



The Newsletter for Indiana Early Intervention



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Raising awareness of EI

Share with others why you choose to be an early interventionist

Dear First Steps personnel,

I wanted to take the opportunity to extend my utmost gratitude to each of you for your hard work. Your continued dedication to First Steps not only helps us serve more than 30,000 children and families each year, but it is critical in assisting these children in growing, learning and thriving. We are appreciative of every member of the First Steps team for showing relentless and continued efforts despite the challenges faced.

We know the growing number of children referred to the program, increasing costs to deliver in-person services and shrinking number of personnel places a tremendous amount of pressure on providers, service coordinators, administrative staff and every contributor in the system. While the state team is actively working with a variety of stakeholders and policy makers to bring attention to the critical needs of the early intervention system, you can also help our system by raising awareness of early intervention as a meaningful career path.

Recently, the Division for Early Childhood, Early Childhood Personnel Center and the U.S. Department of Education launched the national campaign “Be Part of EI” to increase the number of professionals working in early intervention. We encourage you to check out and share their [public-facing website](#), where you will find information and resources about how to become an early intervention provider and, most importantly, why it is wonderful and rewarding work. [The video](#) developed for this campaign was created in partnership with Indiana and Illinois early intervention providers and families. Take a look—you just might see some familiar faces! Please share this campaign with your friends, families and colleagues and please continue to share with others why you choose to be an early interventionist.

You can inspire and help us to reach those professionals wanting to have a career which quite literally changes the lives of Hoosiers every day. All individuals looking to enroll as a First Steps provider should visit our newly revised webpage, [Become a First Steps Provider!](#)

In appreciation,

Christina

Please like and follow us on Facebook  and Instagram 

You can find us by searching @FirstStepsIndiana.

The First Steps Interagency Coordinating Council is a governor-appointed body required by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The role of the ICC is to advise and assist the state's early intervention team in developing and maintaining an early intervention system of the highest quality and balancing family-centered services with fiscal responsibility. Its membership is comprised of parents of children with delays and/or disabilities, state agency groups, early intervention service providers, legislators and others. The ICC meetings are open to the public. The next ICC meeting will be hosted in person on **Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., ET**. We will also have an online option to attend virtually via Zoom. Please [click here for meeting details](#).



EIHub

First Steps Early Intervention Case Management System

EIHub updates

We would like to keep our stakeholders informed of the work we are doing behind the scenes to enhance the First Steps case management system.

If you encounter an issue, have concerns regarding system speed or have questions when navigating the IN EIHub, please reach out to the IN EIHub Help Desk by emailing infirststeps@pcgus.com or calling 877-522-1065, weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET.

Please note: As of January 2023, there will be no extended hours for the EIHub Help Desk.

Homefront Family Services

Nearly 19 years ago, Jerry and Connie Creason's little daughter Hallie, who has Down syndrome, was receiving First Steps early intervention services when Homefront Family Services agency director Amy Ellis learned that Hallie's mom had a background in early childhood education. Amy encouraged Connie to become a developmental therapist. Connie is still a First Steps DT as well as lead therapist and agency supervisor.

Fast forward to the present and Hallie works for Homefront Family Services as well! When Hallie graduated from high school and was looking for a job, her parents were concerned, because Hallie can sometimes be shy. They wanted her to work in an environment in which she felt comfortable. Well, it didn't take long for Hallie to open up socially and fit right into her new work environment. Both Amy and Hallie report that they talk and laugh a lot at work.

Hallie is very busy learning many new skills. She makes copies, assembles and staples packets for the new providers, pulls archived files as needed and helps to keep the office clean. She says her favorite part of the job is shredding documents and papers but she does not enjoy mopping.

When asked if she likes working at Homefront, Hallie responded, "I love it! I like working where my mom works. It reminds me of when she started working here when I was younger."

Amy says the opportunity to work with Hallie has been a HUGE blessing to her and is a full circle moment to have a former client now working in the Homefront Family office.



2023 Indiana Early Intervention Conference

Held in-person June 8-9, 2023, in Bloomington. Indiana First Steps and Infancy Onward have partnered with the Early Childhood Center at Indiana University to bring together national and local experts to address research and best practices in Early Childhood Intervention. [Register now](#) to get the \$90 early bird rate (until Feb. 14, 2023).

