



***The Newsletter for
Indiana Early Intervention***



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- Much more!

So long 2020!

Last year brought both challenge and success

Dear Stakeholders,

While 2020 brought many challenges, hardships, stress and grief for so many in our First Steps family, it was also filled with great success. When faced with an unprecedented public health crisis our teams came together to do extraordinary work.

Infants, toddlers and their families were supported through new policy development, increased communication, stakeholder collaboration, resource development, coaching and innovative virtual practices. While it was certainly difficult to learn and implement new policies, procedures and service delivery methods, our children and families benefited from continuity of IFSP services during a time of much uncertainty.



Services provided to families went beyond early intervention, as our service coordinators and providers assisted more families than ever before with vital food assistance, housing and Medicaid enrollment. Our personnel connected with families in whatever ways they could to ensure families didn't feel socially isolated and children continued to grow and learn.

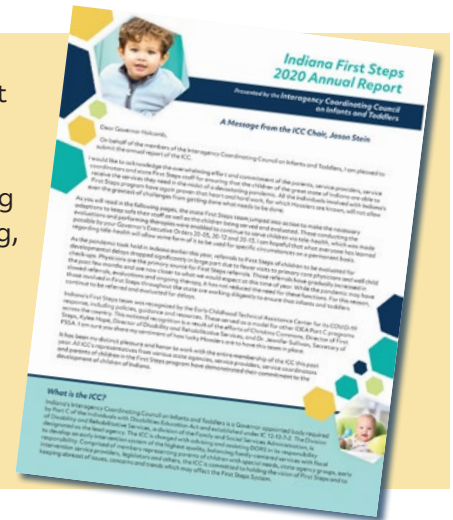
I hope you take some time to reflect on the outstanding work you achieved this past year, and may 2020 be a reminder our First Steps program is as resilient as the children and families we serve.

Happy New Year,

Christina

The **First Steps Interagency Coordinating Council** Annual Governor's report has been posted to our website. To learn more about the ICC and to find the full report in both English and Spanish, [click here](#). The ICC will host its next quarterly meeting on Jan. 13, 2021, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., EST. The meeting will be hosted virtually on Zoom and is open to the public. To join the meeting, [please click here](#).

The Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services is a division of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. If you have questions about Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services programs and services, visit us online at www.DDRS.in.gov and [visit our webpage](#) To learn more about DDRS Commissions and Councils.



EI Hub

First Steps Early Intervention Case Management System

We continue to focus on building the new Indiana Early Intervention Hub and have currently been registering all enrolled and credentialed providers into the new system. We thank you for your diligence and patience as we continue to work to get all personnel registered and ready to go for our February 17 Go-Live of the IN EI Hub!

For more information, you may visit the [First Steps website](#) and click on the [IN EI Hub link](#) posted on the banner of the homepage. There you will find a link to our [recently updated Frequently Asked Questions](#), the user guide and a list of tool tips to help with registration, as well as a list of informational videos about the EI Hub, provider enrollment management, the Learning Management System and service logging.

We would also like to encourage you to share the information with your personnel and colleagues. If you have any additional questions, please email infirststeps@pcgus.com.

Child Development Services is growing!

Welcome, Part C Assistant Director **Jessica Tomasino**



The Bureau of Child Development Services within the Family Social Services Administration is growing!

The small but mighty First Steps state team is thrilled to welcome Jessica Tomasino as the new Part C Assistant Director.

Jessica graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology from IUPUI and a master's in teaching from Marian University. She has worked as a

community-based mental health skills specialist, an ABA therapist and public school teacher. Most recently, Jessica was the Preschool Special Education Specialist and Indiana's Part B 619 Coordinator at the Indiana Department of Education. She also teaches courses as an adjunct staff member of IUPUI's Early Childhood Program and serves as the vice-president of the Indiana Chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood.

Jessica is very familiar with the First Steps program as she has been a valuable partner in helping to revise our transition processes to make them more family-friendly. As a recent member of the Interagency Coordinating Council executive board and chairman of the professional development committee, Jessica is knowledgeable about the mission and vision of First Steps and excited to help lead our program into the future.

As you can tell, Jessica is a very busy lady, but in her free time she enjoys gardening, doing projects around the house with her husband Anthony, corralling their two daughters, Adilee and Paislee, and walking their dog, Hank!



Developmental therapists... What are they?

What are the different types? What is their training? When and why would you refer to a DT or DT-specialist? Each early intervention provider fulfills a special role in the First Steps program. Developmental therapists are no different.

We would like to share some information about these Part C professionals and why they are valuable to our system and the families for whom we serve.

