**Beaufort County Department of Disabilities and Special Needs**

**Media Kit: Case Studies**

**One mother’s experience with the BCDSN Early Intervention program, June 2022**

I knew my daughter, Isabella, was not developing as she should have been, and no one seemed to have any answers for me. Once I started digging in and doing some research, I learned about Babynet and the Bright Beginnings program offered by the Beaufort County Department of Disabilities and Special Needs.

Isabella had been exposed to multiple drugs in utero and was born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). She experienced horrible withdrawals and side effects throughout the first seven months of her life. At around 16 months of age, she started having meltdowns that would last an hour or more. She also started showing signs of developmental delays. I was at a loss as to how to help her. I knew that the drugs had to have damaged her brain in some way, but I had no way to make it better for her. It was often a struggle for both of us to just get through the day. She was so miserable and so uncomfortable in her own skin, and I was spinning myself into exhaustion trying to stay one step ahead of her next meltdown. Looking back, we were both so broken and lost.

Our lives have changed so much since then. Through Babynet, Isabella has been blessed with an amazing early interventionist, Jenny McGorty. She is now in speech and occupational therapy. With Jenny’s guidance, I was able to find a knowledgeable pediatrician who understands what is going on with Isabella. Going forward, Isabella will be seeing a neurologist, a developmental pediatrician, and a geneticist to help provide us with even more understanding. Without Babynet, I wouldn’t have been able to give my daughter the help she needs.

Now, I look at us and smile with pride. We have both come so far. Isabella’s meltdowns are not an everyday occurrence, and most days she’s a happy two-year old. In five short months I have learned so much about her and what she needs. Our sessions with Jenny are teaching me how to parent Isabella effectively, and I’m not spending my days trying to stay that one step ahead of her next emotional event. In fact, most days Isabella and I walk side by side on her journey. As I’m writing this, I’m watching my daughter actually “playing” with a toy. This is a huge thing for her to do all on her own. I can say without a doubt, if we didn’t have Babynet and Jenny, I wouldn’t be crying such happy tears right now watching my little girl being fully content simply playing with her toy. *Thank you Beaufort County DSN for changing our lives!*

**Mary’s story, as told by Bill Love, BCDSN executive director**

Several years ago, a hurricane forced the Beaufort County Department of Disabilities and Special Needs to evacuate all individuals enrolled in the residential program to a safe location, four hours outside of Beaufort. During that time, the BCDSN group was invited to attend a local church service and enjoy a meal afterward with the congregation. At one point during the church service, the organist stopped playing and called out to one of the BCDSN individuals, “Mary is that you?” Mary excitedly stood up and replied, “yes, it’s me!” He proceeded to explain to the congregation that a few years back he had been working at another facility where Mary was dropped off and abandoned. He was so happy to see that she had survived. Without a doubt, there wasn’t a dry eye in the congregation that day.

Because of her difficult behavior and failure to follow rules, Mary had 13 failed placements before the BCDSN was asked to accept her for services. In the beginning, Mary had a hard time following rules and accepting direction from staff members, but Mary’s hard work, combined with the tremendous commitment and support of the BCDSN staff, paid off. She is now living successfully in one of the BCDSN homes. While she still faces challenges, Mary has made great strides in coping with her mental health and social issues and is so much healthier than when she first started. At BCDSN, Mary has found a safe and happy place to live and to enjoy life on her terms.

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