



*The Newsletter for
Indiana Early Intervention*



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Happy new year!

*Looking back with gratitude,
looking forward with anticipation*

Dear Colleagues,

As we close out 2021, I want to celebrate and thank you for what you have accomplished this past year. The integration of new technology into your work utilizing EIHub was no small task and yet you continue to adapt and learn. We were thrilled when we were able to offer vaccinations last January to our personnel working directly with children and their families. This gave First Steps a new tool in keeping children, many of whom are medically fragile, safe and healthy. In addition, we continued other safety measures, such as teleintervention, masking, outdoor play and social distancing. COVID continues to present challenges for Indiana, but because of your due diligence, First Steps has continued to deliver critical early intervention services to children and families even in the face of rising cases.

As we look to 2022, we are excited to announce this year's conference will be held in partnership with Infancy Onward. Our organizations have always had a shared commitment to strengthening the relationships between young children and their caregivers, which is so central to children and their healthy growth and development. As a result of our partnership, the Indiana Early Intervention Conference will emphasize early intervention and infant and early childhood mental health. We strongly believe the focus on supporting early intervention professionals working with infants, toddlers and their families has never been so important. The pandemic has left many families feeling isolated and numerous children without interactions with same-age peers. These experiences help them to regulate and express their emotions, form relationships with others and interact with various environments, expanding their ability to grow and learn. Having the right tools to monitor and support mental wellness will be critical for all those working with young children and their families for years to come. The conference committee is currently accepting proposals for breakout sessions through Jan. 15, 2022. Please help us bring high quality professional development to Indiana's early intervention and early childhood professionals by sharing the call for proposals with your colleagues. We hope to see you all at the conference in June.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy New Year!

Christina

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 special needs, state agency groups, early intervention service providers, legislators and others. [Click here to learn more about the ICC](#) and to view agendas and minutes of previous meetings, in both English and Spanish. The next ICC meeting is **January 12 at 10 a.m. Eastern Time** ([the ICC agenda](#) is also posted on the [DDRS Commissions & Councils](#) page).



EI Hub

First Steps Early Intervention Case Management System

IN EI Hub rolls out Phase II

On December 17, we began releasing functionality for Phase II of the [IN EI Hub](#). With this release, System Point of Entry offices are now able to enter the entire Individual Family Service Plan in the Case Management module and link outcomes directly to services. Additional functionality will continue to be integrated in EI Hub throughout 2022.

Families are now able to access the Family Portal within EI Hub. The Family Portal allows families to view their statements and submit payments online.

As always, if you have questions or need assistance, please contact the EI Hub helpdesk at 877-522-1065 or email infirststeps@pcgus.com weekdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time, with extended hours Tuesday and Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Eastern time.

Vermont Oxford Network universal training program

18-module training program was developed by national experts

The Indiana Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative and the Indiana Department of Health have partnered with the Vermont Oxford Network to provide a subscription to VON's universal training program to improve care for substance-exposed infants and families. The 18-module training program was developed by national experts in the treatment of both mother and baby and has been used by over 300 hospitals to address the issues surrounding perinatal substance use.



First Steps providers were offered the opportunity to access to the VON online learning modules at no cost. We would like to congratulate the following providers for completing all 18 courses and gaining specific information on how to support mommies and babies during this important time in their lives. The providers also received six hours of First Steps credentialing credits.

Congratulations to Kendra Davis, Alison Kistner, Johanna Painter and Rashel Roberts.

If you have access to the VONs modules... keep going! You can do this and learn valuable information to help families in the meantime! If you have any questions about IPQIC and/or the VONs modules, please email Jan Bledsoe at perinatalcollab@att.net.

FGRBI is coming to Indiana!

The first cohort of FGRBI trainees will kick off in January

We are excited to announce the first cohort of Family-Guided Routines-Based Intervention trainees will kick off in January. Implementing this coaching model is an ongoing collaboration between the state First Steps team and the Early Childhood Center at Indiana University, under the leadership and direction of FGRBI founder and developer Dr. Juliann Woods with support from her Florida State University team.