As posted in our First Steps policy manual, developmental therapists must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood or special education with an early childhood focus. Individuals with related degrees may be considered if they have completed at least 15 hours of academic coursework relevant to child development, specifically working with infants and toddlers.

In general, a developmental therapist looks at the whole child. They are trained to observe and assess cognitive or intellectual development and social emotional skills. Developmental therapists also evaluate a child's receptive and expressive skills, self-help skills and fine and gross motor development. In addition to observation, assessment and evaluation, DTs work closely with families—tracking a child's milestones, sharing resources, providing parent education, and assisting parents in finding quality childcare and preschools for their children. There are situations when a DT will refer to other therapists of varying specialties as the family and team feel it is necessary and beneficial for the child.

You may encounter several different types of developmental therapists with a variety of specialties and focuses in Indiana's Part C program. We employ general developmental therapists as well as developmental therapy – communication, developmental therapy – deaf and hard of hearing and developmental therapy – blind and low vision specialists.

A developmental therapy-communication specialist is unique to Indiana. These early intervention professionals are required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in communication disorders or in speech and language. A DT-C works with families whose children are experiencing an otherwise non-specific general delay in communication development. Therefore, if a child is referred to First Steps for a language delay it would be very appropriate for a DT-C to be identified on the IFSP to encourage language acquisition, as a DT-C may address joint attention, imitation, requesting, following directions and early consonant sounds.

To continue, a developmental therapy-deaf and hard of hearing specialist, or DT-D/HH, has earned a minimum of a bachelor's degree in special education/deaf education. SKI-HI training through an accredited university is recommended to be DT-D/HH, but not mandatory. These

providers work with children and their families to address a variety of communication needs for infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing. They share knowledge of communication opportunities and language development, including auditory development, spoken language, visual language, amplification and other technology needs. The D/HH specialist may only provide services that address the hearing and communication needs for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Another type of developmental therapist is called a blind and low vision specialist, commonly referred to as a DT-B/LV specialist. Blind and low vision specialists will visit with the family and child in their natural environment to provide suggestions, resources, and support. Typically, DT-B/LVs have a bachelor's degree in elementary special education with an additional university certification in the area of blind and low vision, such as VIISA and INSITE. These providers may only address the vision needs for children who are blind or have low vision. It is recommended that families have their child examined by an ophthalmologist or optometrist before being referred for B/LV services. First Steps has several ophthalmologists and optometrists enrolled in our system who can provide thorough eye exams for children with vision concerns.

All DT and DT specialists are valued members of a child's IFSP team. These professionals enhance the child and family's early intervention experience. It is important for eligibility determination teams, service coordinators and other early intervention providers to recognize the expertise of developmental therapists and know when to refer to these early intervention specialists.

To add a DT or DT specialist to a child's IFSP, please complete a Change Page or Addition to Services form and submit it to the service coordinator so an IFSP team discussion can take place and the Team, including the family, can discern if it is necessary.

As early intervention professionals we all have a unique role in helping children to meet their outcomes and to support families to be their child's best advocate in helping them to grow and flourish.

For more information about development therapy please visit the following organizations:

- [The Council for Exceptional Children's Division of Early Childhood](#)
- [The Infant Toddler Coordinator's Association](#)
- [The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center](#)

DDRS—First Steps Indiana statewide profile report

Reporting Period: 10/01/2019 to 09/30/2020

I. Population Information

Population (U.S. Census Bureau)	6,376,792
Population Growth Percentage (U.S. Census Bureau)	4.00%

II. Child Enrollment & Referral

	Number of Children	Percentage of Children
One-day Count w/ IFSP—0 to 1 year old	1,460	
One-day Count w/ IFSP—All Children	11,002	
Annual Count of Children w/ IFSP	22,918	
Annual Count of Children Served (regardless of IFSP)	26,086	
Average Age at Referral (months)	14	
New IFSP 07/01/2020-09/30/2020	2,871	
Children with Referral to IFSP 45+ Days 07/01/2020-09/30/2020	116	

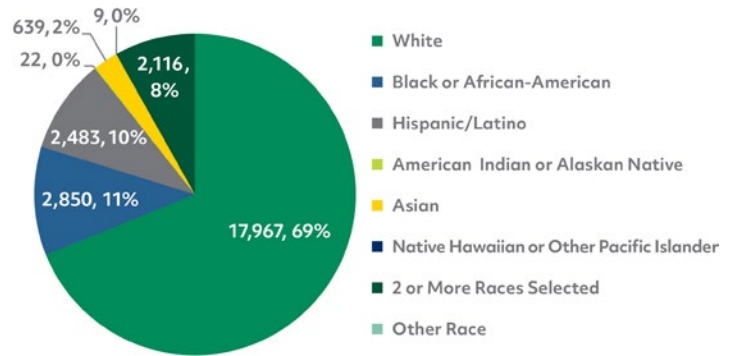
III. Exits

	Number of Children	Percentage of Children
Children Moving to Preschool Special Education	5,595	48%
Children Under 3, Services No Longer Needed	252	2%
Eligible Children Who Declined Services	1,549	13%

