

# Tommy's Story

"Something's wrong with Tommy", Melanie said to her husband Todd, as she held the baby a week after birth.



He didn't move around or open his eyes, and had to be awakened to eat every three hours. His prenatal care had been excellent, he was born full-term and had passed his newborn hearing screening. But Melanie knew when they welcomed him into their home as a foster baby that things were not okay. Her own twins had been born seven weeks early more than a decade before without anyone raising a concern, but the hospital staff soon recommended Birth to Three for Tommy due to his poor health. Tommy had been diagnosed with failure to thrive and was often limp in Melanie's arms despite her loving attempts to get Tommy to look at her or smile or even move. A Birth to Three evaluation team came to their home and found Tommy eligible when he was two months old. Melanie and Todd eagerly accepted the offer of early intervention supports and the whole family began to use the techniques that Deb and Wendy, his teacher and occupational therapist, showed them. "Tommy has made such tremendous developmental gains – all because his family cared too much to just let him lay there", said Deb. Tommy might have been considered to be an "easy baby", but soon a series of medical diagnoses were made: cortical blindness, a cardiac problem, breathing difficulties, and a genetic deletion syndrome. When he wasn't babbling like other babies his age, Tommy was taken for another hearing test and tubes were inserted. When Tommy would stop breathing, the family dog, Calvin, would alert Melanie. They started to use CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) at night, and soon Tommy had more energy and was more alert and interactive with the family around him. When he turned one, they adopted him. Melanie's parents taught him to give kisses and talked and sang to him throughout the day. His brothers and foster sister played and played with him and Tommy loved it. The Birth to Three team gave Melanie lots of information about the types of toys that would best help Tommy learn new skills. Now when Todd's truck pulls into the driveway, Tommy can't wait to ride around the yard on his pedal tractor with Dad. The family goes camping together and watches baseball, and at age three Tommy started preschool special education.

Melanie's advice to other parents when they know "something is not right": Pay attention to it; report it to your child's medical provider as soon as possible and as often as it takes until it is addressed. Keep aiming for the next new skill. If you are concerned about your baby's learning, call Birth to Three for advice and an evaluation. Never give up!