



Early Intervention - a bright & healthy start

Children deserve a bright and healthy start in life. Recognizing developmental delays and treating them early is vital in the growth of children. Via's Early Intervention program can make all the difference in a family's life. Early identification and age-appropriate therapies are critical to the well-being of children with disabilities. Early Intervention, offered to children from birth to age three, can enhance a child's development and provide support and assistance to families.

At the most critical time in a child's life, Via's Early Intervention specialists recognize and address developmental delays and disabilities. Therapists work with infants and toddlers in their homes and daycare facilities and include caregivers in the teaching process so therapy can continue in all aspects of the child's environment. Infants and toddlers are eligible to receive early intervention services when they have been identified as having a developmental delay or disability in:

- Cognitive development
- Physical development (incl. vision & hearing)
- Communication development
- Sensory development
- Social-emotional development
- Adaptive development

A Bright & Healthy Start

Via's Early Intervention program is staffed by highly qualified and experienced professionals from a variety of



disciplines. Via's speech therapists, occupational therapists and physical therapists work with children in their natural environments (homes, daycares, etc.) to meet the individual needs of each child and their families.

Children are assessed by their therapist to determine their strengths. A plan is developed that helps each child learn and grow according to their needs and abilities. Via's Early Intervention program offers:

- Licensed, highly trained professional staff of speech, occupational and physical therapists
- Community-based delivery in the child's natural environment (in home and childcare settings)
- A plan designed to meet the child's individual needs and centered around family routines
- Team-based approach
- Family training

Early Intervention Therapies

Speech Therapy (ST)

Speech Therapists focus on development of skills that enable a child to express themselves and understand others. Speech Therapists encourage natural development of

communication skills like babies locating sounds and responding to language, and making their first sounds or gestures. Muscle development of the mouth and face is necessary to facilitate speech and eating skills. A Speech Therapist looks at how a child is using their muscles and works to improve "oral-motor" skills for better eating and speech.

Occupational Therapy (OT)

Occupational Therapists focus on how a child receives and uses input from their senses (vision, hearing, touch and movement). By working with this "sensory-motor" development, children acquire "fine motor" skills, such as use of the eyes and hands together, so the environment is more accessible and fun. Fine motor skills are used for play, feeding, dressing and school activities.



Physical Therapy (PT)

Physical Therapists work with children to develop gross motor skills such as rolling, sitting, crawling, walking or climbing stairs. Therapists also work to improve children's ability to maintain good body posture and move through their environment safely.

Special Instruction (SI)

Special Instructors (also known as Early Intervention Teachers) focus on promoting the acquisition of skills by infants and toddlers by designing and enhancing the learning environments, activities, and routines of children and their families. Teachers adapt teaching

techniques to each individual child and work collaboratively with families to enhance a child's skills in a variety of developmental areas, including cognitive and language processes and social interaction.

Enrolling in Via's Program

Early Intervention is administered through your county's Early Intervention department. Via receives referrals from Lehigh or Northampton county after a parent has contacted the county to have their child enrolled in this program.

Children are assessed in their home by a team of therapists to determine if they qualify for Early Intervention services. Once a child qualifies, they are assigned a county service coordinator. Service coordinators establish a service plan with families and Early Intervention specialists which includes desired outcomes for each child and frequency and duration of services. Sessions are designed to include caregivers so therapies can continue outside of the structured therapy session.

Service coordinators refer families to a program like Via's program; families may request and/or choose which service provider they wish to work with.

Early Intervention is a state-wide program entitlement program and is available to all families at no cost, regardless of household income.



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Gracie - Speech Therapy

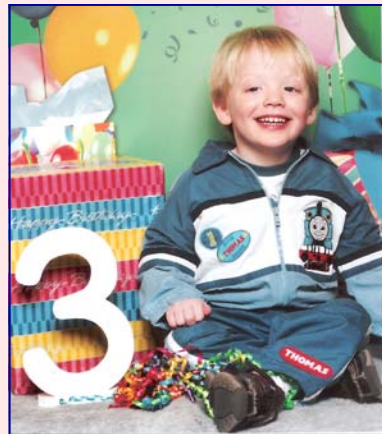


Two-year old Gracie and her older brother's arguing seemed to be just a part of family life. Actually, Gracie was having extreme difficulties communicating and was frustrated in her interactions with those who love her most.

After an evaluation by Via's Early Intervention program, it was discovered that Gracie's speech development was slower than that of most children her age. This discovery helped the family understand that Gracie's behavior - which often included biting and pushing - was a result of her frustration of not being able to communicate her feelings using speech.

Via began working with Gracie and her family on a weekly basis. Gracie's mother says the change has been dramatic since Via started working with her. Gracie's speech has improved and she has learned how to tell her family what she needs and wants without frustration. Gracie's mother enjoys watching her learn through play and the steps Gracie has made in communicating with her family have made all the difference in her children's relationship.

A Mother's Endorsement - Occupational Therapy



A Via occupational therapist, Kathy, worked with a little boy, Jacob, and his family for over two years. Kathy provided in-home early intervention services before he transitioned out of Early Intervention program and began services with his school district's special education Intermediate Unit.

At the family's last early intervention session, Jacob's mother showed Kathy his memory book. Jacob's book features a special section called "Thank You, Ms. Kathy" that includes a picture of Mom, Dad, Jacob and his two siblings and this heartfelt note:

Dear Ms. Kathy,

We greatly appreciate all you have done in your work with Jacob. It is obvious that his improvements are a direct correlation to your hard work with him. We truly believe that Jacob would not be as advanced in his developmental milestones as he is now if it were not for your consistent hard work, patience, kindness and love for your work and for the children you serve.

We feel that you have gone beyond the expectations that are required of you to perform for Jacob's needs. He has made such excellent progress in not only the occupational therapy area but other areas such as social expression, development of individual interests, personality development, expression of wants, needs and feelings, etc.

These advancements have helped prepare him for his acceptance into pre-school, prior to becoming three years old. You go above and beyond in your work with children - it is obvious that you love your work and are well skilled at what you do. Thank you for all of your efforts and know that we will miss you and the joy you have brought to Jacob on a weekly basis.

Our deepest thanks, Jacob's family

Via of the Lehigh Valley is a non-profit agency that provides services for children and adults with developmental disabilities like cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism and intellectual disability. Via's mission is to provide leadership, support, opportunities and resources for people with disabilities so they may be independent, productive and enjoy full lives within the community.

The official registration and financial information of Via of the Lehigh Valley, Inc. may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1 (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



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