



*Caring For Our Community.
All Day. Every Day.
For a Lifetime.*

GATEWAYS

Early Steps ... Early Victories

by Nancy Lucci, Director, Early Supports and Services



Meet Nancy Lucci

Nancy Lucci was recently named the new Director for Early Supports and Services (ESS) at Gateways. Lucci joined Gateways in 2003 as the Family

Support Coordinator for the Partners in Health Program and in 2006, she became the Intake Coordinator for ESS.

"When the Program Director of ESS announced her retirement from the administrative needs of the program, Nancy was compelled to apply for the position due to her strong desire to continue the current standards of excellence within the ESS team," said Peter Van Voorhis, VP, Community Services. "Nancy is very passionate about the supports and services ESS provides to children and families every day. She continues to be amazed by young children and how they interact with their world"

Lucci recently graduated from Rivier College with her Masters in Educational Studies/Counseling Concentration. Nancy is currently continuing her education at Rivier College pursuing a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Mental Health Counseling. She lives in Londonderry with her husband, four children, and pets, including one lively pug dog.

Save the Date



Annual Meeting

"Reach Out, Reach High"

Wednesday, September 29, 5:00 p.m.

Sky Meadow Country Club

Imagine you are a parent of a young child, concerned about your child's progress in meeting developmental milestones. Your pediatrician recommends calling Early Supports and Services (ESS) for a developmental evaluation. You dread picking up the phone and calling a stranger to talk about your child. What may begin as a scary endeavor results in validation, reassurance, and a plan of action to assist your child in meeting their next developmental milestones.

Gateways provides supports and services to children from birth to age of three and their families. There are many reasons parents and medical providers refer children for evaluation. Referrals to ESS range from children with a speech delay to children with a variety of conditions known to result in developmental delays. We receive calls from local and distant hospitals referring babies born prematurely for developmental checks. Referrals come from parents and pediatricians when the next milestones -- when baby is learning to roll over, crawl, walk, and/or talk -- are not happening in the expected timeframe. No matter what the initial reason for referral, from that first phone call, all of us at ESS focus on getting to know as much as we can about your child and your concerns.

During the intake process, along with the collection of general information, is the collection of developmental information with the use of Ages and Stages Questionnaires. The fun begins immediately when parents carry out the various playful tasks to answer the questionnaires which will provide baseline developmental information for the evaluation team. Children learn and express themselves through play, so in ESS we are all about play! The developmental evaluation is no stuffy endeavor. Therapists from two different disciplines arrive for the evaluation with a large bag of toys. To the casual observer it is difficult to realize an evaluation is in process due to the active and playful nature of the process. Our therapists get on the floor and join into children's worlds to learn about them, to see their strengths, and to address any developmental concerns that may be present. The children see the toys and the fun! As a result of the evaluation, parents are provided with up to the minute developmental information on their child and have the opportunity to ask questions about any and all aspects of development.

We respect parents as experts on their children. The relationship between parent and therapist is that of a partnership. If a child is found eligible for ESS, we rely on parents to share their goals for their child, and at the same time therapists share techniques and strategies proven to assist children in growth and development. This knowledge is

blended to create a plan, an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP), specific to each individual child and family enrolled in the program. Parents have a choice regarding the goals of services provided. The services are tailored to meet the developmental needs of the child at the same time being tailored to meet family needs as well. Techniques and strategies suggested by therapists are geared to busy families and designed to fit easily into the routine of each family's life. An important component of ESS includes sharing these techniques and strategies with parents and other important people in a child's life so the "therapy" can be continued throughout the time in between visits, which results in children making the most progress.

Another important component of the work of ESS includes addressing family needs and concerns. ESS therapists are very knowledgeable regarding state and community resources related to a variety of family needs. Our therapists collect information for families including recreational activities appropriate for children and families, application for Healthy Kids insurance, resources and benefits that may be available to families, as well as connecting families with Gateways Family Support and other programs throughout the state.

Children are enrolled with ESS until they meet the goals expressed on their IFSP. Children may meet their goals within a few months, or may be enrolled with us up until their third birthday. As children grow, therapists and parents engage in continual progress checks, both formally during further evaluations, and informally during therapy visits, to be sure the supports and services being provided are meeting the needs of the child and family. Some children who have received ESS will not need similar assistance in the future. For children who may require further assistance, parents and therapists review the options available within the community in anticipation of eventual "graduation" from ESS.

