Meet Wesley

Wesley’s Story, written by his mother, Sabrina Pettersson

Wesley’s first word was at 18 months old and he was not saying much at the age of two. I knew I should call Early Intervention because something just wasn’t right! I called, Wesley was evaluated and he qualified for speech therapy. He received speech services in home for six months - while he was 2 to 2.5 years old. During those six months of speech therapy Wesley made so much progress that he “graduated” from the program. It was amazing! He had caught up!

Almost a year after graduating from Early Intervention Wesley started to plateau. He was not progressing much, lacked conversational skills, had sensory issues, and was not understanding things. He had a lack of awareness. I had him tested again. This time around he qualified for speech therapy and occupational therapy! He was 3 years old and I ended up enrolling him in preschool where he received some services at school and some at home. While he was receiving therapy and going to preschool from January 2019 to June 2019, he made the most progress he had ever made in his life! He has made SO much progress since we began receiving services again, it’s incredible! Wesley is a different kid and Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education Services made such a difference.
Last fall, I was really worried. Now, I am so impressed by how much Wesley has improved. He is almost 4.5 years old now and he is thriving. He still receives speech and occupational therapy at preschool. I know when kids are delayed, it is so important to give them therapy EARLY! It makes all the difference in the world. It is so difficult to correct speech issues later in life…I was a school counselor before I had children and saw this firsthand!

If you'd like to share your families experience with Early Intervention and/or Preschool Special Education services please contact Kristen Rogers at kristen@thechildrensagenda.org.

Understanding the Kids Can't Wait Campaign

Overall campaign goal: To successfully advocate for the reform and improvement of New York’s Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education systems, bringing them into compliance with federal law and ensuring that young children receive the services and therapy they need in a timely manner.

State fiscal year 2020-2021 advocacy goal: Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislator should take significant action to ensure that New Yorkers ages birth to 5 with developmental delays and disabilities are receiving services to which they are entitled, such as evaluations, speech/language therapy, physical therapy, Special Education classes and other interventions.

2020-21 fiscal year asks:

Early Intervention Specific Recommendations
- PRIORITY: Increase rates for EI rates for providers, evaluators and service coordinators by 10% in the New York State FY2020-21 budget.

-The Governor and the NYS Legislator should adopt policies that ensure insurance companies pay their fair share to cover the cost of EI services.

*Preschool Special Education Specific Recommendations*

- PRIORITY: Increase Preschool Special Education classroom and evaluation rates by 10% in the New York State FY2020-21 budget.

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**Advocacy Letter Drive**

Letters to the governor urging him to increase payment rates for Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education are steadily coming in. If you'd like to join others throughout the state to amplify this message you may do so by clicking [here](https://thechildrensagenda.salsalabs.org/KidsCantWaitJuly20190_copy1_copy1).

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**YOU have the power to affect change!**

In January 2019, Kim Dooher stumbled across a flier regarding The Children’s Agenda’s advocacy trip to Albany. Having spoken at county legislators meetings Kim was eager to have an opportunity to speak to state legislators about the Early Intervention program.
Kim didn’t understand how a federally mandated program that has benefitted her daughter tremendously is unavailable to so many others. Kim fervently boarded the bus on 2/4/19 and what has happened since is astounding.

In March 2019, Kim held events at local libraries as an outreach effort to meet more families. It was at these events that she met fellow parents Danielle Salamone and Brittany Jencik who were also passionate about the cause. The three formed together and became Parents Helping Parents Coalition of Monroe County (PHP). The PHP facebook group they started in July 2019 currently has about 100 members. This group of parents have made their voices heard by meeting with legislators to educate them about the issue, speaking at county legislator meetings and marching in the Suffrage Parade. They are also playing an instrumental role in circulating the advocacy letter to the governor throughout the community. Their advocacy efforts coupled with that of local providers and other local advocates contributed to Monroe County raising rates for preschool related services by 15%.

The Children’s Agenda is appreciative of the work PHP is doing here in Monroe County. We also recognize that the Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education provider capacity issues are a statewide concern and we need Albany to hear the cry from all the various regions. If this issue is dear to your heart and you’d like to lead the charge in your area but aren’t sure where or how to start then PHP wants to help. They may be reached via email at parentshelpingparentsmonroe@gmail.com. The Children’s Agenda is here to assist too.
Albany Visit

Join us on Tuesday, February 4th as the Kids Can't Wait Campaign amplifies its message in Albany. Stay tuned for more details about this wonderful event. If you think you may be interested in joining us please send an email to kristen@thechildrensagenda.org.

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