

## Early Start Family Stories Video Transcript – Episode 4

- Hi, my name is Diamond Alexander.

- And my name is Greg Alexander.

- And let's see, we have four children. We have a seven-year-old. We have twin, three-year-olds, they just turned three. Jordan who has a mild to moderate ASD, and Journey who has mild ASD. And completing our family, we have a 16-month-old named, Jayden.

- Hmm.

- Yeah.

- That's us!

- As soon as the referral was put in, Early Start was amazing, they contacted us and we filled out questionnaires, and they helped us determine that Jordan and Journey were both eligible for services. They both were gonna get PT, physical therapy, since they weren't walking yet, occupational therapy, speech. That's what we were given at that time. So Early Start was really amazing because I had this child with Jordan who was struggling and I saw that he was struggling and I didn't really know what to do with those struggles. I wasn't sure how to help him. Having two children receive services and taking them out of the house and then also we have a young baby as well, it just was really difficult to schedule all of those services. So having providers come to the house... And Early Start is really good about finding providers who will work in home. And I just think that that is amazing. I want to go so far as to say imperative because it's difficult to get young children out to all of the different services that they often require.

- But one of the things that we'd learned in the the education course that we took is that it's not our job as parents to cure our children, but to support them. It's about recognizing the gift that they are, that we've been given these lives that we've been put in charge of, to guide them on their best path. And there's a relief in knowing that we don't always have to have the answers.

- Having a child with special needs can be very exhausting. And having two children with special needs is doubly exhausting. And we strive to be the absolute best parents that we can. And in that process, we

pour immense amounts of ourselves out to our children. And I think I'm very grateful for the Early Start program because that increased energy that we pour out doesn't go unrecognized. And one of the other services that we're very fortunate to receive from the regional center is respite care. And so we get 24 hours per child of help from an individual who loves children and understands their needs and works with them and pours into them and meets them where they are. And that time is imperative to have a moment to collect my thoughts, have a moment to grocery shop. Or it gives Greg and I a chance to sit down and remember each other's names. And so I've learned that it is great to figure out the best way to help my children and to meet their needs, but that it is also great as a parent to take a moment for myself to recognize that I need a moment for myself and to have the support of a regional center who says, "Hey, we recognize that you need this time and this support as well." I think every parent's goal is for their child to be independent, successful citizens, members of society. I would advise parents to trust their instincts and trust your intuitions. You know your child, you are with your child. Doctors are amazing and they're amazing professionals, and they're not with your child 24 hours a day the way you are. So if you feel like there is a delay, if you feel like there's a concern, bring it up and continue to bring it up. And if you don't feel like your pediatrician is honoring what you're saying or is dismissing what you're saying, ask for a referral. Seek out another doctor. Seek out the help that you know that your child needs. Don't let someone dismiss you if you know that there is a concern.

- [Narrator] If you are having concerns about your child's development or would like more information about California's Early Start program, please call 1-800-515-BABY. That's 1-800-515-2229.