

Usha R. Patel: Volunteer, Asha for Education, Danbury Chapter

**Site Visit to ASHRAY AKRUTI – EARLY INTERVENTION CENTER, Hyderabad, India,
November 19, 2018**

A Voluntary Organization Working for the hearing impaired since 1996

Website: www.ashrayakruti.org

I visited the “Early Intervention Center” at Ashray Akruti on Monday, November 19, 2018. The “Early Intervention Center” at Ashray Akruti has three locations.

- 1) Srinagar Colony, (Ameerpet, Telangana)
- 2) Chandrayangutta, (Telangana)
- 3) Kadapa, (Andhra Pradesh)

I visited the “Early Intervention Center” located in Srinagar Colony, Hyderabad. This center has grown and has 20 children. The center at Chandrayangutta has 10 children and the center at Kadapa has 6 children. The enrollment is expected to rise due to the high demand, because of the positive outcomes & success rate. Currently there are girls and boys and the children are between the ages of 1-7 years. All children/students are hearing impaired with varying levels of disability. The goal of these Early Intervention Centers is to help the children at an earlier age when the outcomes are superior and the cost per child is significantly less. Furthermore, these children go on to regular schools and are mainstreamed at a much earlier age.



The early intervention center/school building at Srinagar Colony is clean and properly maintained. The classrooms are well organized. Here I met with Kalpana, the vice principal of the center/school. She explained how the children are evaluated and taught at the center and reported on the progress they have made. As discussed in my previous site visit report, the children are evaluated as below:

When the children first come, they are evaluated at the center and provided hearing aids depending on their needs. They are taught with the use of audiovisuals. The tools for teaching include audiovisual kits for separate age groups: for example, infant kits (until 2 years), toddler kits for children ages 2-4 etc. They have dedicated teachers/speech therapist teaching in the child's native language. The child is accompanied by the mother and the mothers are also trained on how to help the child learn since it is important to reinforce at home the lessons that are worked on in school. Thus the children and parent(s) are trained. The success rate depends on how involved the mothers/parents are. At present they teach in Hindi and Telugu. The teachers work with 3 month goals and the progress for each child is captured and then individualized depending on the need and progress of the child.

Once the child has progressed to a certain level, the child/student may have the option to get a cochlear implant (parents approval needed). Depending on the

financial capability of the family, this may be subsidized. After a cochlear implant the children attend the Auditory Verbal Therapy (AVT) from where they can be easily mainstreamed.

Learning at an early age as at the Early Intervention Center, occurs via hearing and speech as opposed to lip reading and sign language when there is no early intervention. This results in much better outcomes and quality of life for the child and family. It is also more economical: Happy and healthy children and a greater return on the investment.

During my visit this time, I observed a teacher teaching 4 students, in Telugu, using the tool kits. The children were between the ages of 2 – 3 years. The children were eager to learn and happy. They were accompanied by their mothers. I had an opportunity to speak with 2 mothers who expressed their gratitude to the center and the funds provided by donors such as ASHA. They were emotional and said this center has made a big difference in their lives and the life of their child. The children were happy to learn and started speaking after joining the center. Some of these mothers had to travel almost 2 hours each way to come to the center, but said it was well worth it.

I was able to see the progress children were making when compared to last year, during my site visit. What struck me was that the parents were enrolling their children at a younger age, when outcomes are much better.

They will need sponsors/donors in order to keep the programs going since the children are from very poor families. (See report from Ashray Akrti with further details). Furthermore due to the rise in enrollment, space is also at a premium.

It was a very rewarding experience to see a place where children & women can hope and build a better life.

Below are some photographs taken during my visit:



Students at the Early Intervention Center



Students at the Early Intervention Center



One on one teaching



One on one instruction for a more advanced older child-making progress