



Our Family Resource Center—a key component of our early intervention services—takes a highly relational approach to assist families in accessing basic services such as food, shelter, and health care.

# Healthy, Happy Babies

When four year-old Maya first came to the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic in summer 2008, her tantrums were so frequent and severe that she could not attend regular preschool. So she was enrolled in the Clinic's Early Intervention (EI) Day Treatment program, which provides positive reinforcement, consistency, and expert support for children. At the same time, her mother and father joined one of the Clinic's parent groups to learn additional parenting skills.

This therapeutic program for children ages 2 ½ to 5 years old is highly structured and nurturing. Art, music, and movement therapies are offered at the same times each day. "Predictability fosters security and a sense of mastery," explains Myisha Driver, LMFT, EI Day Treatment Coordinator, "especially for children whose homes and neighborhoods can be so unpredictable."

Often EI Day Treatment is the first port of entry for families needing help for children who already have speech and language disorders, multiple developmental delays, or disruptive behaviors.

The program is open each weekday, but interaction extends to home visits and free transportation to and from the Clinic. "This is our village," says Kim-Lan Dovan, LMFT. "We become a community for families who sometimes feel isolated by their problems."

EI Day Treatment is just one aspect of the Clinic's early intervention services for children ages 0 to 5, which have earned national recognition. The

Clinic focuses on the earliest years for a reason: brain development research is proving this period is critical for determining neurological pathways.

"The earlier we can intervene with targeted services, the more likely we can change the course of a child's brain development—and his or her life," says Nancy Ezra, Ph.D., Director of Early Intervention & Community Wellness Services & Training.

The Clinic is reaching even more lives through its Early Intervention and Training Institute—where "gatekeepers" who work with vulnerable children, ages 0-5, can increase their understanding of healthy social and emotional development and their ability to identify children in need of mental health services.

This year the Clinic appointed nationally recognized early intervention specialist Connie Lillas, Ph.D., as Chief Faculty for the Institute, and is expanding its faculty and offerings.

Clinic staff members are inspired by knowing they're making a difference. "Every day I come to work, I'm contributing to a child's positive development," says Rafael Sanchez, EI Day Treatment Mental Health Rehabilitation Specialist.



*Left to right: Myisha Driver, Rafael Sanchez, and Kim-Lan Dovan*



*Nancy Ezra*

Measurable outcomes show he's right: children enrolled in EI Day Treatment demonstrate significant improvement in social development and language comprehension skills, while their caregivers experience a significant decrease in stress levels over time.

Maya made remarkable strides and, after six months, graduated to a community early education center. She now attends preschool, where she completes her work and has made friends. This summer, she enjoyed a "goodbye party" at the Clinic. She arrived dressed as Cinderella – fitting for the belle of the ball.



**"How can we best assure America's economic competitiveness? Invest in comprehensive early childhood development."**

**— Nobel Laureate James Heckman**