Never Too Early Alabama

OP-ED/BLOG POST (SAMPLE)

**You know best. Know EARLY.**

All babies are uniquely and wonderfully made, and they change a lot in the first three years. While all babies are different, they should all reach certain milestones in their development to be sure they are growing up healthy and prepared for success in school and life.

*You know best. Know EARLY.* is a public awareness campaign intended to get important information about early intervention to more Alabama families, especially those in rural and underserved areas of our state. It’s critical that parents and caregivers know EARLY if their child has a developmental delay and that early intervention services are available to them at no cost.

Alabama’s Early Intervention System (AEIS) is a network of services and supports for families whose children under the age of three have a delay in their physical, social-emotional, cognitive (brain), and language development. In [insert city/town], [insert name of local AEIS provider] helps families of eligible children develop a plan and learn ways to help their child overcome these delays.

Early Intervention (EI) can lead not only to positive outcomes for children and families but also for the community. Research over the past two decades has shown that adults who participated in programs like early intervention as children were more likely to graduate high school, less likely to commit a crime, more likely to be employed, and more likely to go to college, get better jobs and earn higher incomes. In a state working to grow its skilled workforce to meet tomorrow’s employment needs, early intervention can be a catalyst to that growth.

Every child from birth to age three is entitled under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (IDEA Part C) “to support in reaching developmental milestones if they have a developmental delay.” But too many Alabama families are unaware of how EI services can have an enormous impact on their child’s ability to learn and grow. AEIS supports the family by empowering and equipping them to integrate developmentally appropriate activities into their everyday routines that strengthen their child’s physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional skills and enable them to reach their full potential.

Parents love watching their babies grow; every moment they do something new is like a miracle. But when there are concerns, it’s critical that they find out if there is a developmental delay as early as possible. It’s never too early for Early Intervention.

For more information or to refer a child, visit nevertooearlyAL.org or call 800-543-3098.

Alabama’s Early Intervention System is a division of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, which provides services to Alabamians with disabilities at any age and in all 67 Alabama counties. Eight core values guide AEIS: 1) Family-centered, 2) Developmentally appropriate, 3) Individualized, 4) In the child’s natural environment, 5) Trains/equips parents and caregivers, 6) Collaborative, 7) Routines-based intervention and 8) Evidence-based practices. More about ADRS can be found at rehab.alabama.gov.