**VIGNETTE**

A family sought political asylum and arrived, with official immigration documents, from a Central American country with their 18 month old son with Down syndrome. The family lived in a one room, dirt-floored garage in Los Angeles. The garage had one overhead light bulb, but no running water or cooking facilities. They had very little furniture, bedding, or clothing. They arrived from El Salvador with only what they could physically carry.

The family learned about a local early intervention program through the church they joined. The family was monolingual (Spanish). With the help of a translator from the church, they completed the necessary steps and paperwork to enroll their son in the early intervention program. They had never seen a program like this before. In their country, they had received no special services for their son. They were especially pleased to meet other parents of children with Down syndrome and to learn what their new country had to offer their son.

The child was enrolled in a daily program; the family received monthly home visits. Initially the mother, father, and child participated in each home visit. As a result of the sessions, the staff of the early intervention program became concerned about the family’s living conditions. They began bringing the family furniture, clothes, bedding, extra food, etc. They also place the family on a priority list for publicly funded housing. They were committed to helping this family have a better physical existence.

Gradually, the father began to come less frequently to the home visit sessions. Within three months, the child was not on the bus when it arrived at the program. At about four months, the child’s teacher went out to make a home visit at the regularly scheduled time and no one was home. She continued to stop by the house for the next two weeks when she was visiting other families in the area. She persisted because she had a sense that the family’s decision to discontinue the program was not related to the quality of services they had been receiving for their son.

What do you think contributed to the family’s decision to discontinue services?

Adapted from Vincent, L.J. (1992). Families and early intervention: Diversity and competence. *Journal of Early Intervention, 16*(5), 166-172.