Saying goodbye is never easy once a family invites us into their homes and their lives, but our therapists feel good about playing their part, along with parents, in helping children get a good start with their development. We are continually inspired by the strength and spirit of the families with whom we have the good fortune to cross paths. All of us in ESS are passionate about the work we do and cherish our time with each and every family we meet along the way.

To learn more about ESS, please contact Nancy Lucci at nlucci@gatewayscs.org or 459-2773. Or visit our new web site at www.gatewayscs.org, and click on Gateways for Children.



From The
Desk of
Sandra Pelletier,
President & CEO

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend an exceptional and enjoyable Broadway play in New York with some of my extended family. As we waited for the performance to begin, my sister-in-law shared with me some wonderful family news -- her 5 year old grandson, who at 18 months was diagnosed with pervasive developmental disorder, was just re-evaluated and told that he had made amazing strides and was no longer presenting with delays that would warrant this diagnosis. I reflected on the call three years ago when his mom, my niece, called me shaken by the diagnosis and was not sure what to do next. Even though they lived in New Jersey, I walked upstairs to my ESS team and asked for guidance about Andrew; they looked at the evaluation and suggested that he receive Early Support and Services in his home state. My great nephew embarked quickly into the world of early intervention and therapy. All this effort paid off as he enters first grade next year and we have witnessed the major strides he has made because of all the support and services he has received. As I reflect on my great nephew's growth and our families' excitement on his behalf, I also think about the many children Gateways serves and their development.

As a parent, you know your child better than anyone else. You know what works for your son or daughter and you are your child's best advocate for getting them what they need to be successful. Parents stand up aggressively for their children when it comes to getting services through ESS and the school system. Parents of children with disabilities are the backbone of our system. Parents work cooperatively with caregivers, educators, OTs, PTs, and special education professionals to map out support plans that result in triumphs for their children.

Many parents rely on state funded services to get their children what they need and this is a very difficult time for those who depend on social services. Money is stretched thin in the state of New Hampshire and each new bill, rule, or budget can undercut a service for a child. It is terribly important that parents' voices are heard by legislators in Concord. Parents must not only work with providers to set clear and specific goals for their child's development, but they must also work with lawmakers to ensure continued funding support.

Gateways, in collaboration with parents, helps children develop and learn within their community. I hope that the parents we assist will one day look back on their children's milestones and development, and know that they have provided a strong foundation for their future. As a mom and an aunt to Andrew, I understand that there is no happier feeling.

~ Sandra B. Pelletier

Thank You ESS!

My son, Andrew, was born in 2004. My first child -- how exciting! When he was about age one, we realized he wasn't using words like other children his age. In fact, he wasn't using ANY words. His pediatrician recommended that we contact Early Supports & Services (ESS) to have him evaluated. He did have a significant speech delay, and so began our journey with ESS.

We received weekly visits to work on his expressive language skills, and he began learning American Sign Language to "give him a voice" he so desperately needed. He began attending an ESS playgroup that was designed so that children could connect with others with a variety of challenges, and the mothers could meet for support. It was a wonderful opportunity at a time when we had a lot of concerns for his development.

Andrew transitioned out of the program about 15 months later with an ASL vocabulary of over 130 signs, and speech was coming quickly. So quickly in fact, I began to home school him, and we are proud to report that he finished first grade before he turned six in June! We have no doubt that his accomplishments were due in large part to the incredible head start he received through ESS.

When my second son, Matthew, arrived in 2008, he was facing medical and developmental issues due in large part to a congenital heart condition. By the time he was a year old, we recognized he too had a speech delay and we didn't hesitate to place the call to ESS for help. He began receiving weekly visits as well. He is over 2 now and preparing to transition out the program because his speech came so quickly.

We are so grateful for the caring, competent team of ESS professionals working and collaborating with us. ESS empowered us to advocate for our child's needs, and then gives us access to the support, tools, and community resources we needed to help them achieve their full potential. We are no longer feeling overwhelmed by concerns, but instead feel excited about their achievements. Thank you, ESS!!

~ The Ford Family, Nashua



Andrew (right) and Matthew (left)
enjoy their achievements!

