



# First Steps

*The Newsletter for  
Indiana Early Intervention*

## First Steps state team

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|--|--|
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## Governor Holcomb proclaims Oct. 3, 2019, First Steps Day

### *First Steps program and team recognized at the ASK Founders Breakfast*

Gov. Eric J. Holcomb proclaimed Oct. 3, 2019, First Steps Day in honor of the 30th anniversary of the signing of House Bill 1974, which established First Steps. Kylee Hope, director of the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services, received the proclamation at the About Special Kids Founders Breakfast. About Special Kids honored the Special Kids Can't Wait Coalition, which secured the passage of legislation to officially begin early intervention and special education services in Indiana for infants, toddlers and preschoolers with special needs. HB 1974, establishing First Steps, was signed in 1989.

Dr. Jennifer Sullivan, Family and Social Services Administration secretary, commented, "This is a wonderful tribute to the commitment we have as a state to meet the needs of children no matter their circumstances and to grow and evolve our programming as those needs change. Thank you to our First Steps team."



Sen. Greg Server, DDRS director Kylee Hope and Rep. Sheila Klinker with the proclamation.

## A letter from the director

### *Summer 2019 has been busy and productive*

Hello First Steps early interventionists!

This summer has been very busy for the state First Steps office and we are excited to provide you an update on all the various projects that have been set in motion.

The 2019 legislative session was quite fruitful for First Steps. The overall budget for the program was increased to \$18 million, \$6.6 million of which is new funding. These new monies were allocated toward increasing many of our provider rates, the system point of entry contracts for increased service coordinator compensation and the addition of new personnel, and a new early intervention data system. [Click here](#) for more detailed information regarding the historic provider rate increase.

Through HEA 1216, First Steps is able to decrease the administrative burden on system points of entry for the purposes of determining families' cost participation for the program. As many First Steps families are also enrolled in other social services programs with specific income eligibility requirements, we are able to utilize the income verification information from Medicaid, SNAP/TANF, the Child Care and Development Fund and the Women Infants and Children Program to ensure that families can access the early intervention services their children need without delay. This change also affords service coordinators and system points of entry the time to focus on the enrollment and individualized family service plan development processes rather than gathering various income verification documents from many families.

In July, [a memo](#) on progress note requirements was released. Providers are now, at a minimum, required to provide reports at the fifth and 10th months of each child's IFSP. By decreasing the number of required reports, all providers are able to potentially add additional children to their caseloads and provide meaningful documentation of progress regarding child and family outcomes.

Over the past three years, the state First Steps office has made many changes to its processes to improve efficiencies for both families and providers. We are thrilled to announce that we will be working with Public Consulting Group on designing, developing and implementing a new case management, billing and provider enrollment system for the program. This is a huge step toward realizing our modernization goals set three years ago. One goal of the new system is to develop an electronic case management file for all children in the program, providing ease in sharing information across teams, gathering and reporting data at state and federal levels, and almost eliminating our reliance on paper. We will continue to provide information about this exciting project in each newsletter and look forward to collaborating with SPOEs, agencies and providers on this effort.

Thank you for all you do for infants, toddlers and their families each day.

Best,  
Christina Commons, Director

### Get First Steps information directly via email

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

## Indiana's Early Intervention data system update

### *Public Consulting Group awarded new case management system*

The Bureau of Child Development Services within FSSA and the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services has recently awarded the new case management and payment system contract to Public Consulting Group. We are expecting full implementation of the new system to take approximately one to 1.5 years. As our team wants to be inclusive of all First Steps stakeholders, we may be asking for your cooperation as we build this new system. Provider agencies and system points of entry personnel may be asked to

# PCCG

participate in various information gathering sessions.

In this new system, we will be able to better collect and consolidate our data, which leads to more consistent and efficient reporting to the federal government, and make data-driven decisions when it comes to early intervention system changes. It will allow for improved and streamlined business processes across the state. We are also looking forward to being able to eliminate some IT-related expenditures for system point of entry and agency offices.

Both the First Steps state office and PCG are very excited to create and implement this new comprehensive system that ultimately lead to a more efficient work environment for personnel and better outcomes for the children and families we serve. Look for our updates in our upcoming newsletters as we continue to share our progress!



## Indiana State Library resources for children and families who are blind or have low vision

The Talking Book and Braille Library is a free service to those residents of Indiana who are unable to read or use regular print. This may be due to a visual impairment or a physical condition and may be temporary or permanent.

Audio, large print and braille books are distributed through the U.S. Post Office and players are loaned, free of charge, to patrons. Patrons may also establish a BARD account, which allows downloading of books from the National Library Services for the Blind and Print Disabled collection. For more information, [visit their site](#), email [tbbl@library.in.gov](mailto:tbbl@library.in.gov) or call 800-622-4970.

### Save the date!

Join Talking Books on Dec. 14 for their first annual winter story time—an hour of books, fun and activities for children who are blind or have low vision. The event will be from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. EST at the Indiana State Library. Please share the information with families..

