

Embracing Our Future

(link for viewing at end of transcript)

[Adults and children singing]: London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down...

Narrator: The early years-- so important to a child's life. Head Start embraces a comprehensive vision of health. To prepare children for the future, Head Start supports all aspects of children's development, including their physical, nutritional, oral, and mental health. At Head Start, keeping children healthy is everyone's responsibility ... parents, Head Start and Early Head Start staff, and community members work together to make sure that, whenever possible, health problems are prevented and identified early on.

It's all about relationships--... and no one works alone. Head Start is the common thread that keeps children, families and communities connected. In this video we will see Elias, Mason, Naikya, and Matthew. Four very different children who all have something in common... they have benefited from Head Start's health services and can now look forward to a brighter, healthier future.

Teacher: Now it's time to eat my breakfast, eat my breakfast. Now it's time to buy my bag, buy my bag... Narrator: Elías is a bright, four-year old boy who loves learning, and playing with his classmates. But when he entered the Head Start program just a year ago, he was withdrawn, didn't speak, and seemed lost in his own world. Araceli, Elías' mom: - (translated) He was eighteen months old when I first noticed something wrong.... When we spoke to him, he wouldn't turn to look at us.

That's how we realized he couldn't hear us. Joanie Delgado, Health Manager for the Oregon Child Development Coalition: - He was an infant on our program, in a Migrant Head Start program and then they left the area....Then he returned at two and a half years of age. Went to his doctor... His mom noticed there was a concern about his language. Narrator: Elías was sent by Head Start for a screening at the local clinic. He was diagnosed as profoundly to severely deaf, and was given a hearing aid.

Christine Wallace, audiologist: - ...He might hear very loud gunshots, and some things like that, but he's not hearing speech, and so with the hearing aid we're trying to get him back to a point where he can hear some speech, and start to use some of that. Narrator: The hearing aid is helping Elías, but not enough for him to speak. So, three times a week, Head Start and the Local Education Agency send him to the Idaho School for the Deaf, where he is learning English and sign language at the same time. Elías's parents are seasonal workers, and speak only Spanish.

Pam Harris, teacher, Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind: - ... the signing will definitely give him the communication means that he needs, and the ability to interact with family members, friends, peers, whatever, and to get the information that he's going to need in school in order to learn to read and progress in school... Narrator: Through a partnership with the Local Education Agency, Elías also gets one-on-one signing support at Head Start, where he is also learning Spanish. It's really a team effort, with teachers and especially his classmates learning to sign with him.

(kids learning colors with Elías) Julie Smith, hearing specialist, Local Education Agency: - ...he'll learn a lot from the other kids versus just sitting there with him the whole time. ... he's trying to interact more with the other kids... he's trying to sign with the other kids. ... So now they are saying ok we have to communicate with Elías, we have to sign, we have to have him look at us. Narrator: Mom's a part of the team too. And she gets extra help from a Spanish-English interpreter provided by Head Start and a hearing specialist provided by the Local Education Agency.

Julie Smith: - We started out by first doing some communication skills with her, so first, teaching her how to sign. Narrator: At home, everyone is catching on fast to signing. (Elias and Anabel interacting through sign language...) Narrator: Head Start is also helping this family to get other health services, and providing an interpreter at school and doctor's appointments.

Joni Delgado: - Head Start helps them get into their medical home and also keep up with the preventative care for those children. Sometimes, in the medical community or other agencies, there are not translators available, and that empowers the families to be able to access those services. Julie Smith: - I think mom was really surprised... And Head Start was saying, this is what we can provide for your child. ... things in the home that they can help her with through home visits, and just at a school, following up on how to work with Elías.

Joni Delgado: - Every one of us has a piece to do for his education, and has a responsibility to the child and to the family. It takes all of us to do it. Araceli: (translated) - I've learned a lot through the program. I don't think my child would have made progress without it. They helped me see I needed to become more involved, helping him and teaching him. He's very active. Everything you tell him, he does. He's a happy child, and I'm very happy with him.

Narrator: - Mason was fifteen months old when his mother, Dana, first saw him bite himself. What she thought was a one-time event, quickly turned into a regular occurrence. Dana, Mason's mother: - ...When he gets frustrated he bites himself extremely hard and he does leave marks, so it's kind of upsetting...