Wanted: Adult Sibs

Who are the adult sibs in your life? The Gateways Siblings Program just hosted their first Adult Sibs One Day Workshop and it was a great success. Plans are already underway for next year's event. As siblings age and move out of the family home, Gateways no longer has an address or contact information for them. If you have adults in your life who have a brother or sister with a disability, please send us their contact info so we can include them when we do outreach for our next great workshop. Please email Karin Harvey-Olson at kharvey-olson@gatewayscs.org, or call at 459-2774, to be added to our contact list.



Family Support Council Update

by Eric Shaffer,
Chairperson

Council just hosted our 9th Annual Family Support Council Picnic on June 5th. Approximately one hundred fifty people attended as the weather held out. Everyone enjoyed lively music, fun games, face painting, good food, and ice cream. Two of the Nashua fire department's engines stopped by and provided a chance to explore the fire engines and learn about fire safety. Council appreciated that so many people came to socialize, share a meal, and have fun.

In April, council held our first Family Night at Chunky's Movie Theater in Nashua. One hundred thirty seven family members attended. Families watched "How to Slay a Dragon" in a family-friendly environment and mingle with one another. Based upon the strong turn out, council is now working on how to possibly offer similar opportunities on a bi-monthly basis.

In May, one hundred sixteen family members attended the Family Support Conference held at the Mount Washington Resort. (750 people throughout the state attended the conference.) It was nice seeing so many people enjoying themselves getting some rest and relaxation while recharging their batteries from the information provided during the various sessions. Council hopes to see more of our region's families able to attend the conference next year.

Kelly Walker resigned from the council after numerous years of serving as she accepted a job at Gateways. We will miss her hard work and dedication to the council and the families that we serve but know that they will still benefit from her drive to advocate for people with disabilities.

Nancy Dowey visited our council meeting to educate us about Gateways Parent-2-Child Training Program. The program is a practical solution that offers classroom instruction for the children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and parents with the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis. The program, offered through Early Support & Services, lasts through the child's transition at age 3.

Sharon Stephens came to update us about increasing number of retirees that the system will be facing over the next 10 years. With people living longer and wanting to be independent, we discussed how Personal Care Services, Adult Day Services and Homemaker Services will be in higher demand while putting more strain upon the overall health & human services. Our council will be making sure to keep informed of ways to assist this growing population that will be potential relying on services.

With the end of June, we will be holding our council elections and wrapping up this fiscal years discretionary funding needs before taking the summer off. We are already looking forward to getting back together in September and begin working on ways to advocate for our consumers.



Zachary Ostrowski enjoys an ice cream treat at this year's Family Support Picnic!

Do You Qualify for ESS Help?

FC-ESS eligibility must be determined by an evaluation team comprised of professionals licensed or certified in two different disciplines with expertise in the area of concern which resulted in the referral. The evaluation shall be based on parent report, informed clinical opinion, and the results of an evidence based evaluation tool such as the Hawaii Early Learning Profile (H.E.L.P.)

There are four eligibility categories as follows:

- 33% delay: In the absence of specific diagnoses, to be eligible for FC-ESS, a child must have a 33% delay in one or more of the areas of physical, cognitive, communication, social-emotional, or adaptive development as determined by multidisciplinary evaluation.

- A child with a qualifying "established condition" will also be found eligible for FC-ESS. An established condition is a condition that has a high probability of leading to a developmental delay even if no delay exists at the time of evaluation. Examples of established conditions include chromosomal abnormalities, metabolic disorders, congenital malformations, neurological disorder, developmental delay due to severe toxic exposure, sensory impairment, etc. This is not an exhaustive list.

- Atypical behavior documented by the family and qualified personnel including extreme fearfulness or other modes of distress, unusual and persistent patterns of inconsolable crying, chronic sleep disturbances, regression in functions, lack of interest in adults and peers, inability to communicate emotional needs or engage in age appropriate social situations. This is not an exhaustive list.

- At risk for substantial delay. This category is a combination of specific parent and child factors that may lead to a determination of eligibility for FC-ESS.

FC-ESS staff are skilled at determining eligibility for our services. Should a child be found not eligible for our services but still experiencing a slight delay in development, the evaluation team will provide recommendations based on current development. If the family does not see the expected progress within a prescribed amount of time, the family is encouraged to call and request a re-evaluation. To learn more, contact the ESS team at 459-2764 or nlucci@gatewayscs.org.



New Hampshire's SIS Journey Begins

by Gabi Teed, SIS Interviewer & Service Coordinator

"We all lead supported lives and that support comes from all over. It might be a doctor, mechanic or a friend. We all need to remember that while some of us might need supported living services, they are just one of the means to supported life, not the end."

