

Happy 30th Birthday to Part C



By: Mary Jacob

It's hard to believe 30 short years ago infants and toddlers weren't required to receive any services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) known 30 years ago simply as Public Law 94-142 - The Education for All Handicapped Children Act. When the original special education law was passed in 1975 a critical group of children were omitted from the law - babies and toddlers. Because of research we knew the critical formative years were birth to five years of age, yet this age group was somehow left out.

Public Law 94-142 was a great law and provided an immediate positive impact on millions of children with disabilities that were traditional school age. Thankfully, the major flaw was detected and corrected, even though it took over a decade.

In 1986, Public Law 94-142 was finally amended to include infants and toddlers through Public Law 99-457. This amendment supported the right to early intervention services for all infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with a disability who were at risk of having a substantial developmental delay. Further amendments in 1990 brought major changes to the law and created the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

When I reflect back over the past 30 years of early intervention services, it is with mixed emotions. I've witnessed everything from no services to great services back to minimal services. I often wonder if "we" the public, and the policymakers get how important early intervention services are to infants and toddlers. Do they realize there is a very short window of opportunity that can make a huge impact in their life? Do they realize spending money on quality early intervention services will pay off and cost

the state less in the long run? I have no doubt we have quality services in some areas, with some providers. But, I also know we still have places in our state with minimum providers and very limited service minutes. As professionals, we all know the importance of early intervention and yet, the services are traditionally very limited in comparison to Part B services once a child is officially in Kindergarten.

What exactly are Louisiana’s Part C Services?

Part C Services under IDEA is for infants and toddlers, birth to 36 months who have a medical condition likely to result in a developmental delay, or who have developmental delays. Delays include cognitive, motor, vision, hearing, communication, social-emotional or adaptive development may be eligible for services. Louisiana Part C Services are called EarlySteps. EarlySteps services are designed to improve the family’s capacity to enhance their child’s development. These services are provided in the child’s natural environment, such as a child’s home, child care or any other community setting typical for children birth to 36 months.

Services include Assistive Technology, audiology, health services, nutrition services, occupational therapy services, physical therapy services, psychological services, service coordination, social work services, special instruction, speech-language pathology, translation interpreter services, transportation, and vision services.

Anyone can make an EarlySteps referral by contacting their local System Point of Entry (SPOE). A list of SPOE’s can be found online at <http://ldh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/directory/detail/609> or you can contact FHF of Jefferson at 504.888.9111.

Happy Birthday to Part C. You’ve come a long way baby!

