

# 10 years of Special Start: Serving Children and Families with Multiple Risks

A public/private partnership between  
Children's Hospital Early Intervention Services and  
Alameda County Public Health/Family Health Services



First 5 Alameda County  
Commission Meeting

March 26, 2009

I am almost 3. I have Downs Syndrome and now Leukemia. I spend a lot of time at Children's Hospital.



Both siblings followed by Special Start with  
“undiagnosed” syndrome.

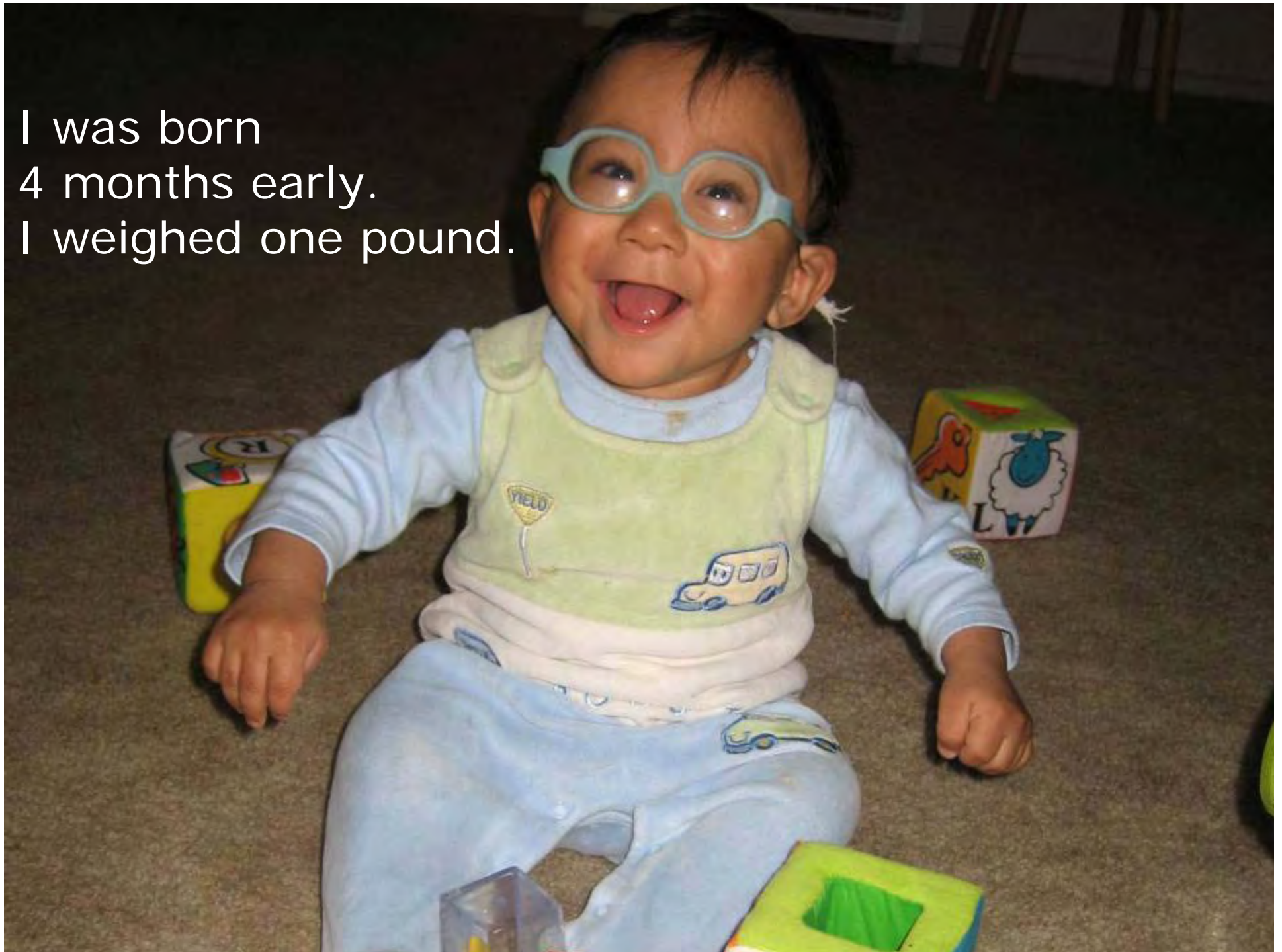




I am 2 years old. I have Downs Syndrome. I had heart surgery when I was 5 months old and now I have a pacemaker.



I was born  
4 months early.  
I weighed one pound.



I am 20 months old. I had heart surgery when I was 3 days old. I have been hospitalized 15 times and I take 7 medications each day.



My dad is feeding  
me through a  
stomach tube.





I was 3 months early and I weighed  
1 pound 14 ounces



I was 3 months early and I weighed 2 pound 4 ounces. I take medicine every day to help my asthma.





