



JOGESH

I received the encouragement I needed to not give up

My son Jogesh has suffered from a number of challenges since birth. The physical ailments that he encountered as an infant and toddler overshadowed his mental disabilities as he suffered from failure to thrive from two weeks old until the age of seven and he contracted a life-threatening parasite as a toddler that caused him over a year of pain and malnutrition.

When he started pre-K I knew he wasn't on par with his peers neither socially nor academically, but after moving him to two different schools, it was obvious that he had some type of undiagnosed disability. He struggled and the entire school staff including the principal wanted him to be held back in Kindergarten even though his report card reflected above-average grades.

Jogesh continued to struggle, not eating at school, refusing to read, and having minimal support. He felt discouraged and unhappy and I felt like we were fighting an uphill battle. My request for him to have a para at school was denied, citing a "lack of funding" as one of the main reasons.

Jogesh is now 8 years old and has a G-tube for supplemental nutrition as well as a diagnosis of Level 1 Autism, ARFID, and ADHD. It wasn't until I came in contact with Laura Nata, the Director of Peer Support of Families Helping Families, that things started to change for him at school. She educated me about my son's legal rights and encouraged me to not give up on advocating for him to have the supports he needed at school. Laura attended an IEP meeting with me virtually as we were still in the midst of the pandemic, and her presence and voice aided my son in establishing a meaningful IEP for school that served his needs. He now has a full-time one-on-one para, OT, and Speech Therapy services through the school and is improving all around. She has continued to provide me with resources and she even shared her experiences with her own special needs child as an encouragement to not give up and continue to advocate for my son to get what he needs to thrive in school and in life. I am very appreciative of the connection. Thank you, Laura!

Joy Debnath