

Parenting Awareness Month

Spotlight on Parenting Support through *Early On Michigan*

The Issue: Every parent wants their child to reach their full potential and enter school ready to learn. For parents with children with a developmental delay or health condition that could lead to a delay, support through [Early On Michigan](#) offers critical home-based early intervention to help parents provide the best support possible to their struggling infants and toddlers (children are eligible up to 36 months.).

Despite the fact that at least two in five children provided appropriate early intervention services do not need special education in preschool or K-12, Michigan has not invested in *Early On* as other states do and relies exclusively on a nearly \$12 million annual award from the federal government. In recent months, some state funds for *Early On* have been directed to support Flint children exposed to harmful lead poisoning through the municipal water supply.

Michigan's Children continues to prioritize *Early On* services in its policy and budget advocacy and this year was instrumental in urging that the state direct Michigan dollars not just to Flint, but where needed statewide. Without a comprehensive effort to provide early intervention for all who need it, Michigan will not be successful in its own goals to improve 3rd grade reading proficiency and to become a top 10 education state in 10 years.



A Mother's Story: Barbara Lubic, a single mother from Grand Rapids, adopted three children from foster care; all had varying degrees of developmental delays and received *Early On* services until age 3. Lubic said the personal training she received from *Early On* professionals, Erin and Mary, made all the difference in the world for her and the children. Over the years, the women became "like family," she added.

Lubic, a Grand Valley University professor of special education, along with her nanny, gained valuable knowledge, training and tips to address a variety of problems including poor muscle tone, feeding problems and sensory issues. When she noticed her older son was having a hard time learning to crawl because of poor muscle development on one side of his body, Lubic learned games to play with Harold, now 6, to strengthen him. With both sons affected by sensory issues, she was given tips on potty

training that were specific to kids with sensory disorders. Home visits were always coordinated to accommodate her work schedule. And she frequently received informational articles about parenting,

notices about seminars pertinent to her family's needs, and frequent phone calls to check on her and the children's progress. The advice was always friendly and personal with offers like, "Here's an activity for you that your kiddos would really enjoy," she recalled. Overall, Lubic said the support she received bolstered her own parenting skills and empowered her to be the best parent she could be for Angela, 10, Harold, and Alexander, 4.

"It was a true connection with us -- not services that would be provided and then they would leave," Lubic said. "Here I was a college professor of special education and often thought, wait a minute, shouldn't I know that? But my work was with older children.

"I really hadn't expected them in the beginning to be there and support my parenting and help normalize some of my struggles," she added. "It was invaluable to me to have a parent-mentor walking along side me."

Today, the children are all thriving. Alex has overcome his speech problems (he made no sound other than a scream for the first two and a half years of his life) and his language is now "above average." His mom calls him a poster child for early intervention.

"My kids were surrounded by people who helped them overcome their difficulties," she said. "I felt I had this team of professionals who literally were wrapping their arms around my family, with friendly voices, and support without judgment."

Read more about it in these Michigan's Children reports:

[Better Financing *Early On*® Michigan Early Intervention – January 2016 Update \(1/2016\)](#)

[*Early On*® Michigan Early Intervention: Supporting Infants, Toddlers and Their Families – January 2016 Update \(1/2016\)](#)

*Watch a special video about another family's journey with *Early On* on YouTube:*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzTVor9VJ00>

For additional Parenting Awareness Month resources, click on
<http://www.preventionnetwork.org/#!2016planningpieces/cb3>