Each training cohort will be comprised of approximately 50 direct service providers. With supplemental funding from the American Rescue Plan, we are able to offer stipends to early adopters of FGRBI and expect at least 200 Indiana First Steps providers to be trained over the next 18 months. The training process will continue over the next several years until most First Steps providers have been trained. If interested, providers will have the opportunity to become FGRBI coaches. Eventually, the training will be incorporated into the onboarding requirements for new providers.

And that is just the beginning! The second cohort will begin in June. Encourage your agency to begin watching for information in March as we will be reaching out to invite agencies to participate in the trainings.

As a part of building our training infrastructure, the Early Childhood Center at the Indiana Institute for Disability and Community at Indiana University is pleased to welcome the following team members, who are currently being trained to be FGRBI coaches and will lead the implementation of Family Guided Routines Based Intervention in the

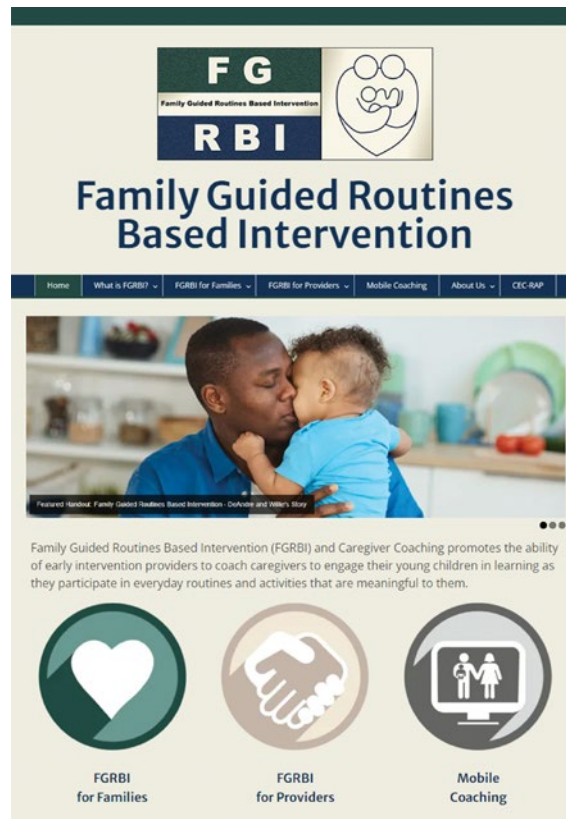
state of Indiana.

Katherine Hargreaves has worked in both early intervention and Early Head Start in Maryland, Washington D.C., Virginia, Illinois and, for the past 19 years, here

therapist with both children and adults. However, she has practiced for most of her career with infants and toddlers enrolled in the Illinois Early Intervention program. She and her family recently relocated to Indiana and along with her duties at the ECC, Nancy provides First Steps services for PEDIplay. She holds a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy from the University of Southern Indiana and a Master of Health Sciences degree in occupational therapy from the University of Indianapolis.

Kayla O'Neill has worked in early intervention as a developmental therapist for 10 years. She provided Part C services in North Dakota and Minnesota before coming to Indiana. She is currently working as a developmental therapist with A Step Ahead Agency in Columbus, Ind., Kayla has a bachelor's degree in special education with an emphasis in early childhood special education and developmental disabilities from Minnesota State University, Moorhead, and a master's in education with a focus on English as a new language learners from Augustana University.

This talented group of early interventionists will lead the Indiana FGRBI initiative and you will hear more from them in the coming months. In the meantime, if you are interested in learning more about FGRBI, [visit the FGRBI website](#), the [dedicated FGRBI pages](#) on the First Steps website or the [Early Childhood Center at Indiana University website](#). Currently enrolled providers may also access recorded webinars on FGRBI on the IN EIHub Learning Management System.



in Indiana. Most recently, she has served as the early Intervention services manager at Easterseals Crossroads in Indianapolis. She has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from the University of Maryland, College Park, and a master's in child development from the Erikson Institute in Chicago.

Nancy Simmons joined the Early Childhood Center at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community as a research assistant in April 2021. She has worked as an occupational



Eligibility determination teams

In this issue of the First Steps *IN Best Practice*, we are highlighting the important work of eligibility determination teams. Eligibility determination teams were previously known as the assessment teams.

