

## The Start of a New Journey

My family and I were dreaming of having a baby girl in our house and, finally, she came on September 12, 2019. I'm not going to lie I was worried about having a baby again. My son was 6 years old when I had Alanna. Many emotions came to my mind with a new baby and a toddler at home. But I knew everything will be ok. When Alanna was growing everything was joy and happiness. Alanna came into our lives to show us how to love someone unconditionally above all. When 2020 came, it came with the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone was locked down in their houses, with no socialization, and no contact, everything was a mystery. At that time, I was working in a nursing home, and it was essential I couldn't miss any day because we had to support each patient. During that period, I missed my daughter's developmental moments.



When Alanna turned 2 years old, I noticed something was happening, she didn't say mom or try to make conversation like other kids her age and, I thought it was because of the time we were locked in our house and she didn't experience the outside environment with other kids and people. When finally, everything was returning to normal, schools were opening up, and parks were open to the public. I decided to take Alanna out for her to experiment with the outside world after the pandemic. After trying socialization and seeing she didn't respond like other kids, I started looking for help. I reached out to Early Intervention and, she was able to receive DI, ST, and OT for a short time because when she started receiving service, she was a couple of months from turning 3 years old. Early Intervention was a great option for Alanna to improve her self-management, social skills, and emotional development. When we finally finished Early Intervention, we were not as lucky as others, our case manager took family leave and was unable to exit us from the program so after all I didn't know what to do or how to continue this journey with Alanna. My frustration started to show, and my anxiety was trying to knock me down but every time I saw my daughter's smile, it was a reminder and another reason for me to get up and still look for help for her.

After a couple of months of looking for help, I finally got OT at Jersey City Medical Center for Alanna when she turned 3 years old. I was trying to get ST, but it was a long waiting list that we couldn't get into the services at that time. Every time Alanna was in her OT sessions she demonstrated progress, so I kept knocking on doors asking for help. One day the OT therapist told me that hospital's pediatric services would merge with RWJBarnabas Health and that was the sign I was all that time waiting for. One day I decided to pass by Children's Specialized Hospital (CSH) in Bayonne, and I spoke with the scheduler letting her know my needs and she was able to help me to schedule an ST evaluation. After my first evaluation at CSH, I can personally say we are part of this great hospital that now is a part of us. Alanna received OT, ST, and PT at CSH. When Alanna turned 4 years old, our Developmental Pediatrician Dr. Lavinia Stoicescu diagnosed Alanna with (CAS) Childhood Apraxia of Speech. And now our real journey



begins after the diagnoses. After we have an official diagnosis, we can understand what was going on with Alanna and, how we can help and understand her needs in a better way. After all this efforts Alanna can make her needs known also, after receiving her treatments she can do so many things now that she couldn't do before. After research about Apraxia I found a website that help parents about this diagnosis. Also, this page helps me to submit a proclamation to recognize May 14<sup>TH</sup> Apraxia Awareness Day. Now the city of Bayonne in NJ and Hudson County recognize May 14<sup>TH</sup> for Apraxia Awareness Day. Now, my daughter is 4 years old and she still learning, growing, and discovering, I know my journey does not stop here we still

learning together, healing, and adjusting to our new life. We must keep rolling until she achieves her goal which is speaking and having a fluent conversation with family and others

An advice from one parent to another, please keep your hope alive everyone has a different journey but we are connected by a special needs superheroes.



**Resources:**

Apraxia Kids: Official Support Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/apraxia.kids.group/>