



*The Newsletter for
Indiana Early Intervention*



Christina Commons
First Steps director

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Grateful for your partnership

Dear First Steps Team,

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, I want to take a moment to express my gratitude for all your hard work to ensure First Steps is available to over 30,000 Hoosier infants, toddlers and families each year.

Your work makes a real difference in the lives of the children and families you serve. You collaborate and coach families to teach their children learn new skills, build confidence and develop their independence. You also help families navigate the early intervention process and access the resources they need to support their children.

I'm grateful for your partnership in helping Indiana First Steps achieve its mission of providing high-quality early intervention services to children and families. Our work would not be possible without your dedication and commitment.

With gratitude,
Christina

Please like and follow us on Facebook  and Instagram 

You can find us by searching @FirstStepsIndiana.

Portrait of an Early Intervention Provider *by Susan Swindeman*

An EI Provider...

Sees unique potential yet experiences utter joy with each new developmental milestone.

Follows children's and families' leads yet adapts like a master.

Is fluent in acronyms yet knows how to explain things clearly.

Understands that play affects neuroplasticity and development yet watches kids' movies for "homework."

Feels exhausted and exhilarated all at once yet enters each session with the same energy as if it were the first.

Appreciates wonderful families entrusting them with their children yet loses sleep as if they were their own.

Recalls how to create toys from paper rolls, pillows and containers yet forgets to eat or eats in the car.

Designs obstacle courses out of furniture, blankets and tape yet also has fun simply blowing bubbles.

Transforms boxes into epic rockets, slides, tunnels and ball pits yet recognizes the value of cozy retreats.

Researches evidence-based practices for "fun" yet finds grass stains on their clothes and pudding in their hair.

Empowers, respects and honors individual challenges yet remains passionate about making a difference!

EI Hub update

Thank you to those who have submitted tickets to the IN EI Help Desk regarding issues with the Print to Report function in the Service Logging module.

The First Steps state team has met with Public Consulting Group's development team members to review the issue and discuss proposed solutions.

PCG confirmed that the Print to Report function may not work consistently due to an upgrade needed to the infrastructure in the Service Logging module and until this upgrade can be installed, it is possible that the Print to Report function may not work during times of high traffic.

We know this issue has a significant impact on the

workload of our service providers and we are currently working with PCG to implement a solution to this issue as quickly as possible.

We recommend users first try the Print to Report function. If the function is not working properly, providers may share a copy of the service log with the family at the next session, use the Print to PDF function, fillable PDF or paper copy to send notes to families.

We appreciate your patience as we work to resolve this issue. Please continue to contact the Help Desk with any issues you experience with EIHub by emailing infirststeps@pcgus.com or calling 877-522-1065, weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET.

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. 10, from 10 a.m. to noon, ET**. We will also have an online option to attend virtually via Zoom. Please [click here for meeting details](#).



FGRBI: Partnership

Having intentional conversations with caregivers

Family Guided Routines Based Intervention emphasizes a partnership between the caregiver and provider. This partnership is built on intentional conversations with caregivers.



Conversations are purposeful and should support the family's understanding of the child's learning. Providers are actively listening to find ways to support the caregiver's participation in the intervention embedded in everyday routines.

As partners with caregivers, providers use open-ended questions that encourage reflection, problem solving, planning and decision making by caregivers, which are essential aspects of adult learning.

What open-ended questions will you use with families this week?

How will you use the information you receive to support an increase in caregiver confidence and competence?

First Steps wants to hear from YOU!

The First Steps quarterly newsletter is dedicated to sharing news, information and updates to Indiana's early intervention personnel. With that in mind, we want to know what you are interested in and what will assist and support you in your job of providing services to infants, toddlers and their families in their natural environment.

Please take a few minutes to [complete the online survey](#). Let us know how we can improve the newsletter to better align with your professional needs.

We appreciate the work you do to help families every day and thank you in advance for your input.

Early Intervention Conference call for proposals

Addressing research and best practices in Early Childhood Intervention

The 2024 Indiana Early Intervention Conference is June 13-14 in Bloomington. First Steps and Infancy Onward have partnered with the Early Childhood Center at Indiana University to bring together national and local experts in Early Childhood Intervention.

The conference planning committee invites you to submit a proposal to present your evidence-based research or innovative ideas at the conference, please

complete [the proposal survey](#) by Dec. 15.

Notification of acceptance will occur by the end of February 2024. Each proposal chosen will receive one conference registration. You can find out more about the conference at [earlyintervention.iu.edu](#).

If you have any questions, please contact Janet Ballard at jaeball@indiana.edu or Joy Jones at jsj5@iu.edu.



**Save the date for the 2024
Early Intervention Conference:
Thursday and Friday,
June 13-14
Bloomington, Ind.**

We would love to have you!



Head Start and Early Head Start

A comprehensive education program that supports the whole child

Generally, when one thinks of Head Start, laughing, smiling, playing and engaged children come to mind. In reality, Head Start programs go much deeper to support low-income children and families. Head Start, initiated in 1965, established a comprehensive child care education program that supported not just the educational needs of low-income children but the whole child, by supporting low-income families and their children with comprehensive services.

