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CPD Legacy Story: Dax Drysdale

Center for Persons With Disabilities

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This legacy story comes from a family involved with the Up to 3 Early Intervention program at the CPD. It is written by Dax's mother, Jill Drysdale.

Looking back I am unsure what would have been the first sign that would have indicated a need to be concerned for my sweet little Dax. Would it have been the constant colic? Would it be the way he resisted being held for comfort? I am not sure what could have been my first sign for concern, but I do remember the moment when I knew there was much reason for concern.

It was a beautiful Spring afternoon and I was being allotted a little bit of peace while my two boys who were ages 3 and 22 months were nicely playing in their room. I chose to use my free time flipping through the channels on the television when I landed on the Oprah Winfrey show. The show was on Autism. I watched these mothers tell their stories, and describe their heartache for their children. I found myself in tears as I felt that I could relate with the many stories they were sharing. I thought of myself with my relationship with my 22 month old Dax. At the end of the program they posted on the screen the red flags for autism. If your child has any of these red flags consider having them screened for autism it said. I read as it listed things such as no babbling by 12 months, no putting two words together by 2, no pointing, does not respond to name, limited eye contact, inappropriate toy play, and repetitive behaviors. As I read over the list my heart just about jumped from my chest as I realized Dax displayed all of them except for the inappropriate toy play. By the next morning I knew it was time to have him seen and I contacted the Early Intervention Up to 3 program at USU.

When I had mentioned to people in my life that I was concerned Dax had Autism, they all comforted me with their words that they were sure that was not the case. Which, instead of comforting me, actually made me feel crazy that no one would believe me that something was not right. As I made that phone call and was greeted by the Up to 3 staff who then went through a questionnaire with me, I finally felt heard as this person on the end of the line did not think I was crazy to be concerned. I could hear it in her kind voice.

I was then visited in my home for an evaluation for my child by a nurse, a speech therapist, an occupational therapist, and an autism specialist. Each individual who visited with me seemed knowledgeable, kind, and most of all concerned with finding out exactly where Dax was and what was needed to help him. They let me know that they did not test for Autism, but would be giving him his services based on where he was developmentally. The results were a little shocking. He was much more behind than I had realized. They offered placement in a program offered through Up to 3 at the Center for Persons with Disabilities. It was a preschool-like setting that helped children who showed autistic like tendencies called the ABC program. We also received other amazing services such as having a service coordinator, a speech therapist, and an occupational therapist come into our home and work with our family.

I never could have imagined that these individuals who stepped in my home those first days for their evaluations would end up feeling like a family to me. They were able to help my child, and teach me the skills I needed to help him the way he needed help. They not only offered me the tools I needed for him, but the support I personally needed to get through what I learned was truly a grieving process as Dax was officially diagnosed with Autism and I realized I was no longer sure what to expect for his future. I never would have been able to help give him the gift of the amazing progression he has been able to make without those individuals, and the Up to 3 program.

We currently are involved in the ASSERT program, a preschool classroom for children with autism, also located within the CPD and are happy that the stellar services we received within the up to 3 program are also carried out through all programs we have been involved with at the Center for Persons with Disabilities.