DEC RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of early intervention services

According to the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood, assessment is the process of gathering information to make decisions. Assessment is used as a screening tool to determine eligibility for services, plan individual services, monitor progress and measure child outcomes. Assessment is an integral part of early intervention services for infants and toddlers. It informs and guides the services for young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. Because the child and family are central to everything we do in First Steps, it is important to keep the family at the forefront of all assessment activities.

For example, the DEC recommends that early interventionists work with family to help guide the assessment processes and work together as a team with other professionals (e.g., physician, caregiver, service coordinator, early intervention providers) to gather all the necessary information to create the full picture of the child and his or her development. The DEC outlines that early intervention providers use the materials, tools and strategies that are appropriate for the child's age, taking into consider-

ation the sensory, physical, communication, social emotional development and family culture of each individual child. According to the DEC, best practice dictates that

assessments should be conducted in the child's natural language and include additional languages if the child is learning more than one language.

It is recommended that assessments include all areas of development and behavior to identify the child's strengths, needs, preferences and interests. Early intervention providers and eligibility determination team members must use a variety of information gathering methods such as, direct child observation and parent/caregiver interviews. It is crucial to collect as much information as possible about the child's level of mastery of skills in their daily activities and routines in a variety of environments such as, home, relatives' home, child care, community settings, etc.



It is the role of the early interventionist to use their professional knowledge in collaboration with assessment results gathered to identify current levels of development, determine program eligibility and share input for the Individual Family Service Plan.

Direct service providers use the initial assessment as well as ongoing assessment information to identify needs, outcomes and goals for the child with the family. They

should constantly be monitoring progress and updating plans and goals as needed.

As recommended practices for assessment, the DEC underscores the importance

of assessment tools being sensitive enough to detect a child's progress of developmental milestones, which is especially important for a young child who may have significant needs of support.

It is also vitally important that all early intervention providers, service coordinators and eligibility determination team members always use language that families and caregivers can understand and is useful to families, whether that be in communicating assessment results or sharing information during a weekly visit.

Early intervention services are only for a very, very short time in a child and family's life, it is important they understand their child's needs and how we as a team can wrap around each family.

“Because the child and family are central to everything we do in First Steps, it is important to keep the family at the forefront of all assessment activities.”

The latest news about Respiratory Syncytial Virus

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[Respiratory syncytial virus](#) is a viral infection that is common in young children during the winter months. There has been an increase in the numbers of children who have been diagnosed with RSV this year. It is also showing up in very young children earlier than usual with greater numbers of children getting sick.

Although most people with RSV have mild cold symptoms, it can

cause severe illness and can sometimes result in hospitalization.

It is important that early intervention providers and families understand the symptoms of RSV so that they know how this illness can affect children and how to respond when children get sick. Check out [this information](#) from the American Academy of Pediatrics on RSV, including symptoms.



FGRBI

Thank you to All Kids Can

The First Steps state team and the staff at the Early Childhood Center at the Indiana Institute for Disability and Community at Indiana University would like to recognize All Kids Can for being a leader in the adoption of Family-Guided Routines-Based Intervention in Indiana!

All Kids Can is a First Steps provider agency located in Madison and serves Cluster J. All Kids Can has supported ALL of their personnel in learning the FGRBI framework and participating in the professional development sequence. We look forward to the impact this will have on improving child and family outcomes! Well done and thank you!



2022–2023 Indiana Early Learning Foundations prioritization

From our partners at IDOE

The Indiana Department of Education Office of Kindergarten Readiness is looking for input in prioritizing the Early Learning Foundations. Committees made of early learning educators, providers and administrators, and family and community members will review the Foundations and make suggestions for improvement. This important work will help shape the learning of all Indiana children birth to age five.

The committees will meet three evenings in February and March. Participants will be paid for their completed work.

If you are an educator, service provider and/or administrator and are interested in being a part of the Early Learning Foundation committee, [you may apply](#).

Additionally, as family voices are so very important, IDOE would appreciate your support in sharing this information with the families you serve.

Family members and other community stakeholders [may apply](#) to share their input.



First Steps webinars and trainings, including those required for initial credentialing, are now located on the [IN EI Hub Learning Management System](#). [Watch this video](#) to learn more about the LMS! All registered IN EI Hub users are encouraged to visit the [Learning Management System](#) to check out the new trainings that have been added. Look for some exciting changes to come to the LMS in 2023, including brand-new service coordination and direct service provider trainings.