IV. Paid Services

	Amount	Percentage
Children w/IFSP Served Primarily in the Natural Environment	22,818	100%
Total Amount Paid on Behalf of Children Served	\$46,655,862.38	
Average Paid on Behalf of Each Child Served	\$1,788.54	

V. Race Information



VI. Children Receiving Each Service Type

Service Type	Number of Children Served	Percent Receiving Service
Assistive Technology	182	1%
Audiology	877	3%
Developmental Therapy	13,914	53%
Health Services	0	0%
Interpreter Services	533	2%
Medical	0	0%
Nursing	0	0%
Nutrition	337	1%
Occupational Therapy	14,750	57%
Other Services	39	0%
Physical Therapy	13,422	51%
Psychology	219	1%
Social Work	33	0%
Speech Therapy	16,863	65%
Vision	13	0%

Source: First SideHatch Database

Understanding Part C federal indicators

Federal Indicator #9 Hearing requests resolved and #10 Mediation agreements

As we continue our exploration of the Part C federal indicators, we will examine two indicators related to dispute resolution; Federal Indicator 9: Hearing Requests Resolved and Federal Indicator 10: Mediation Agreements. These indicators identify the number of complaints of Part C violations that are reviewed and resolved through due process hearing or mediation.

A due process hearing may only be requested by a parent or guardian when the “identification, evaluation, placement, or provision of Part C services” ([CADRE](#)) for the child is in question. This is a formal proceeding “conducted by a hearing officer who considers the information provided by each side, may ask questions of witnesses and makes a decision about the dispute” ([CADRE](#)).

Mediation is intended to assist the family and First Steps providers in resolving a disagreement about the provision of Part C services. During the mediation process, a trained mediator works with the family and First Steps personnel to find a solution agreeable to all parties and in the best interest of the child.

Under IDEA Part C, the family is entitled to certain rights and procedural safeguards. Procedural safeguards “are intended to protect the interests of families

and children with special needs, as well as the special education and the early intervention systems.” Families must be presented their rights and procedural safeguards continually throughout their time in First Steps.

If a family believes a violation of their rights under Part C has occurred, they should submit a written and signed complaint as well as a request for a due process hearing or mediation to the First Steps state office. While receiving a complaint from a family may not seem ideal, it is actually a great opportunity for a family to advocate for their child and their early intervention services. As First Steps personnel, you should familiarize yourself with family rights and procedural safeguards. You are encouraged to review the documents entitled “A Family’s Guide through Procedural Safeguards” and “Family Rights.” Both are posted on the First Steps website under the Families tab. You may also take the “Family-Centered Approach to Procedural Safeguards” training and receive First Steps credentialing points. The training is located on the Trainings page of our website, www.firststeps.in.gov.

For more information, visit the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Centers [website](#).



SAVE THE DATE!
JUNE 10 & 11, 2021

**VIRTUAL
FIRST STEPS
CONFERENCE**

[EventMobi link](#) | [Registration link](#)



TRAINING INFO

Due to the rollout of the new Indiana EI Hub, we will be suspending First Steps credentialing activities from Jan. 23 to Feb. 28. Therefore, any providers who are due to credential in January or February must submit their credentialing activities **on or before Jan. 22, 2021**, to CSC or wait to submit their credentialing activities in the new IN EI Hub from March 1 to 31, 2021. However, it is important to note that a provider’s annual credentialing date will remain the same in the future.

All First Steps required onboarding trainings are “under construction.” We are currently updating our recorded modules, in-person and virtual trainings, aligning them with best practices and incorporating the new IN EI Hub data management system. Look for NEW and IMPROVED trainings in the summer of 2021!

All registered IN EI Hub users can access our NEW Learning Management System. We will be posting new trainings and professional development opportunities on the LMS. [Watch this video](#) to learn more!

As always, if you are looking for online trainings for professional development hours, you may visit I-LEAD and register for an account. When registering, identify as an “early intervention provider.” If you have questions regarding I-LEAD, contact their customer services representatives directly at 800-299-1627 and choose option 5, Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m.–7 p.m., or Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m., EST.

As documented in the First Steps policy manual, personnel must retain certificates of completion for seven years.

