

Utah Act Early Ambassador Appointment | CPD

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As Sue Olsen winds down her 2-year term as the Utah Act Early Ambassador, co-worker Janel Preston is gearing up to take the reins. Both women are part of the Up to 3 Early Intervention program at the CPD and have long histories in services and research with young children with disabilities. The federal Act Early Ambassador project is designed to develop a network of state-level experts to improve early identification practices. Ambassadors serve as state liaisons to the CDC "Learn the Signs Act Early" initiative and work as community champions with programs that serve young children and their parents. "We're working to increase early identification of young children with developmental disabilities, including autism," said Olsen. "Currently we have a high focus on autism because of the high numbers of children in the state with that condition." During her term, Olsen's goals included development of customized materials in both English and Spanish outlining developmental milestones for various Utah early intervention agencies. Another accomplishment was embedding the "Learn the Signs Act Early" guidelines in orientation materials and personnel training in the Utah BabyWatch program. According to Olsen, this will result in autism identification training for all Utah early intervention personnel during their credentialing process. As Preston steps in the role, she plans to build on the progress that Olsen has accomplished during the past 2 years, expanding autism identification training into more personnel prep programs. She and Olsen have discussed the possibility of embedding identification information in training for child care providers. Preston also wants to facilitate more involvement with the medical community, hoping to include more doctors in early identification

of autism. "I'm trying to work first with Dr. Odell (CPD Medical Director) to see how we can do more training for the medical community," said Preston. "I'm hoping this will result in more identification in rural areas. A lot of the information we have doesn't get out to all areas in our state right now." Olsen is the CPD Exemplary Services director with a long history in various early childhood services and projects. She lists her primary goal as ensuring that all services provided by the Exemplary Services Division support and enhance a family's or individual's capabilities and self-determination. Preston is the lead teacher in the ABC classroom in the Up to Three Early Intervention program. This class is for families who have a child with a Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis or are in the process of getting a diagnosis. The CPD is proud to have such capable and enthusiastic representatives working to improve life for children and families in Utah.