Head Start (serving children ages 3 to Kindergarten entry) and Early Head Start (serving children birth to age 3 and pregnant moms) agencies are federal-to-local grants from the Office of Head Start, currently supporting over 13,000 Hoosier children. Head Start programs are set up to support the whole child through comprehensive services via center-based and home visiting programs that address:

1. **Education**, in the form of learning experiences to help children to grow intellectually, mentally and physically;
2. **Health**, by providing health services such as immunizations, dental, medical, mental health and nutritional supports as well as the early identification of health problems;
3. **Parent involvement**, through volunteer opportunities and involving parents in the planning and implementation of activities, serving on the policy council and committees that make administrative decisions and participating in classes and workshops on child development; and
4. **Social services support**, by providing outreach to families to determine what services they need. These services are outlined in Head Start's guiding principles, the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

The Office of Head Start monitors Head Start programs through stringent guidelines called the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Those Head Start Program Performance Standards guide agencies in every aspect from health and safety guidelines to assessment and evaluation, teacher qualifications and curriculum guidelines to enrollment and eligibility to operations to fiscal components of the grant. The HSPPS specifically address assessment, observation and referral.

Head Start programs are required to do assessments on enrolled children within 45 days of their enrollment date.

That means that Head Start staff work to collect information through developmental milestones observations and discussions and assessments, often via the CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early" tools, as well as developmental screening instruments like the ASQ and Brigance, assessment tools like Teaching Strategies Gold and curriculum assessments like Creative Curriculum and Frog Street.

Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms are there to support the growth and development of children where they are and much of that growth and development builds on collaborations with families and service providers through First Steps and local education agencies. Often, those screenings and assessments lead to referrals for next steps in securing services for the child.

Because of the way HS and EHS programs work closely with and engage families, services and support for those services become a collaborative effort that includes supporting therapists and therapies, building rapport and supporting families during their service journey. This can include attending IEP and IFSP meetings alongside family members.

Head Start Program Performance Standards not only define program services and operations, but they also define eligibility criteria. Head Start programs are designed to support low-income families; therefore, eligibility requirements include income at the 100% federal poverty level, families on public assistance (TANF, SSI and SNAP), foster families and families experiencing homelessness. In addition, local programs annual assess community need so that they can be responsive to local and regional needs and they prioritize enrollment based on needs, such as disabilities, health and environmental factors.

It's also helpful to know that the HSPPS require all programs to maintain a wait list for enrollment, so while that can be frustrating for those families with an immediate need, families are encouraged to keep the conversations open and ongoing regarding enrollment. As mentioned, each program does individual enrollment and the attached sheet indicates each grant recipient's area as well as the agency director.

Head Start programs are available in all 92 Indiana counties. Services vary from county to county, based on the local grant recipient's program. For the most recent Head Start Needs Assessment data, more information and resources and how to contact your local program, visit the [Head Start and Early Head Start web page](#).

All registered IN EI Hub users have access to the Learning Management System in the IN EI Hub! First Steps webinars and trainings, including those required for initial credentialing, are located on the [IN EI Hub Learning Management System](#). [Watch this video](#) to learn more about the LMS.

Look for exciting changes to come to the LMS in 2024, including brand-new service coordination and direct service provider trainings.

The Indiana Early Intervention Conference recorded webinars are now posted on the LMS and are a great way to obtain 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.

- **Indiana University School of Medicine ECHO sessions.** Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes is a movement to connect local primary care teams with inter-disciplinary specialist teams to improve treatment for complex and chronic health conditions. Visit [the ECHO website](#) to learn how to participate.
- **Indiana Hands and Voices** has fun planned for children and their families across the state! Check out their [website and calendar of events](#).
- **Indiana Alliance Trainings.** Check out [the trainings scheduled](#) about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder at Indiana Alliance on Prenatal Substance Use Exposure.
- **Division for Early Childhood 39th Annual International Conference on Young Children with Disabilities and Their Families, Nov. 28 to Dec. 1.** The conference provides professionals in early intervention, early childhood special education and related fields and family members of young children with disabilities an opportunity to learn, network and collaborate. Visit www.deconference.org to plan your conference.
- **The Indiana Early Intervention Conference, June 13–14, 2024.** Plan to join your colleagues in Bloomington, Indiana at the Monroe Convention Center! We are now accepting proposals for breakout sessions until Dec. 15. Notification of acceptance will be given by the end of February 2024. To find out more [about the conference](#), please contact jaeball@indiana.edu or jsj5@iu.edu.

Research study opportunity for early intervention providers

Indiana University is seeking research study participants for “Building Interactive Social Communication for Toddlers with Autism in Community-Based Early Intervention Systems.”

BISC is a federally funded study that provides targeted intervention for children aged 30 months and younger with communication concerns. The intervention focuses on social communication before age three, when important social foundations are developing.

Providers selected for BISC will gain knowledge to support and empower families of toddlers with social communication concerns. Providers will receive a stipend and accrue 15–30 professional development contact hours through participation. Enrollment begins January 2024. Providers can add their name to the contact list now.

If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, please email Addison McGeary, BISC Project Associate, at amcgeary@indiana.edu.



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 Department of Health

Your health is our priority

Make your voice heard. Help us know what you & your household need to support your well-being.

[This survey](#) is administered by the Maternal and Child Health Division & Children with Special Healthcare Services Division, Indiana Department of Health. Complete for a chance to win a gift card! Survey is open until Dec. 15, 2023. Questions? Email kschedel@health.in.gov or meroberts@health.in.gov.