- Before Prop 10 was passed, community-based planning efforts identified children most at risk for child abuse and poor outcomes which included:
  - ◆ medical fragility
  - ◆ social stressors, such as maternal depression, low income, recent immigration, etc.
- Every Child Counts first strategic plan identified these infants as one of the most vulnerable groups in the county

## why special start?

- Sound research on impact of home visitation
- Spending lots on hospitalizations, with no system to support families after discharge
- Combines resources of tertiary pediatric medical center and public health dept
  - ◆ CHRCO Neonatal Follow Up Program: many years of experience with medically fragile babies
  - ◆ AC Public Health: long term commitment to high risk infants and families

special start  
goal

To improve the health, developmental and social outcomes of infants at increased risk for infant mortality, morbidity, abuse, neglect and out-of-home placement due to a combination of medical and social risk factors

## program model

- Babies identified at Alameda County NICU's (about 1000 births/year)
- Shared process of assigning cases
- All families entering program have high social risk
- CHRCO follows babies with the highest medical risk



program  
model

- Family-centered, relationship-based, multi-disciplinary case management services based on intensive and sustained home visiting to support families with high levels of social stress
- Aligns interventions with socio-cultural context of family

## services



- Parent support and education
- Resources and referrals
- Systems Navigation
- Support Groups

- Medical case management
- Health and developmental monitoring and brief intervention
- Mental health support services



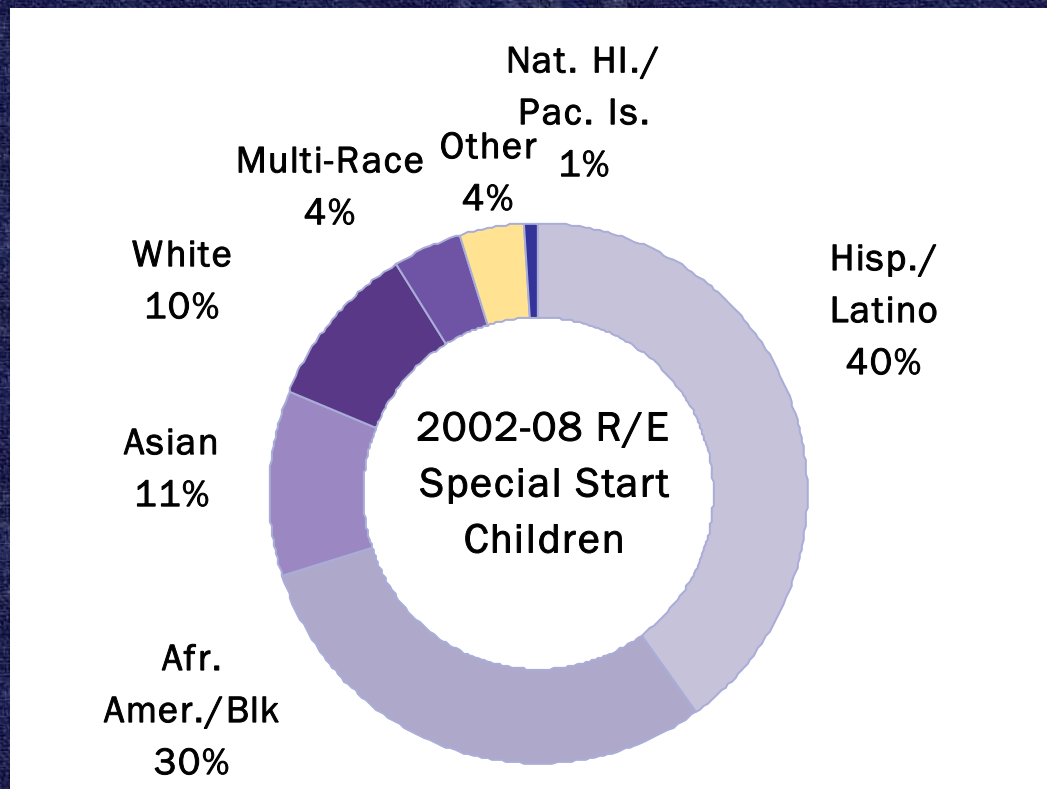
## staffing

- Specially trained home visitors including bilingual/bicultural staff:
  - ◆ nurses
  - ◆ social workers
  - ◆ infant development specialists
  - ◆ family advocates
  - ◆ nutritionists
  - ◆ drug and alcohol counselors



# clients served 2002-2008

~ 600 families served per year and received an average of 22 visits



# Mother's Primary Language

English	69%
Spanish	25%
Cantonese	2%
Arabic	1%
Vietnamese	1%
Thai, Tagalog, Farsi-Dari, French, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Other	1%

## medical/developmental risk factors (2007-08)



- 81% of children born low birth weight, <2500g
- 39% of children were very low birth weight, <1500g
- % of children screened "of concern" in at least one developmental domain (2008-09)
  - ◆ 86% of children served by CHRCO
  - ◆ 37% of children served by ACPHD

## social risk factors

- 10% of families were known to Child Protective Services at the start of case management in 2007-08
- 79% families in 2007-08 qualified for low-income health insurance or had no health insurance
- 32% of mother's had less than 12 years of education / did not complete a high school education

## social risk factors



- 13% of mothers were teen parents, .5% were less than 15 years old
- 27% of mothers screened positive for depression
- 79% live in neighborhoods with low performing elementary schools

## 2007-08 sample results

Primary Caretakers screened for depression	81%
% screened positive	25%
% of children with health insurance	100%
% of infants receiving breast milk at first home visit	63%
% receiving breast milk at 6 months	49%
% with primary pediatric provider	99%
% with immunizations up to date	99%
% with appropriate well child visits	98%
% of families reading, storytelling or singing with their children	88%
% with CPS case opened during reporting period	7%

We are Special Start graduates!