The responsibilities of ED team members include conducting the initial/annual evaluation and assessment, determining eligibility based on the results of the AEPS and the child's medical history, and recommending skills/areas of development for possible IFSP outcome topics. In addition to service coordinators, ED team members are some of the first people families encounter in First Steps so it is imperative they make sure the family understands and is comfortable with our program by explaining our services and what a family may expect. Eligibility determination teams often set the tone for the ongoing early intervention providers to follow. They are an important piece to setting the foundation for First Steps.

To become a member of the ED team, the individual must be enrolled and credentialed personnel in the First Steps system, have at least two years working experience in First Steps or providing early intervention services, be employed or contracted by a SPOE, and attend trainings as required by First Steps including AEPS Part 2. ED team members may provide ongoing services, but they cannot provide evaluations or assessments for the same child to whom they provide ongoing early intervention services.

Under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a multidisciplinary evaluation is required to establish a child's eligibility for early intervention services and a multidisciplinary assessment is required to identify the child's unique strengths and needs, as well as to inform the development of the IFSP. Each team completing a child's evaluation and assessment must be multidisciplinary, meaning the two individuals completing these activities are of different disciplines.

All evaluation and assessment activities must be conducted in the least intrusive manner to the for the family by being in the child's natural environment and native language. Indiana First Steps requires the Assessment, Evaluation and Programming System to complete the evaluation and assessment. The AEPS utilizes observation and parent reporting to complete the tool. Through the use of parent reporting ED teams have been able to transition to virtual evaluation and assessment activities more easily than states that do not use this tool.

Once the evaluation and assessment activities are completed, the child's eligibility is determined. Eligibility

for First Steps is based on the state's definition of developmental delay. The child must have: a delay of 25% or two standard deviations below the mean in at least one area of development; a delay of 20% or 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in at least two areas of development.

The areas of development that must be evaluated are cognitive, physical (including vision and hearing), communication, social emotional and adaptive or self-help skills. The child may also be found eligible if they are diagnosed by their physician with a condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay as categorized by the federal government. These categories are chromosomal abnormalities, genetic or congenital disorders, sensory impairment including vision or hearing, inborn errors of metabolism, neurological abnormality in the newborn period, congenital infection, low birth weight (1,500 g/3.1 lbs.), severe attachment disorders and severe toxic exposure, both pre- and postnatally and including fetal alcohol syndrome.

It is the role of the ED team to determine the child's eligibility and to make recommendations to the other IFSP team members. It is not the role of an ED team member to assign specific disciplines to provide services, as

that may impede a child from receiving any services.

It is expected that the child's developmental needs and the family's priorities will change over time. It is the role of the ED team to participate as a part of the IFSP team during the child's annual assessment and as changes to the IFSP are proposed.

ED teams review requests to amend the IFSP such as adding a new service or changing the frequency and intensity of existing services. ED team members must communicate with IFSP team members when reviewing a request and cannot deny a request without documented discussion with the other IFSP team members.

ED team members open the door to children and families receiving First Steps services. Ultimately, the family has the final say in their child's services and it is our mission to help empower the parents to advocate for their baby or toddler.

To find more information about evaluations and assessments and eligibility determination teams, please visit [the policy manual](#) on our [First Steps website](#).

"Eligibility determination teams ... are an important piece to setting the foundation for First Steps."

DEC RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Environment*

Supporting the child's daily routines in their natural learning settings enhances development

As we continue to explore the Division of Early Childhood recommended practices for working with children who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities, we will focus on the importance of the family and child's environment in relation to early intervention services.

Babies and toddlers learn through play and social interaction with people in many different environmental settings such as their home, a relative's home, child care, preschool and places in their neighborhoods and communities.

It is important for early interventionists to keep in mind that the location a child frequents, the activities they partake in and for how long they engage in these activities are just as big a part in their development as the toys and books they play with. Family members and early intervention providers can influence a child's learning by intentionally changing how a child interacts in and with their environment.

The DEC environmental recommended practices have been established to ensure a child's safety

while also encouraging the child's access to learning opportunities. By being aware of and supporting the child's daily routines in their natural learning environments, families and providers can promote caregiving and learning that enhances the child's health and development.