Amy Catherine Cooper, Head Start Teacher: - When he bites, he sees the other kid hurt, and we go to that other child first, he will tend to sometimes bite himself, and so then he will start to cry, and show you that Mason was bit too. Narrator: - Head Start teachers talked with Dana about their concerns, and with Dana's consent brought in Wayne Floyd, a mental health consultant to give teachers, as well as Dana, advice about how to help Mason.

Wayne Floyd, Head Start Mental Health Consultant: - He's an only child, so a lot of the biting occurred when other kids kind of got in his space. Kids at this age are really struggling to deal with all those impulses and feelings that they have inside and they don't have words to express it. So sometimes, it comes out in behaviors like hitting and biting.

Narrator: - Wayne's advice to the Head Start team was to help Mason express his feelings in words, especially teaching him to say the word "no" instead of biting when he gets frustrated. Amy Catherine Cooper: - I think it helped all of us because he told us what he was seeing and we were like "Oh, yeah, you're right they do invade his space" and we don't see that when we're in there...

Narrator: - Wayne also suggested teachers find calming activities for Mason, like drawing. And giving him a baby doll to learn to care for others. Amy Catherine Cooper: - His biting has decreased tremendously, and he's much more verbal now. He will talk to baby and sometimes he'll ask you to take care of baby if he has something to do, or have you hold baby. Narrator: - Dana is seven months pregnant, and the Head Start team is working to prepare both Dana and Mason for the new baby.

Linda Primrose Barker - Manager of Disability and Mental Health Services: - One of the ways we are assisting Dana is helping her prepare her son for this new baby, and also helping Mason at this time to deal with some of his frustrations. Wayne Floyd: - He's going to have to share mom's attention and separate more from her, and what we're going to do is try and help that transition happen in a way that is less painful for both of them.

Narrator: - For Dana, Head Start's help has been crucial. Dana: - Head Start has given me a lot of opportunities to help Mason with his biting and made me feel more confident as a mother... because before, I would get frustrated with Mason because I didn't know what to do to help him with his biting. And they've also given me pamphlets to help me, you know ensure me, that it'll be okay when the baby does come that Mason will eventually adjust. It's just going to take some time.

Narrator: - Vashtai Rowe was five months pregnant with her daughter Naikya when a friend encouraged her to visit her local Early Head Start program. Before coming to Early Head Start, Vashtai had not had any prenatal medical care. Vashtai: - I had my first prenatal appointment here because at that time I didn't have health insurance ... I gave birth at Howard University Hospital and I came back and continued to get my annual checkups, and my daughter Naikya continued to get her checkups here.

Narrator: - Vashtai and Naikya are benefiting from a unique partnership of three agencies under the umbrella of the

DC Developing Family Center. Under one roof, the agencies are able to provide Early Head Start services, family services, and regular, well/child health care services to women and their children. Travis: - Before the DC Family Development center came into being, the infant mortality rate in this particular community rivaled some third world countries.

Narrator: - Thanks to this partnership, mothers in the Early Head Start program are able to get care throughout their pregnancy, during delivery and after delivery right on-site at the Early Head Start program. Travis: - We always talk about a medical home in Head Start. Our goal is to have this be a seamless service delivery system for families.

Narrator: - Naikya, who is now enrolled in Early Head Start, also gets her check ups in the same building as her Early Head Start classroom. Rhonda Waller: - We want to make sure all of our babies are immunized, make sure that they are developing properly. And that's not just their physical development, but their emotional development. Health services are very important to Head Start. It ensures that the children that are served are receiving their periodic checkups on time, that they're receiving their immunizations on time.

Dr. Randolph: - Making sure that they can see well, that they can hear well, that they are growing and developing normally, is all part and parcel of children being able to learn, so you want a child to be healthy, so that the child has the best chance of learning and succeeding. Narrator: - Vashtai says that the Early Head Start program also taught her that good nutrition includes eating fresh fruits and vegetables.

Vashtai: - It was very easy for me to stay off junk foods and fast foods when I was pregnant because I knew that I was carrying a child and I wanted her to come out healthy... It's a little hard, but I am trying so Naikya is going to see me eating right and practice good eating habits. Narrator: - Staff at the Early Head Start program also gave her the encouragement she needed to begin exercising.

