

## Tomas's Story

Tomas is a 6½-year-old boy. His parents, Lucinda and Carlos, live in a mid-sized urban city. Lucinda and Carlos are native Spanish speakers. Carlos speaks English well. Lucinda uses predominantly Spanish with the children and manages with her English skills outside the home. Carlos is currently working at a fast food restaurant, and Lucinda works occasionally for a friend's catering business to bring in added income. Tomas's brother, Mateo, is 3 years old. The family enjoys time together but acknowledges that their limited income makes life stressful. The family is unable to meet their expenses with a single income and rely on the assistance of a local community center that offers clothing, periodic meals, and a food pantry. At this time, the family does not have a car. Tomas attends the neighborhood school in a partial Spanish immersion classroom, and Mateo is enrolled in Head Start.

Tomas was born at full term. His mother received prenatal care from a visiting nurse. When he was 18 months old, Lucinda and Carlos were concerned that Tomas was slow in learning to use a spoon, continued to play with toys by banging them to make noise, and did not imitate pushing a toy car. He enjoyed social games, such as peek-a-boo, with his parents. When visiting the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, they reported that he was drinking and eating foods fed to him. His weight was appropriate for his age.

At age 3, Tomas was referred by the family practice physician to the public school for evaluation. He was identified as having global developmental delays and was placed in an early childhood classroom, with no Spanish language support. Currently, Tomas is in first grade in a partial Spanish immersion classroom and receives support from a special education teacher. He is speaking in short two- to three-word sentences, usually in Spanish but sometimes a mix of English and Spanish. He follows one-step directions in his classroom and knows the classroom routine with the help of a picture schedule. He enjoys listening to stories and likes dress-up play, especially playing super heroes. Tomas enjoys music and singing his favorite songs. He enjoys running activities, is beginning to catch a large ball, and is learning to hop on one foot. He enjoys simple puzzles and takes turns with classmates in simple games. He looks at books and sometimes labels what he sees. He does not recognize any words in books but does recognize his own name.

At home Tomas likes to be in the kitchen and help his mother cook. Tomas can play well with his brother and likes to show him how to build with blocks. On the playground at the apartment complex, he plays with other children Mateo's age. He is able to dress himself except for fasteners, is independent for toileting with some reminders, and feeds himself using a spoon, fork, and open cup. He needs adult assistance to brush his teeth and bathe. Tomas is toilet trained during the day but often wets the bed at night.

Lucinda finds it difficult to keep the house clean with two active boys. She feels isolated not knowing other families with disabilities. She sometimes talks with her friend when they have a catering event. Lucinda and Carlos are very concerned about whether Tomas is going to ever be independent when he is older. They think that their income limits what they can purchase in the way of toys that might help Tomas learn. They would like to have an iPad but cannot afford it. Lucinda and Carlos frequently argue about finances and isolation without transportation.

### *Summary*

*Tomas's parents are pleased that Tomas is gaining skills at home and school but they worry about his ability to be independent when he is older. They would like to see him learn to read and wish they could provide him more learning toys.*

*Tomas is demonstrating an intellectual delay in all areas of development. His family is supportive of him but is experiencing financial stressors that add constant tension to the family dynamics.*

### *Follow-Up Suggestions and Recommendations:*

- 1. Encourage Tomas' parents to work with school around developing Tomas's language skills in English and Spanish. Talk with Tomas' teachers about his reading readiness and how to help him develop his literacy skills.*
- 2. Consider connecting Tomas' mother or father to job-training opportunities to help them increase their income in the future.*
- 3. Continue with school programming. Tomas appears to benefit from inclusion with typically developing children in a regular education classroom.*
- 4. Provide resources such as the public library for story time and reading incentive programs to continue to develop Tomas' early literacy skills. The library may also be a good resource for toys that can be checked out and brought home.*
- 5. Continue to use the local pantry to extend their food, including fresh foods.*
- 6. The family may also wish to reconnect with the local WIC program with Mateo to supplement their food sources. WIC provides benefits to families with children up to age 5 years.*
- 7. Facilitate Lucinda's involvement in school activities (such as volunteering and contributing to the Spanish-speaking environment of Tomas' classroom).*