

The Spencer Family Story

A child's early years often bring wonder and excitement for families! Children grow and change rapidly from birth to kindergarten entrance, and are learning everyday.

Some babies and young children need extra help to learn and grow.

As parents watch their child grow and develop, they might notice when their child smiles, rolls over, sits up, walks, plays, coos, cries and talks. While all young children grow and change at their own rate, some children experience delays in their development. Special health conditions may affect children's development also. Because parents know their child best, they may be the first to notice that their child is developing differently than other babies or young children.

Ryan and Tessa Spencer, of Cologne, decided it was time to expand their family after 4 years of marriage. They were so excited about the pregnancy, but soon found out they weren't going to get a perfect "Gerber" baby. Their baby had spina bifida. Ian was born and had several surgeries to repair his back and had a shunt put in his head. The Spencers

were referred to Help Me Grow before Ian was discharged from Children's Hospital, as the staff knew Ian would need assistance and help in many different areas.

Help Me Grow and early intervention services helped the Spencer family in many ways.

With Ian's lower leg paralysis, Ryan and Tessa thought he would be unable to roll, sit, Crawl, walk or get from point A to point B. Early intervention staff taught the parents what Ian should be doing and how to get him to be at the same developmental level as a child without a disability.

"They have been full of information for us as parents, which puts us at ease. It's comforting knowing he is in great hands and that they are there to help him grow in every way possible mentally and physically. The therapy sessions have strengthened him to sit,

roll and pull himself around. We would never have guessed he would be doing half the things that he is doing today. Ian is nearly one year old and has lower leg paralysis, but we feel we have our perfect "Gerber" baby and love him unconditionally. We have many obstacles and challenges ahead and believe that because of Help Me Grow and early intervention, our son will walk someday!", said Tessa Spencer.

Ryan Spencer advises, "Don't be afraid to ask for help! Help Me Grow is a wonderful program that has so many different areas to better you child. Sometimes it's hard admitting that your child has a disability or a learning problem, but Help Me Grow is

wonderful at helping and putting you at ease."

Free help is available

Minnesota children from birth to five years old, who are eligible for Help Me Grow, can receive services in their home, child care setting or preschool. These services are free to eligible families regardless of income or immigrant status. In Carver County Help Me Grow was previously known as First Step.

Assistance from experts

Early childhood specialists will work with eligible children and families to plan the services and supports they need. These may include: special instruction and other services, including speech, physical and occupational therapy; ways that a family can support their child's development at home; and connections to community services and programs. Early childhood specialists can help find other community resources and early childhood programs for those children not eligible for Help Me Grow.

Visit www.MNParentsKnow.info for more information about how young children develop plus ideas to help your child learn and grow.

Call 952-368-0160 in Carver County or 1-866-693-4769 statewide if you have questions or concerns about your child's development.

