

# *A Thankful Parent*

I was going through a pile of old mail and found the E.I. flyer with information about the Staff appreciation luncheon. Hopefully it is not too late to get this note to you as a thank you note to the entire Early Intervention staff and in particular to Linda Floyd, the Speech Pathologist.

I thought your idea to include cards or note to E.I. staff was a great idea! I would like to applaud the Early Intervention staff on two levels. As an Integrated Public School Preschool teacher, I have worked with E.I. staff for nearly seventeen years. My contacts with them have always been professional, friendly and caring. They are on the front lines, often the first ones to assess a child and have to say to a tearful parent, your child does have special needs. They are also on the front lines to provide services and therapy to the child and family, and are the first ones to win that parent's trust. That is a huge responsibility and they do their job very well. Susan Lozier is one of my primary contacts at E.I.; and my colleagues and I have found that the information and assessments that Susan shares with us is always accurate. Susan and her team know their children and know where they are functioning. As the next person to receive a child through a referral, I appreciate this and am better equipped to help the child when she/he transitions to my program.

When I became a special educator twenty years ago, I never guessed that my own child would require the services of this awesome team. As much as I already know about E.I., I was still pleasantly surprised to see them in a different light – as parent

of a child who needed E.I. services due to her deafness. While I could easily write a book on what it is like to go from special needs professional to parent of a child with special needs (during a one hour hearing test), I'll keep this brief. I can best sum it up by saying "I now get it!" I now know and understand why parents are so nervous about leaving Early Intervention. I know because I felt it, too.

E.I. provides parents with a strong support system of not just services, but encouragement, caring, kindness and information. My first service provider was Janice Wenstrom, who offered my family information on deafness, American Sign Language, and consistently reassured us, when we struggled with this new language, that "we could do it!" Our family was shocked and saddened when we learned of Lily's deafness, but Janice and Linda Floyd, Speech Pathologist were both there to help and guide us. Janice was wonderful and we were very sad to see her go.

As Lily approached her third birthday, I struggled with the same apprehension and sadness that any other parent feels as they know their child is about to leave the "safe umbrella," of Early Intervention and the special one-on-one therapy and support of E.I. Yet I am well aware of how the transition from E.I. to public s works. So in closing, I just wanted to offer my heartfelt thanks to the wonderful, compassionate, and dedicated staff of Early Intervention; and to applaud all their hard work... and to say a special thank you for helping my family, and the many, many preschoolers that you have passed along to me.

*Sincerely,  
Shirley Bourque-Fruguglietti*

*This article is excerpted and adapted from the Connecticut Birth to Three online Fact Sheet*

## Get The Most Out of Your Child's Early Intervention Visits

**Parents:** *You know your child best. You have valuable information about your child; early intervention staff need your input just as much as you need theirs. Remember, you are and will be your child's best, most important, and most constant teacher and advocate.*

**When you schedule a visit:** Your schedule and daily routines are important. If a day or time proposed for the visit is not convenient, say so. The visit is for the benefit of your child and family. It should not be disruptive to other important things on your schedule.

**Be prepared.** Make sure you schedule your visit when you can be there and not have a lot of distractions. Decide how brothers and sisters will be involved or plan an activity for them.

**Plan the agenda.** Let the early intervention staff know what you want to discuss at your visit. Remember or write down any questions that you may have since your last visit.

**Be ready to share what has happened since your last visit.** Think about or make a list of anything you think is important to share, such as a trip to the doctor or changes in routine. Think about what suggestions have worked well and those that have not worked so well.

**During Your Visit: Ask questions.** Make sure you understand what is being said. If you are not sure why something is being done, just ask. If it helps, ask for things in writing.

**Ask for a demonstration.** Ask to be shown anything you don't understand. Practice strategies together during the visit. Hands-on instruction is the best way to learn.

**Discuss ideas for carry over between visits.** Time between visits is just as important as the visit itself. Be sure to talk about ways to use the strategies and activities during everyday family activities.

