

(Moorhead Mom on how the cuts have affected her daughter's PCA services. - shared at an ARC Press Conference April 3, 2010)

Recent cuts to the PCA (Personal Care Assistance) program are significantly affecting our three-year-old daughter and our family.

Before I share the impacts, I want to give you a bit of background. We were blessed to adopt Grace when she was 17 months old. Grace's contagious smile and sparkling eyes are just two small indicators of her engaging personality. Prior to Grace's arrival into our family, she was working through a multitude of medical challenges – open heart surgery at 5 months of age, an ectopic kidney, and a mild bilateral hearing loss. She also has sensory processing disorder, which means that Grace has more to overcome as she receives and perceives sensory input through sights, sounds, touch, tastes, smells and movement differently than the rest of us. Often people who aren't familiar with sensory processing issues describe her as 'busy'. Necessary aspects of her day include an established routine, familiar surroundings and a specific music and brush therapy protocol.

We were relieved when Grace qualified for PCA care a little over a year ago. As she transitioned into our family as a toddler, it was important to us that she be home as much as possible. PCA Services through CCRI allowed for that. She has had exceptional care from her staff while my husband and I work outside the home.

We knew changes to the PCA program would likely impact Grace's PCA care. Through in-home PCA services and early childhood, speech, occupational and hard of hearing therapies through Early Intervention Services in Moorhead Public Schools she had made tremendous progress. Her continued success is contingent upon us continuing to support and assist her with the

therapies and processes that we have found work best for her. While we anticipated a reduction in her PCA hours, we were deeply disappointed when we learned as of April 30 she would no longer qualify for any PCA services.

We've scrambled to find child care within our community. It is obviously critical that a center provider is not only familiar with Grace's needs, but also have the knowledge and background to provide her with excellent care given the range of her therapies. We're very concerned about Grace's upcoming transition.

Grace seems to be a special needs child caught in the middle. She is benefitting from the various therapies and services and making significant progress while doing so. In addition, her medical background warrants extra caution and monitoring. But she is doing too well, according to the State of Minnesota. And some of the very services that have helped her make significant strides in the past 20 months will soon be gone. We're certainly not hoping for any regression in an effort for her to re-qualify for PCA services.

We also have an almost nine year old son, Carson. Carson has had two open heart surgeries, a liver transplant and a moderate to severe hearing loss. Without the services he receives, including MA through the TEFRA option, a CADI waiver and respite care in our home, Carson's progress and status would also be in jeopardy.

We'll continue to work tirelessly to advocate for services for our children and collaboratively work through Grace's upcoming child care transition with her providers and therapists.