

## Parent Representation for Connecticut's Birth to Three Advisory Council

The Connecticut Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) would love to have and welcome more parent representatives on its advisory council. Parent representatives currently receive a stipend for travel (gas mileage) and childcare reimbursement for attended ICC and ICC-related meetings. Additionally, if you cannot commit to an appointment to the ICC, we always welcome any comments, questions, or suggestions you may have. One of the greatest strengths the ICC can have is truly knowing how Birth to Three early intervention services are helping families, and even more importantly, where things can be improved. For more information or questions, the current parent representatives can be contacted via email through [familyconnections@cpacinc.org](mailto:familyconnections@cpacinc.org). Please enjoy reading the ICC parent representation experiences from two of the ICC's current parent representatives.

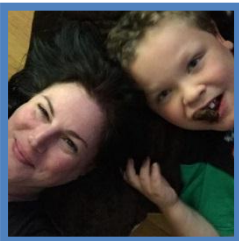
My name is Corinne and I have been one of the parent representatives on the Connecticut Birth to Three ICC for almost 5 years now. My introduction to the ICC starts with the birth of my son. He was born 13 weeks premature in May 2009 and spent 9 weeks in the NICU before discharge. His gestational age at birth and extremely low birth weight gave him automatic eligibility for Birth to Three services. Our son's early intervention service provider offered some information in which the ICC was looking for more parent representatives. After consideration with my family, I applied for an appointment on the ICC and attended my first meeting in Dec. 2010.

It has been a privilege to be a voice for parents of young infants and children that need and could benefit from early intervention services. Being a parent representative on the ICC allows one to offer advice and suggestions to the ICC from the family perspective. I tend to be quiet and reserved which has, and sometimes still does, cause me some anxiety in being part of an advisory council. To that, I feel it took me a while to "find my voice". And I think that is okay. What I have learned in my time on the ICC is that each of us (parents) has the common denominator of having a child/children who was, or is currently, receiving Birth to Three services. But each of us has a different perspective or some facet of our experiences that distinguishes us and informs others. It is those differences that lends to our strength (as a group of parents) in advising on the ICC.



My name is Sharri and I am the mom to a special little 6-year-old boy named Wyatt. Wyatt was diagnosed with Autism and the genetic disorder Fragile X Syndrome, which is the #1 known genetic cause of Autism.

Our family and our home became hosts to a special group of early interventionists. It goes without saying that these services ramped up at what was a very painful and difficult time for our family. The one light piercing the darkness was the incredible team of professionals who worked tirelessly with him and with us. Wyatt was totally withdrawn into himself and when Wyatt transitioned to special education at the age of three, he was no longer alone in his world. He was active, affectionate, and learning how to communicate through PECS. He is still nonverbal but he has learned to communicate his needs, is doing well at school with modifications, and very charismatic!



After our services ended, I was invited to attend an ICC Birth to Three meeting. We had a great experience but I felt a parent's perspective on the board was imperative. Who better to be a part of things that affect children with special needs and their families? It can be so difficult to navigate this world I found myself in, but I wanted to make a difference. With mentoring, assistance, and other parent cheerleaders in the ICC I hope you find a voice on our council. Along with other parents, I felt like we have made changes that benefit families and have made a difference. I hope to see you soon.