This quote by Charles Galloway, Director of Training Toward Self-Reliance (TTSR), California, sums up the philosophy behind the assessment tool that is currently being piloted by the New Hampshire Bureau of Developmental Services (BDS).

The Supports Intensity Scale, or SIS, is a name that has been getting a great deal of attention recently around the state. What is it? Why are we using it? What is it for? What does it mean? These are all common questions surrounding SIS.

SIS is an assessment tool that was developed in the early 2000s and published in 2004 to address society's changing views of individuals with disabilities. SIS addresses the supports an individual with a developmental disability would need to be as successful and active a member in their community as any other typical adult their age in the same community. SIS is currently being used in several different states around the United States and Canada; and in several countries overseas. It has been translated into ten different languages.

All 10 area agencies across New Hampshire are currently involved in the SIS pilot project, which is scheduled to end in September 2010. The BDS database randomly chose 400 individuals to participate in the pilot phase of the project. The purpose of the pilot is to get baseline information for New Hampshire and to streamline the interview, data collection and data entry process. BDS is projecting that everyone receiving waived services (Medicaid funded) through any state area agency will have a SIS completed within the next 2 - 3 years.

At this time, the results of the SIS are mostly beneficial to teams as a planning

tool. It will not have any effect on current funding or services unless the team decides to change something. It is anticipated that at some point in the future, maybe 2 - 3 years, the SIS will be used as a piece of the information used to determine individual funding. This will allow funding to be allocated in a more equitable and meaningful way. In addition to service planning and funding, the SIS has many potential uses. At the agency level, the SIS can help with staffing, staff training, budgeting, strategic planning, and evaluation. At the system level, the SIS can be used as a basis for resource allocation, research/evaluation, and systems planning.

Currently, Gateways, and many other area agencies, administer either the ICAP or the SIB-R to individuals coming into service to help determine the level of support individuals might need. These are adaptive behavior measurement tools that typically look at what an individual can or cannot do and do not include the individual as a respondent, or participant in the assessment process. SIS is not interested in what a person can or cannot do, but what supports an individual needs to be successful in various areas of daily life, such as; home living, community living, lifelong learning, employment, health and safety and advocacy and protection. SIS also looks at exceptional medical and behavioral needs that may affect aspects of an individual's support needs.

There is currently six area agency staff across the state who have been certified as SIS Interviewers and four individuals who are in the process of becoming certified trainers. SIS training and certification process is rigorous and involves formal class training, numerous practice interviews and assessment. Reliability is a large part of the SIS philosophy and Interviewers are tested during the year to ensure proper interview technique and results.

During a SIS interview the individual

being assessed is usually present and an active member of the respondent team along with 2 - 4 other people who know the individual well in a variety of settings. Even if individuals are passive participants in the interview, their presence and input validates their role in planning their future and making their voices heard. Because the interview is all about them, individuals rarely leave an interview, even though it generally takes between 2 to 3 hours.

The SIS interview takes place in a semi-structured interview format. The questions posed to the team typically generate discussion about supports needed and get the individual and team thinking about future goals and things to change or improve in the individual's services. The SIS interview helps the team get to know the individual more deeply focuses the team on the supports the individual needs to be successful in their home and community.

SIS is a new and exciting piece of the evolving face of services for individuals with disabilities. It is all about success and independence and has great potential for improving the lives of individuals and the systems who serve them. For more information, contact Gabi Teed at gteed@gatewayscs.org or 459-2733; or visit the SIS website at www.siswebsite.org.



Gateways hosted the 12th Annual Direct Support Professional Awards event last month. Pictured (left to right) are College of Direct Support Graduates Elias Niva, Lindsay Merrill, Helen Indorf, Susan Christopher, Nathan Roby (back row), Cheryl Patten, Jaime Morency, Sally Lui, and Pam Anderson (front row). Award recipients include: Katie Paling, Jon Deacon, Jill Jolin, Amalia O'Neill, Maureen Kitson, Theresa McGuire, Deepak Amatya, Ram Abdikari, Jackie Courville Moore, Amanda Boutchia, Pam Parker, Dave Clermont, Lisa O'Connor, Debbie Shepard, Ann Marie Conroy, Pam Anderson, Edward Palladino, and Marlene Morgan.



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