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MICHELLE
Parent, MA

@EPLP #ElFaceToFace

Michelle

Our family started EI services for Jackson when he was three weeks old. This was before COVID happened. I work in early intervention, and self-referred to have extra eyes on him. We loved our service coordinator, and the services Jackson was getting. When COVID happened, both the program that I work for, and the program my family receives services from, shifted away from in-person visits to telehealth. At that time, we were also in the process of switching service coordinators. It was a lot of change to happen all at once.

Telehealth services through our program were good. Our program really used the Parents Interacting With Infants (PIWI) philosophy, so the shift to telehealth wasn't too difficult. Our service coordinator was very understanding of our schedule, and the balance of home responsibilities like cleaning and laundry, toddler parenting, and working from home. Because I work for another program, and was meeting with all my families using telehealth, we were always talking about what a return to in-person services could look like. I knew our service coordinator had been vaccinated in Phase One, but I was early in my pregnancy with our second child, and I was waiting a bit longer to get vaccinated at my doctor's advice.

Around that time, our program started surveying us about returning to in-person services. They asked if we would be comfortable in-person, if we would agree to wear masks, if we would feel better doing outside visits, if we would socially distance when the provider was in our home, and if we would agree to be as active in visits as we were pre-COVID. I thought it was very considerate of the program to ask us in writing about how we felt about returning to face-to-face services. I was worried about all the unknowns, like the houses they would be going in and out of before they made it to ours, but mostly about Jackson and I being unvaccinated. He was just starting daycare outside the home, and I really was craving normalcy. He wanted me ALL the time, all day long. Our service coordinator let us know that whatever we decided we were comfortable with doing, was okay with her.

It worked out that I was able to get my vaccine just before our first scheduled in-person visit. It was a gorgeous day, so we played outside. She kept her mask on the whole time. Jackson was a little hesitant at first, but he warmed up. The first time we had rain during our scheduled visit, our provider called me

and asked if I would rather have a telehealth visit instead. I said no, and we had it inside. The adults all wore masks. Since we have restarted in-person EI, we have added to our IFSP and have new providers. Jackson has gotten comfortable with them all and now it feels normal to have our visits inside our home.