

Hello, my name is Jacquelynn Rohrich; I am a mother of two children diagnosed with Autism. Ella was born on May 7, 2007 and was the happiest baby I had ever seen, she progressed in all ways from talking, walking and showing affection until she was about 13 months and we noticed that her spark was gone, she no longer smiled or looked us in the eye, no longer talked or made and noise really our daughter had disappeared, we started bringing up the issue right after we had noticed it but it wasn't until she was about 18 months old that the doctor finally referred us to early intervention. She started services right away and we dove head first in trying to get her to communicate or really to come back to us, we started going to the autism/pdd support group held at becep on the second Tuesday of the month and tried to feel out if this is what we were indeed dealing with. Around the age of 22 months we started the quest to getting her the official diagnosis, we set up an appointment with Dr. Degree and it was set for a few days after Ella turned two. She was then diagnosed within two weeks of her appointment.

At the time the autism wavier wasn't in existence we actually were on the traditional wavier through west central and had speech therapy twice a week and ot 2 a month. My husband and I truly believe that the help from Kris Cleary her speech therapist we got our Ella back, it's a weird thing to say but you would be shocked to know the extreme changes that therapy has done for Ella, she is talking, showing affection, looking people in the eyes and recognizing her peers at school. But that wasn't without many struggles and hours of therapy and work. She is the prime example of how therapy, in home and outpatient therapies can really help. She attends becep in their afternoon preschool program, without a personal aide and is becoming such an amazing child, she's smart and witty and it blows my mind to see how she has matured of the last year.

Now as for our son, Cohen he was born on Feb 13th 2009, and let's just say this was a super surprised pregnancy. At the time we were so worried, we researched the statistics for having another child after having Ella, and knew that being a boy his odds weren't the best and having a sibling with autism hurt his odds as well, we prayed but knew to be ready for anything. He also was a happy baby, slept amazing, laughed and cooed as well, but like Ella just kind of disappeared. I blamed myself for a while, was it my fault because I was so consumed in trying to get Ella to develop better that I shut off my worries for Cohen. Did I not fight as hard for him? Could I have done more for him? We started services with Cohen way earlier for him hoping to catch him up faster than it took to catch Ella up, we played the denial game for a good while till around two we just knew it was time to dive into the deep end and get him diagnosed as well.

We started the process for the autism wavier early spring of 2011, we got Ella and Cohen evaluated by the travel evaluation team and they were both approved in May of 2011, the risk of Ella not getting back on the traditional wavier was too great of a risk in comparison to the services and support the wavier offered. Especially since Ella would be four at the time of acceptance and it would only be good for a year. We then decided to move on with Cohen and were truly excited to see what this could do for him. It was a long process to start the wavier in fact I think it took a good month after the acceptance to

actually start using the services, we were introduced to a new provider for early intervention, a group called three speed, we were a little apprehensive because we had used becep for over two years, but decided this was our only option so let's give it a try.

With any new company there are going to be bumps in the road but I felt like there never was a promised kept. The option for therapy times was limited to Fridays only, which didn't work for our family because Ella didn't have school on Fridays and completely took over on therapy days for Cohen, we never met the OT and Cohen missed out on months of getting really good therapy. We then decided to get Cohen evaluated early for the traditional wavier after three. He was approved and we thought since we weren't really happy with the services we were or weren't receiving on the autism wavier let's open up a spot for another family since we had two. The only thing we were going to lose was three speed and that wasn't a good enough excuse to stay. Worried that Cohen wouldn't have adequate therapy we decided to get him and Ella into red door pediatric therapy and he is doing amazing after just over a month there.

The autism wavier also allowed the chance to get educational tools (i.e. Ipad) and we still to this day have not received it. We've been approved for it for many months but keep getting the run around for whose fault it is that things aren't imputed correctly and it's a shame because I believe that the Ipad would open so many doors for both of our kids, we have proof just by them using our almost broken iPod touch.

I guess you could say that I have two very different stories to share, Ella who thrived on the services that were offered to her and Cohen who somehow wasn't given the same. We are thankful for the many services that are provided and we will keep fighting no matter what but we do hope that our story opens some eyes especially when voting for special needs in our city, Therapy truly helps when it is consistent, respite allows me to have sanity and me time.

Thank you for your time.

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