

# Finding His Voice: Jaxson's Journey Through Early Intervention and Head Start

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**Jameera's son, Jaxson, faced early developmental delays, but through timely access to Early Intervention and Head Start, he made remarkable progress—gaining communication skills, confidence, and ultimately meeting all developmental milestones by age three.**

When Jameera's son, Jaxson, was a toddler, his days were simple and familiar—spent mostly at home with his parents, both working remotely, or with his visiting grandparents. He had his favorite TV

shows, toys, and routines. He communicated his needs nonverbally, and while his parents understood him, others often struggled to understand him.

During his 18-month pediatric visit, Jameera and her family were referred for a hearing test and an Early Intervention evaluation. It was the first time a “speech delay” appeared in Jaxson’s medical chart.

“At first, people tried to reassure us,” Jameera shared. “They’d say, ‘He’ll talk eventually—you’ll wish he wasn’t talking so much.’”

A few weeks later, a comprehensive Early Intervention evaluation told a different story. Jaxson was assessed by a speech-language pathologist, a developmental therapist, and an occupational therapist. He was found to be more than six months delayed in speech, along with additional developmental and occupational challenges.

“I was devastated when I heard that,” Jameera said. “I thought I had failed my child.”

Still, she pushed forward.

“I brushed aside my feelings and focused on getting him the support he needed.”

## **The Power of Early Support**

Jaxson began receiving therapy services at home, and the impact was almost immediate. Alongside his progress, Jameera and her family were learning how to better support his communication and development.

Early Intervention, funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services, helps children under age three reach critical developmental milestones by connecting families to therapies and support. But access to these services is not guaranteed as waitlists continue to grow, and many families struggle to get the help they need during these critical early years.

For Jaxson, getting connected early made all the difference.

But Jameera knew he needed something more.

“To help his language blossom even further, we knew he needed more social interaction with other

children.”

## **A New Environment, A New Breakthrough**

That next step led them to Head Start at Wee Care Nursery School and Kindergarten, an Easterseals partner site.

Head Start, a federally funded program designed to promote school readiness, provides children with opportunities to grow academically, socially, and emotionally—while also supporting families along the way.

For Jameera’s family, it meant something simple but powerful:

“Head Start meant consistent social engagement for my child.”

Jaxson’s Early Intervention team worked closely with his Head Start teachers to create a seamless, collaborative approach. Proven therapy strategies were integrated into his daily classroom routine, reinforcing his learning in a structured, supportive environment.

And then, everything changed.

“Once he started Head Start; his language and occupational skills just exploded,” Jameera said.

Jaxson began developing a consistent sleep routine. He formed meaningful friendships. He learned to write his own name.

And perhaps most importantly, he found his voice.

“He can come home and say, ‘I had fun at school,’” Jameera shared.

For a child who once struggled to communicate, being able to express how his day went marked a profound and emotional milestone—one that reflected just how far he had come.

## **Looking Ahead with Confidence**

When Jaxson turned three, he aged out of Early Intervention and was referred to Chicago Public Schools for further evaluation and support.

But at that evaluation, Jameera received unexpected news:

Jaxson was developmentally on track across all milestones.

“I know that wouldn’t have been possible without Early Intervention and Head Start,” she said.

Today, Jaxson continues to thrive. He’s talking, learning, connecting, and growing with confidence.

Jameera’s journey didn’t just impact her son—it inspired her to give back and advocate for the life-changing services her family received. During Jaxson’s time in Head Start, Jameera served as Vice President of the Head Start Parent Policy Council at Easterseals Serving Chicagoland & Greater Rockford, helping elevate the voices of families navigating similar experiences.

Last year, as federal Head Start funding faced uncertainty—threatening the sustainability of these critical programs—Jameera joined Easterseals’ Early Learning Services Advocacy Night to share her powerful story with families and local stakeholders.

“Head Start is an essential service in all communities,” she said. “Families like mine must keep advocating for the protection of these services. There will be families after us who need this support, and we must make sure they receive the same opportunities we did.”

## **A Message to Other Parents**

Jameera hopes her story encourages other parents to trust their instincts and seek support early.

“Put aside your own feelings and get your child evaluated,” she said. “They are not less than, and it’s not a failure on your part. They may just need extra support so they can succeed.”

At Easterseals Serving Chicagoland & Greater Rockford—an Early Intervention provider through the Illinois Child and Family Connections program and a Head Start provider—we see every day how early support can change a child’s trajectory and strengthen entire families.

Jaxson’s story is a powerful reminder: when families are connected to the right support at the right time, the possibilities are endless.