

Breaking the Cycle



OhioGuidestone

SOLUTIONS FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES
& COMMUNITIES

Tamra opened the refrigerator, even though it was empty. She knew her four-year-old son, Dylan, was hungry, but she also knew that she needed to put gas in the car. It was a vicious cycle. If she couldn't get to work, she wouldn't get paid. If she didn't get paid, she couldn't pay for child care. If she couldn't pay for child care, she couldn't work. But too often there wasn't enough money left over for food. She glanced back at her young son and forced a small smile.

"You'll really like our new place," Tamra said, trying to find a distraction. She hoped that downsizing to a smaller place would help. But, she was worried the move would be hard on Dylan, and worried about finding a new preschool. Because of multiple ear surgeries when he was young, Dylan had some trouble speaking and learning. He needed help to get ready for kindergarten, but his current daycare wasn't really working to help him learn. Tamra had heard about an excellent center nearby, but she was worried about the cost. She had no extra money to spare, even for the education she knew he needed.

From the moment Tamra met Susan



Tamra and her son, Dylan

Life Child Care in Maple Heights, she knew she had to find a way for Dylan to attend. Susan was friendly and welcoming, and as she told Tamra about the curriculum they used, it was clear this center was different. "So tell me," Susan said. "What kind of help do you need for Dylan?" Encouraged by the ease of the conversation, Tamra let all her struggles spill out. Susan listened as she talked about the move, the food and the bills. She nodded when Tamra told her she wanted to find a way for Dylan to attend the Family Life Center. "Let's fill out some paperwork, and we'll help you find a way," she said.

A few days later, Tamra arrived for another meeting with knots in her stomach. Susan smiled brightly at her and said "Dylan is a perfect candidate for our Head Start program. We can have him

start in a classroom this week." Tamra knew this was a perfect fit for Dylan. But she still wondered "How much will it cost?" Her anxiety melted away as Susan explained that enrollment in Head Start was free for those who qualified. "We know it's been hard, and it'll take some time to adjust to your new home," said Susan. "So I've also got some boxes of food here for you and a gift card for the grocery store." Tamra was speechless. She let out a breath she felt like she had been holding for a long time. Finally, it felt like there was a reason to have hope.

A week later, Tamra found herself smiling as she picked up Dylan from the Family Life Center. She had smiled more in the last week than she had in the last year. It felt like everything had changed. While Dylan would need to work every day to overcome his difficulties, the Family Life Center had helped her put a plan in place. Susan stopped her in the hallway. "How has the first week been?" she asked. "You changed my life," Tamra said. "This weekend, I was able to play a game with Dylan and not worry about what we would eat the next day." Susan smiled. "That's why the Family Life Child Care is here," she said. "To make a difference, one family at a time."