

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Emily Olshefski. I have been receiving services from the Family Advocacy Home Visitation Program since my son, Tristin, was born 3 years ago. No words could ever describe how truly grateful I am for this program. I have no idea where we would be (physically, mentally & emotionally) without them. I will however tell you where we are WITH them being a very vital part of our lives.

Shortly after an extremely horrible marriage and divorce, I unexpectedly became pregnant. Due to several complications, I was put on bed rest my entire pregnancy. Not being able to work I moved from PA to CT to live with the father of my unborn at this point son. I had absolutely no family or friends here, in a whole new state, beginning a whole new life. 9 months later a beautiful baby was handed to me to care for. I was terrified, lost, feeling hopeless and alone. Then (I will never forget) into my Hosp room walked Cat Greaves (a Family advocacy worker) offering her services. The moment she said the words "We would love to offer our support" I remember bursting into tears. More than support, she was offering me HOPE! Everything will be ok!

Everyone says that they wish babies would come with owner manuals. Well, Family Advocacy has been my owner's manual. I was quickly set up in the home visitation program (which in it's self is amazing being that I had no form of transportation), and with a Family Advocacy worker Cyndi Perry. She quickly became apart of my family. Giving me guidance and knowledge on how to care for Tristin. Through effective swaddling and soothing methods, teething, colic, and developmental activities, she was with me every step of the way.....I wasn't alone. Because of the knowledge Cyndi equipped me with and because of HER own observance we saw developmental regression and delays when my son was 16 months old. Talk about early intervention! Contacting my son's Dr and bringing Birth to Three into the picture we soon discovered that Tristin was Autistic. Another day that I will never forget was the day of his official diagnosis. Driving away from CCMC, after being told by a Pediatric Neurologist that my son was Autistic, I felt like my heart was ripped from my chest. The hopeless, lost feeling returned, what do I do? What do I do!? Panic came upon me. With no real knowledge of "Autism" I was terrified, crushed. As I was driving home I couldn't help but cry, deep agony of a mother's heart for her son. I wanted my mom or my sisters or a friend but they are all in PA. I needed a hug. I needed hope. Instead of going home, I drove right to Family Advocacy, where Cyndi gave me the hug & hope that I so desperately needed and said the words "Everything will be ok".

During our visits there after Cyndi brought me support, education, and knowledge of resources to help us through this new journey. Without her in the very beginning I would NOT have picked up on Tristin's delays and HE would not have gotten the early intervention that has been so critical. Soon I wasn't terrified. I had more of an understanding for Autism and my son. Fast forward a few years... my son will be turning 3 next week. We (myself, Cyndi, and Birth to Three) together, have been going through the transitional stages of getting my son into Special Ed Pre-School. This is our last week with Birth to Three in our home which is sad however not devastating because I know that Cyndi will still be "in our corner".....everything is going to be ok. Cyndi and Family Advocacy have provided me wonderful recourses and knowledge of CPAC and other organizations to help us through Tristin's school journey. They are still with me, helping to guide me with my next life's Chapter. They have given me the desire and passion to take classes to be able to not only help my own son, but to help other families and children who need support and hope during very difficult times. You see Family Advocacy's knowledge, support, guidance, and hope not only helps families in the present, but in generations to come.

Sincerely ,

Emily Olshefski

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