**After Your Visit: Try things out.** Try out the suggested activities. What is working? What isn't?

**Make a note of it.** Remember to make a mental note or keep a notebook for questions that may come up between visits.

**Have fun.** The best teaching and learning occurs when you and your child are having fun.

**Celebrate successes** - even the tiny ones!!

## WEB SITINGS

### e-ADVISOR

*If you are parent or teacher of a child or youth with visual impairment, the e-ADVISOR is a website designed for you. This internet resource is available online at: [www.e-advisor.us](http://www.e-advisor.us)*

The e-ADVISOR is a collaborative project designed to facilitate communication among parents, teachers and doctors of children with visual impairment.

Some of the things you'll find on the website are:

- Information sheets on eye disorders
- Virtual tours and tutorials
- Parent narratives and resources
- Multimedia presentations
- Discussion Boards

To access the e-ADVISOR website, you need a computer with access to the Internet. If you do not have a home computer, you may be able to use one locally at:

- Programs for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Your public library
- A public school library
- An Internet cafe

Questions? Problems? Suggestions? Contact us at:

The Coordinating Center  
Children's Hospital Boston  
Department of Ophthalmology  
Fegan Building, 4th Floor  
300 Longwood Avenue  
Boston, MA 02115-773

or

[advisor@childrens.harvard.edu](mailto:advisor@childrens.harvard.edu)  
617-355-4174 (phone)  
617-730-0392 (fax)

# Family TIES of Massachusetts

**Family TIES of Massachusetts** is a statewide information and parent-to-parent support network for families of children with special needs or a chronic illness. Parent consultants work in the state regional health offices, providing support to families in their regions. Family TIES is a project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Family and Community Health, Division for Special Health Needs.

*Services provided by Family TIES of Massachusetts:*

## ***Information and Referral***

Toll-free, state-wide phone line (1-800-905-TIES) and regional offices make calling convenient. The program offers an opportunity to speak with a parent who can connect families with resources and the next level of services, if needed. Information can be shared on a wide variety of topic, including diagnoses, community resources and services, support groups. Resource packets, can be prepared on public benefits and other support services

## ***Early Intervention***

A central directory of Early Intervention (**EI**) programs throughout the state is maintained. Contact information for referrals is available by phone and electronically on our website.

## ***Parent-to-Parent Connections***

Parent-to-Parent matching is offered by health concern, special need, or area of interest. Connections can be made with other, support networks providing parent-to-parent support services. Support Parents are offered training and continued support.

## ***Resource Directory***

The Family TIES Directory of Resources for Families of Children with Special Needs is published annually. The online access is available on our website: [www.massfamilyties.org](http://www.massfamilyties.org)

## ***Website***

The website offers information for parents and providers on subjects related to Early Intervention and other services and supports for children with special needs and their families. "Submit A Question" provides direct access to any member of the Family TIES staff. Online enrollment is available for Family TIES Advisors.

## ***Workshops and Training***

Program staff participates in the annual conference of the Federation for Children with Special Needs. "Next Steps" workshops focus on building skills and strengthening Community connections.

Contact your Regional Coordinator to make arrangements for a local offering.

## ***Share Your VOICE!***

Family TIES of Massachusetts invites you to share your voice and become a parent leader in Massachusetts. Parents of children with special needs advocate daily for their children's educational, medical, and social needs. Each of us has the potential to be an advisor to the "powers that be." Family TIES is offering you the opportunity to take the next step in advocacy - become a Family TIES advisor. As a Family TIES parent advisor, you will be invited to share your expertise with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and be given the opportunity to participate in whatever way fits into your life. Training is available. Some examples include:

- \*Attend focus groups
- \*Participate in phone or written surveys
- \*Serve on an advisory board
- \*Review educational materials or grants
- \*Participate on a committee
- \*Become part of a phone tree

Would you like to help us make a difference? Please contact Joanne Spencer, Family TIES Parent-to-Parent and outreach Coordinator, **781-774-6740**.