**iCanConnect Helps New Jersey Girl Continue Speech Therapy Services**

**During Pandemic**

Molly Henkle is a seven-year-old New Jersey girl who has CHARGE syndrome. She is deaf and uses American Sign Language (ASL) as her primary mode of communication. Molly receives auditory verbal therapy (AVT) but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, her in-person AVT sessions have turned into teletherapy sessions. Using the equipment and training she received through iCanConnect, also known as the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program, Molly has been able to continue receiving speech therapy from the comfort of her home.

“Having access to the right equipment and technology is important,” said Jenn Henkle, Molly’s mom. “Since ASL is Molly’s primary mode of communication, using the video function on her tablet is great for her because she can see the person she is speaking with,” Jenn continued. “Molly has made amazing strides in her speech over the past few months through teletherapy. If she didn’t have her tablet through iCanConnect, she wouldn’t be able to continue her speech therapy, and she wouldn’t be as advanced as she is today verbally.”

Molly is a socially motivated child who thrives when interacting with family and friends. While it can be isolating staying home for extended periods of time, Molly has the ability to get in touch with those closest to her at a moment’s notice using the video chat function on her tablet. “If Molly didn’t have her tablet, she would be more dependent on others to communicate,” said Jenn. “With her own tablet, Molly can video chat with her grandparents, cousins, and friends when she wants to and not be reliant on others to help her do it. It’s important for her to have her own way to communicate to help keep her independent and give her a sense of responsibility, especially right now,” she finished.

“Sometimes families are hesitant to reach out for services because they feel like it’s a burden and the technology can be overwhelming,” said Carly Fredericks, iCanConnect New Jersey Program Coordinator. “It’s important for families to know the iCanConnect trainers understand the specific needs of children and there are resources to support them.”

When Molly applied to iCanConnect, Carly assessed her distance communication needs at the time and laid out future goals to set her up for additional training down the line. “Molly was a good candidate for a tablet because she could manipulate her older brother’s tablet but she needed her own equipment to give her the ability to communicate by herself,” said Carly.

As part of her formal assessment and training, an iCanConnect technology specialist went to Molly’s house, set-up her equipment and showed her how to use the video function on her tablet. “Now Molly is working on text messaging,” said Carly. “It’s easier to manipulate messaging on a tablet because it’s larger than a smartphone. We are trained to work with kids to help them reach their potential and that can include setting future equipment goals. For example, we’ve set a Bluetooth keyboard as a future equipment goal for Molly. It will help make her more efficient at messaging,” she finished.

“I recommend iCanConnect to everyone who needs services to help communicate,” said Jenn. “We are so thankful for the equipment and training Molly received through iCanConnect. She wouldn’t be where she is today without it.”