The 2021 Early Intervention Conference recorded webinars are now posted on the LMS and are a great way to get those required First Steps credentialing hours!

As always, if you are looking for professional development hours, you may always take courses outside of the LMS. However, as documented in the First Steps Policy Manual, you must retain your certificate of attendance documentation for a period of seven years.

- **INfancy Onward trainings, December 2022 and January 2023.** Visit the INfancy Onward [community events calendar](#) to find infancy and early childhood mental health training and events sponsored in conjunction with community partners.
- **Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, Wednesday, Dec. 7, 6 p.m.** SPARK Learning Lab, in partnership with K1ds Count Therapy, is piloting infant early childhood mental health consultation services to child care providers. This prevention-based service pairs a mental health consultant with families and adults who work with infants and young children in the places they learn and grow. Providers in Boone, Hendricks, Montgomery and Marion counties are invited to join a virtual informational session [Register now](#).
- **Labor of Love Summit, Thursday, Dec. 8, 2022, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.** Network at the Marriott Downtown Indianapolis with clinicians, public health professionals, lactation consultants, doulas and other healthcare professionals. This year’s theme is “[Year of the Mom](#).” [Registration](#) is now open.
- **2022 Topics in Pediatric Audiology Virtual Conference, Friday, Dec. 9, 2022, 8:15 a.m.–12:15 p.m.** [This event](#) is hosted by Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education and Indiana Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program. Agenda: Unilateral Hearing Loss & Single-Sided Deafness presented by Shelley R. Moats, AuD, PASC.
- **AccessAbility Parenting Disability peer support group, Dec. 21, 2022, 7:30 p.m.–8:30 p.m.** The Parenting Disability Peer Support Group is a peer-led, peer-supported safe space for parents with children with a disability to ask questions, support each other, talk about specific topics and hear from guest speakers. Email jminor@abilityindiana.org for more information or visit [AccessAbility](#).
- **AEPS2 training is being offered Friday, Jan. 27, 2023.** To register for Assessment Evaluation and Programming System 2 training, please [visit the LMS](#).
- **Hear Indiana Listening and Spoken Language Virtual Conference, Friday, Feb. 3, 2023.** The 45th annual conference will take place virtually from Feb. 3 to 28. This is an outstanding opportunity to gain expertise in hearing technologies, spoken language development, and clinical applications. [Register now](#) to secure a virtual seat!



Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services

Get First Steps information directly via email

Sign up for DDRS updates, First Steps newsletter and *INVision* parent newsletter. To register, [click FSSA Subscriber](#).

INvision newsletter

The Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services *INvision* newsletter shares news, information, tips and events from each of our bureaus to help families and individuals with disabilities stay connected and learn more about our services. Families can [view past editions](#) and [sign up here](#). Please feel free to sign up and share with the families you support.

Our mission, vision and values

Mission: To partner with Hoosier families whose young children are experiencing developmental delays and connect them with services that help them promote their child's development.

Vision: All Indiana families have a strong foundation to advocate for their infants and toddlers to grow and flourish to their highest potential.

Values:

- **Family-centered:** To support and enhance each family's capacity to promote their child's development.
- **Strengths-based:** To acknowledge families and children as fundamentally resourceful and resilient.
- **Relationship-based:** To embrace and promote the fact that children grow and learn in the context of positive relationships with caring adults.
- **Holistic:** To promote "whole child" development by recognizing the interconnectedness of physical, cognitive, social emotional and adaptive development.
- **Culturally competent:** To respect and be responsive to the cultures, beliefs, practices, strengths and needs of all families, children and individuals.
- **Routines-based:** To embed services and supports into a child and family's daily activities in their home or other community-based environments.
- **Individualized:** To adapt services and supports in response to the unique strengths and needs of each child and family.

Use your computer to read webpages out loud

BrowseAloud is a suite of products that provides online reading support. BrowseAloud reads website content out loud, highlighting each word as it is spoken in a high-quality, human-sounding voice. Click on the BrowseAloud link that appears beside "Accessibility Tools" on the footer of the IN.gov website. This will launch the BrowseAloud Plus toolbar. This toolbar provides speech at the touch of a button. For more information, visit [BrowseAloud](#).

Indiana First Steps is on social media!

Please like and follow us on Facebook  and Instagram 

You can find us by searching **@FirstStepsIndiana**. For other outreach and marketing materials, please visit our [online toolkit](#).