Several recommendations from the DEC that can enhance a young child's environment are:

- ▶ Providing services and supports in natural and inclusive environments during daily routines and activities, as well as making sure to refer to [Universal Design for Learning principles](#) to create accessible environments for the infant or toddler.
- ▶ Working closely with the family and caregivers to modify and/or adapt the physical and social environments within the child's daily routines to promote access to and participation in experiences and activities.
- ▶ Working alongside the family and caregivers to identify the child's individual needs and supporting



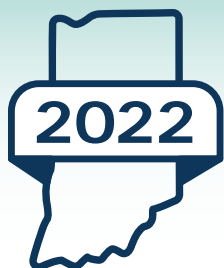
access to promote participation in routine activities in their natural environment, which may include acquiring and/or creating appropriate assistive technology.

- ▶ Working with the family to provide opportunities for movement and regular physical activity to maintain or improve fitness, wellness and development across all domains.

*This article has been adapted from the DEC Recommended Practices. For more information, please visit [the DEC website](#). To learn about the Indiana DEC chapter, you may contact the chapter president at idec.sped@gmail.com and follow [Indiana DEC on Facebook](#).

SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 9–10, 2022

INDIANA'S EARLY INTERVENTION CONFERENCE



First Steps is partnering with Infancy Onward to bring together national and local experts on early intervention for a two-day conference in Bloomington, Ind. [Register, submit a proposal or become a sponsor or exhibitor.](#)



**Infancy
Onward**



First Steps webinars and trainings, including those required for initial credentialing, are now located on the [IN EI Hub Learning Management System](#). All registered IN EI Hub users are encouraged to visit the [Learning Management System](#) often, as we will be posting new trainings and professional development opportunities. [Watch this video](#) to learn more about the LMS!

As we continue to refine the processes and procedures in our First Steps program, we are not currently offering Service Coordination 102/103 and Direct Service Provider 102/103 trainings at this time. We will notify personnel when those become available. Stay tuned!

You may still access trainings posted on the [I-LEAD platform](#) hosted by the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning and other applicable early intervention professional development trainings outside of the LMS. However, as documented in the First Steps Policy Manual, please remember to retain your certificate of attendance documentation for a period of seven years.

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., Eastern time.

- **HANDS in Autism® [training and services](#)** are for families, educational personnel, healthcare providers and others seeking information or collaborative discussion pertaining to the use of evidence-based practices with individuals with disabilities across ages and settings.
- **Indiana Division of Early Childhood open meeting, Jan. 26, 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. ET.** Email idec.sped@gmail.com for more information.
- **AEPS2 training, Jan. 28.** Register via the IN EIHub LMS or contact Barb Blain at bblain@pediplay.com for more information.
- **The PLAY Project Intensive Workshop Online, Feb. 16 to March 9, 2022.** Learn to effectively and playfully engage young children with autism. [The PLAY IWO](#) is a professionally designed course that is fun, engaging and practical. Contact info@playproject.org for a special rate. Limited slots are available.
- **Discovering the Joys of Assistive Technology Making: A Hands-On “AT Makers” Workshop, April 13, 2022.** This [hands-on workshop](#) at the Embassy Suites Plainfield, co-sponsored by the Indiana Deaf-Blind Services Project and the PASS Project, will discuss, demonstrate and actually build skills in AT making. Register by March 13, 2022.
- **The Promoting Positive Outcomes Early Childhood Special Education Conference, “Shaping a Better Future Through Effective Inclusion, Collaboration and Transition,” April 19-20, 2022.** [The conference](#) will be held in Bloomington, Ind. [Register](#) before Feb. 17, 2022, for early-bird pricing. If you have additional questions, please contact Sue Dixon at sudixon@iu.edu.
- **2022 Division for Early Childhood & ISEI Joint Conference, Chicago, Ill., Sept. 27-30, 2022.** The theme of the DEC’s 37th Annual [International Conference on Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families](#) will be “Integrating Research and Practice in Early Childhood Intervention.” Registration will open March 1, 2022.
- **Indiana’s Early Intervention Conference, June 9–10, 2022.** Indiana First Steps is partnering with Infancy Onward and Indiana University’s Early Childhood Center to bring together national and local experts on early intervention in Bloomington, Ind. **Call for proposals!** To present your evidence-based research or innovative ideas at [the conference](#), please submit a proposal. Submissions will be accepted until Jan. 15, 2022. [Submit a proposal here.](#)



Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services

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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](#).