

Excellence in Early Intervention

KIDS Infant Development
Program Supports Children,
Families in Their Homes

They say there's no instruction manual for raising children. But Toby and Philip Cherney of Jamestown have the next best thing.

Thanks to Early Interventionist Mindy Blackmore, they have a binder five inches tall filled with advice to guide them in their interactions with their 2-year-old son Alexander, who was diagnosed with autism in August 2010. Blackmore provides services—home-based support, instruction, information and resources—as part of the North Dakota KIDS Infant Development Program. With each weekly visit she provides a home activity report filled with observations, suggestions and activities. It's a family-focused approach in which professionals and parents/caregivers work together as partners to help children learn and develop their full potential.

"Children learn so much within the first few years of life," says Blackmore. "Parents play a major role in their child's growth and development. We include families in our sessions because they can stretch the interventions throughout the entire day. By training the parents, we are empowering families."

Blackmore helps the Cherneys maximize learning for Alexander through typical activities to enhance his development in the areas individuals with autism often struggle with—communication, cognitive development and social/emotional development.

"I don't know where we would be without Mindy and the KIDS Infant Development Program," says Alexander's mom, Toby. "I work full time, and my husband and I have two other children. The autism diagnosis was overwhelming for us ... in fact, we're still processing it. We have a long road ahead, but the KIDS Infant Develop-



(Left) Mindy Blackmore, an Early Interventionist with the KIDS Infant Development Program, and mother Ashley Frenzel (right) work with Evan to be able to look left or right when hearing sounds.

ment Program has provided us with a lot of answers. They have our son's best interests in mind."

Long-term stability

Eligibility for the North Dakota KIDS Infant Development Program is based on an evaluation that is completed by a speech/language pathologist, occupational therapist, and special education professional. Infants or toddlers under the age of 3 with developmental delays, or with a medical diagnosis associated with delays, are eligible. There is no cost to families for the program, which is supported by the North Dakota Department of Human Services and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Northern Plains Special Education, a co-op of several Special Education programs in North Dakota, administers the KIDS Infant Development Program. Managing the growing program, however, in addition to meeting its other varied responsibilities, has been a challenge. The co-op spread the word that it was looking for an organization to run the program efficiently and effectively, and started a thorough interview process. Northern Plains selected the Anne Carlsen Center from amongst a group of providers to assume operation of the KIDS Infant Develop-

ACC/KIDS Program Timeline



In July 2010, ACC began providing human resources, financial and billing services for the KIDS Infant Development Program.



On January 1, 2011, 50 KIDS Infant Development Program employees will become ACC employees.