Rhonda Waller: - It's important that women exercise, to prepare them for labor and delivery, to ensure that they maintain their weight, and don't become overweight during pregnancy.

Narrator: - Vashtai now works as an administrative assistant at the Birth Center, one of the Early Head Start partners. While on the job, she likes to pass on some of the information she's learned at Early Head Start to new pregnant mothers. Vashtai: - What I've learned here is very important because it gives me a chance to explain to them what we offer and the benefits they would get out of it from coming and doing everything at one stop here at the Center.

Narrator: - Matthew was 2 years old when teachers at his Head Start program told his mother, Lilly, that Matthew was having behavioral problems, and wasn't learning as much as he should. Both Lilly and her husband, Frank, had also noticed changes. Lilly Powell, Matthew's mother: - There were times he would just pick at his food or just be cranky and just complain... Frank Powell, Matthew's father: - He was a little more stubborn, hardheaded, more tantrums...

Narrator: - A dental exam revealed that Matthew had serious dental problems. Dr. Gary Vogelsberg, Dentist: - In Matthew's case he probably had an enamel defect, which was maybe genetic or maybe related to some other thing. He had rampant decay. That means he had decay in very many teeth, and he was also in pain, and had abscesses. Lilly: - We were doing everything that we should be doing. We were brushing, and he was brushing at school so there were several people that were involved in his dental hygiene, so I didn't think that should be an issue.

Cindy Ishim, RN for the Head Start Program: - A lot of children at this age are unable to express that they're in pain. They don't even realize that they are in pain until the dental work has been taken care of, and they are pain free. Then they can start to concentrate on their developmental activities, and their education. Narrator: - Matthew's parents had no dental insurance, and they couldn't afford to pay for Matthew's dental care. (children playing)

Narrator: - The Head Start program's partnership with a community organization and a local dentist on the Health Services Advisory Committee have helped to pay for Matthew's dental restorations. Dr. Vogelsberg: - One of the problems with providing dental care is the fees are so low it doesn't even pay for the dentist's expenses, so that's why it has to be more or less, in our area especially, a volunteer sort of thing.

Joy Trucott, Director of the Roberta Shirley Head Start Center: - He was so proud of his shining teeth. He would go around and smile and look at everybody. And there was an instant behavior change that we noticed within the classroom. Cindy: - He is a lively, healthy, nutritionally sound four year old, that is totally up to skill level, as all of his other peers in his classroom.

Narrator: - Other partnerships between Head Start and members of the community have recently led to the creation of a local dental hygienist clinic and a dental clinic, which accept Medicaid and state funded assistance programs. Char Martinez, Director of Coalition: - For Matthew and kids like Matthew, it's made the world of difference because they can now get preventative care. ...they can be taught how to brush their teeth and how to floss, and their parents can get that education also...

Cindy: - Parents are key partners in the health of their children. Sometimes it's just an education or a language barrier, and one of Head Start's focuses is to find the barriers for families and tear them down one by one so the children can access any care that they need. Lilly: - It's a great feeling to know that my child's getting the support he needs from Head Start. It'll help him so much in his future with his schooling and his further education. Frank: - Having Head Start is like having an angel following you around. ...they're the next best thing to having another mom or dad for our kid.

Narrator: - Like all Head Start children, Elias, Mason, Naikya, and Matthew are unique... But their stories are similar to many others in Head Start and Early Head Start programs across the country. Every day, Head Start is working to make sure children are healthy and ready to learn.

Narrator: - By building trust with families, connecting children to an ongoing source of health care, doing regular screenings and assessments, integrating health into daily activities and giving all children the individualized care they need, Head Start and Early Head Start staff are helping to make sure that the children in their care have the foundation they need to succeed in school and be better prepared for life.

Narrator: There's nothing like seeing a child come back to you, that is now graduated from college or that is entering into college, or the parent who is now in the work force and earning a livable wage, and thanking you for your very small part of it that you played, the impact in their lives. The partnerships in the communities with agencies and community members are so valuable to a Head Start Program, Migrant Head Start Program - without those agencies, we would not be able to do the things that we do with the families.

Narrator: It's a trust between the partners, and you're only as good as your partners and your connections are in the community. I just value each and every one of them, because without them, I cannot do my job and let me do for the families. And, I'm always looking for new partners, all the time.

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