National Webinar Series

Dr. Seena Skelton, Ph.D., will offer a free, two-part series exploring the role of critical consciousness and cultural awareness in the provision of First Steps services. These webinars will focus on initial activities completed with families (first visits, initial assessment, initial IFSP writing, family assessment) and how service coordinators and assessment team members can view these activities through an equity lens. Dr. Skelton will support providers to consider the role of bias, power and privilege in service provision through self-awareness and self-examination.

Session One: April 19, 2021, 12 to 1 p.m., EST
Session Two: May 21, 2021, 12 to 1 p.m., EST

Sessions will be recorded. Only 50 spaces are available. To register for this series, [click here](#). If you need accommodations for this webinar series, please contact Joy Jones at jsj5@iu.edu before April 5 for Session One and May 7 for Session Two.



Infancy Onward virtual conference save the date, Aug. 12 and 13. Visit www.infancyonward.org for more information or email sbailey@mhai.net for questions.



Family Voices has received funding from the CARES Act to connect families in need with internet services. To find out more information, contact Family Voices directly at 844-323-4636 or info@findiana.org.



The IUPUI School of Health and Human Sciences Department of Occupational Therapy is currently seeking occupational therapists to participate in a research study to target and reduce stigma beliefs in healthcare providers as a means of promoting occupational justice for marginalized groups. Compensation for participation will be provided. For more information, contact Sally Wasmuth at 317-400-0269 or swasmuth@iu.edu.



The Early Childhood Center at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community is hiring! If you have Part C and home visiting experience, check out our job posting. If you are interested or have any questions, email Michael Conn-Powers at mipower@iu.edu.

Family-Guided Routines-Based Intervention update

Participants will shape how this model will work in Indiana

There are several opportunities for First Steps providers to learn more about Family-Guided Routines-Based Intervention!

As we continue to explore Family-Guided Routines-Based Intervention and family/provider coaching, beginning in Jan. 2021 and continuing through June, First Steps is partnering with The Early Childhood Center at IU and Dr. Juliann Woods to offer First Steps providers an opportunity to join a Family-Guided Routines-Based Intervention Community of Practice. It is comprised of a select group of ongoing service providers.

In addition to learning more about this evidence-based model that First Steps has adopted, participants will have the opportunity to shape how this model will work in Indiana by sharing feedback throughout the experience.

What will participants receive?

- Access to eight hours of interactive online modules developed by the FGRBI team. These modules, which include embedded video vignettes, will be assigned each month. For your convenience, the videos can be accessed at any time.
- An opportunity to attend five one-hour Zoom forums, facilitated by IU and the FGRBI team, to discuss the module assignments and consider how the practice can be applied directly to your work in early intervention.
- FGRBI CoP participants will receive 13 credentialing hours.

What will your responsibility be?

- To commit to watching the modules on schedule and to attend four out of five of the live forums.
- To be willing to share what you have learned with your agency during a staff meeting.

- To be willing to share your feedback on the modules and FGRBI with the IU Team.

If you are part of the FGRBI CoP, you will have free access to the modules that will help you learn more about these family-centered practices that are associated with improved child and family outcomes. You will also have the opportunity to interact with, share and learn from your First Steps colleagues.

Please note: at this time, the FGRBI CoP is limited to ongoing service providers only.

[Click here to apply](#) for this exciting six-month opportunity! Applications will be accepted until Jan. 20, 2021. We have also recently added a page to our First Steps website dedicated to [Family-Guided Routines-Based Intervention](#). You will find a link to the [FGRBI website](#), a list of helpful handouts and links to access FGRBI guidance documents.



Juliann Woods, Ph.D.

Juliann Woods, Ph.D., is principal investigator of the EPIC project. Dr. Woods is a Professor in the School of Communication Science and Disorders at Florida State University, and the Director of the Communication and Early Childhood Research and Practice Center. She is also the Associate Dean of Research for the College of Communication and Information and an Associate Director in the FSU Autism Institute. Dr. Woods has 40 years of experience as an EI provider or program director in early intervention and as a consultant to state programs.

Scheduled First Steps Professional Development Opportunities

First Steps will partner with Dr. Juliann Woods to offer a series of networking opportunities. These webinars will focus on the issues YOU are encountering in the field, whether you are doing tele-intervention or in-person home visits. Providers of all disciplines will have the opportunity to pose questions and challenges and learn from one another. You are not alone—we hope you can join us!

First Steps FGRBI Provider Forums

[Jan. 25, 2021, 12 to 1 p.m., EST](#)

[April 12, 2021, 12 to 1 p.m., EST](#)

[June 21, 2021, 12 to 1 p.m., EST](#)



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](#).

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