



Eric Holcomb, Governor  
State of Indiana

## *Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services*

### *First Steps*

402 W. WASHINGTON STREET, P.O. BOX 7083  
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46207-7083  
1-800-545-7763

## **Guidance for First Steps Home Visits and In-Person Services**

May 26, 2020

### **PURPOSE**

This guidance is provided as the state of Indiana begins to [reopen](#) and families and personnel become more comfortable with the idea of coming together in person for First Steps services. The goal of this guidance is to:

- ❖ Prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of families, children, and our workforce,
- ❖ Sustain our partnerships with families around their children's growth and development, and
- ❖ Support First Steps personnel to deliver early intervention services to children and families per their individualized family service plans or IFSPs in collaboration with each family's IFSP team.

First Steps agencies and system points of entry (SPOE) must develop internal protocol for the safe delivery of services. Protocols should align with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH). Agencies and SPOEs are encouraged to work together to develop these protocols and identify local resources to support service delivery.

### **SERVICE DELIVERY**

Current [First Steps COVID-19 guidance and flexibilities](#) remain in place. All modes of service delivery will be permitted as allowed under Executive Order and Indiana Medicaid reimbursement policy. This includes teleservices. **Providers may continue to provide services virtually in accordance with their professional judgment and the needs of families and children.**

If the IFSP team decides that services should occur in person based on the comfort levels of family and provider, individual risk factors, and other applicable considerations in accordance with SPOE and agency protocols:

- ❖ The provider must share with the family the procedures the provider will follow during in-person services;
- ❖ Social distancing rules must be followed whenever possible;
- ❖ Providers may alternate modes of service delivery between visits, for example conducting one visit virtually and the next in person;
- ❖ Providers are encouraged to consider "co-treatment" as a strategy to reduce the amount of contact and number of sessions for families;
- ❖ Alternative service locations can be considered, for example a public park, any outside space available at or near the family's home, or, with IFSP team agreement and documentation, in the provider's clinic;
- ❖ If services are provided in the home, participants should try to stay in one location in the home and be mindful of the surfaces and objects being handled or touched; and
- ❖ Services should be provided in a child care setting **only** when **no other option** is available, including teleservices.

### **SCREENING PROCEDURES**

Before providing in-person services, personnel should ask the following three (3) questions of themselves, the family, and anyone else who will be present during the session. If the answer is "yes" to any of these questions, in-person services should **not** occur.

- 1) Have you had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
- 2) Are you currently ill? Do you have symptoms of a cold, cough, or shortness of breath? Have you temporarily lost your sense of taste or smell?



3) Do you currently have a fever or have you had a fever within the past week?

Personnel and families should also consult the CDC for [more information about COVID-19 symptoms and screening for those symptoms](#). Individuals who have had COVID-19 like symptoms as described by the CDC or have tested positive for COVID-19 should be advised to self-isolate at home and not consider in-person services until they have been fever-free for at least 72 hours (3 days) without being given fever-reducing medications AND have had improvement in their symptoms AND at least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared.

**Personnel should ensure the screening process does not interfere with a family's ability to receive services in a manner free from bias or discrimination.**

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Providers, provider agencies, and SPOEs should consult guidance from CDC and ISDH on the use of PPE. Considerations in developing a PPE protocol should include an assessment of individual risk factors and ability to follow social distancing while providing services. **Providers should utilize coaching practices to the greatest extent possible.** This means coaching the family through the session rather than being hands-on with the child. This is best practice for public health reasons in order to maintain social distancing but also for early intervention services in general.

**Masks:** Per ISDH, disposable, surgical-grade face masks are preferable and should be changed between visits, if possible. Cloth or reusable masks may be used, if necessary, but should also be changed between visits. Face masks may be cleaned by laundering or microwaving the mask in a bowl of water for six (6) minutes, hanging the mask to dry, and spritzing the mask with Lysol or an equivalent disinfectant. **Children should not be forced or encouraged to wear masks.** Please also refer to [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) guidance on the use of reusable cloth face coverings for more information](#).

**Gloves and hand hygiene:** Per ISDH, gloves are not required. Instead, families and providers should *focus on effective hand hygiene practices* in accordance with [CDC handwashing guidance](#) and the general health and safety guidance below. Gloves may be considered in SPOE and agency protocols for certain activities where the provider may contact the child's bodily fluids (for example, feeding or other oral-motor activities).

## GENERAL HEALTH & SAFETY

First Steps personnel should adhere to the following health and safety recommendations from ISDH:

- ❖ Maintain at least a 6 feet distance from other individuals whenever possible.
- ❖ Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60% to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. You should use soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.
- ❖ Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- ❖ Cover your coughs and sneezes. Use respiratory cough etiquette using your sleeve or tissue to cough. If a tissue is used, dispose of the tissue right away and perform hand hygiene immediately.
- ❖ Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects often using household disinfectants that contain bleach products or alcohol greater than 70%.
- ❖ Get plenty of rest, drink fluids, eat healthy foods and manage your stress.

## RESOURCES

- ❖ ISDH Epidemiology Resource Center (available 24/7): 877-826-0011
- ❖ ISDH dedicated COVID-19 webpage & resources: <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/>
- ❖ CDC dedicated COVID-19 webpage & resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- ❖ Small Business PPE Marketplace: <https://backontrack.in.gov/ppemarketplace.htm>
- ❖ Back on Track Indiana, General Guidelines for All Businesses: [https://backontrack.in.gov/files/BackOnTrack-IN\\_IndustryGuidelines-Businesses.pdf](https://backontrack.in.gov/files/BackOnTrack-IN_IndustryGuidelines-Businesses.pdf)