well before today — and it will encourage us to treat people the way they would like to be treated."

Special Olympics, as the world's largest movement dedicated to promoting respect and human dignity for those with intellectual disabilities, has long championed the use of people first language. In 2004, in response to its athletes' call for change, the Special Olympics International Board of Directors adopted a resolution to update the movement's terminology from "mental retardation" to "people with intellectual disabilities." In 2008, Special Olympics launched the website www.r-word.org to combat the inappropriate use of the R-word in common usage and helped lead protests against media use of the word in response to the film 'Tropic Thunder.' In 2009, the youth-led "Spread the Word to End the Word" campaign launched with rallies in K-12 schools and universities around the country, enlisting young people to combat use of the word and collecting more than 100,000 signatures to pledge inclusion and respect towards all people.

Reprinted in part from www.specialolympics.org