**ICC update** The Interagency Coordinating Council members are First Steps stakeholders appointed by the governor. The role of the ICC and its subcommittees is to advise the First Steps office on the state's early intervention system. We believe that adopting a shared vision and shared goals is essential to working together to improve services and outcomes for the children and families we serve.

All ICC meeting dates and minutes are posted on [the DDRS website](#).

2019 ICC meeting date: **Nov. 13.**

All meetings are from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. EST at:

**Choices Coordinated Care Solutions**  
7941 Castleway Drive  
Indianapolis, IN 46250

## Quality review team improves services

### *First Steps face-to-face sheets a critical factor*

Part of the responsibilities of the quality review team is to conduct biennial visits with First Steps provider agencies. Each year, half of all First Steps agencies have a review with the QR team to ensure providers and agencies are communicating well and proper procedures are followed. A large amount of time is spent on reviewing provider face-to-face sheets.

### **The importance of First Steps face-to-face sheets**

All providers must use the face-to-face sheet to capture what happens during sessions. Proper documentation is extremely important for quality assurance and billing purposes. An F2F sheet should outline family engagement and parent education shared during a visit. Remember, early intervention focuses on engaging and educating the family and this should be reported on the F2F sheet.

As we know, activities that happen in between visits make a big impact on a child's progress. Providers should document suggestions and activities, or homework, on the F2F sheet and make sure the family understands what they can work on between sessions. Documentation is especially important for children seen in preschools and child care settings. The parent should be able to read the F2F sheet, have a good idea of what happened during your time with their child and learn about activities they can do with their child between visits.

During these reviews, the QR team looks

for key words on F2F sheets like: "taught," "reviewed," "shared," "encouraged," "discussed," "parent-modeled," "demonstrated," "provider answered questions about" and/or "the parent showed an understanding of." These words and phrases are indicators that family engagement and education occurred during the session. Providers should allow time at the end of each visit to write legible, high-quality F2F sheets and review them with the family to ensure best practices.

Other interesting findings reported by agency directors during the QR team visits were:

- The new enrollment and credentialing procedures are easier and take less time to process.
- Many agencies are actively recruiting new providers.
- Many agencies are providing professional development at each staff meeting.
- Agencies align professional development with federal and state identified topics, observing a professional development need first hand and surveying providers on what topics interest them.
- The exit skills checklist flowchart (posted on the [First Steps website](#)) is very helpful in working with the other IFSP team members to complete.

Thank you for all the hard work you do with your agencies to ensure families are receiving the best possible early intervention services available!





# 2020 CONFERENCE

June 11-13, 2020 • Monroe County Convention Center

## *Call for* **PROPOSALS** Addressing Research and Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention

**June 11-12, 2020**  
**Bloomington, Indiana**

Indiana First Steps is partnering with The Early Childhood Center at Indiana University, to bring together national and local experts on early intervention for this third annual two-day conference.

To submit a proposal to present your evidence-based research or innovative ideas in a breakout session or as a poster presenter, please [complete this survey](#) by the end of business on Jan. 15, 2020.

Notification of acceptance will occur by the end of February 2020. Each proposal chosen will receive one admissions pass to the conference.



# DDRS—First Steps Indiana statewide profile report

Reporting Period: July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019

## I. Population Information

Population (U.S. Census Bureau)	6,376,792
Population Growth Percentage (U.S. Census Bureau)	4.0%

## II. Child Enrollment & Referral

	Number of Children	Percentage of Children
One-day Count w/ IFSP –0 to 1 year old	1,599	
One-day Count w/ IFSP –All Children	11,782	
Annual Count of Children w/ IFSP	22,964	
Annual Count of Children Served (regardless of IFSP)	26,527	
Average Age at Referral (months)	14	
New IFSP 04/01/2019 –06/30/2019	3,194	
Children with Referral to IFSP 45+ Days 04/01/2019–06/30/2019	577	

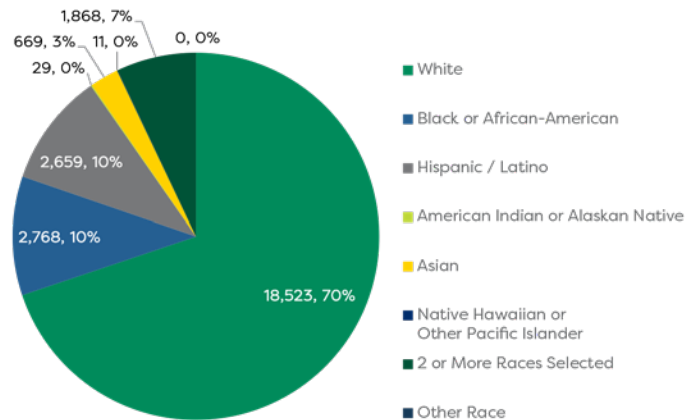
## III. Exits

	Number of Children	Percentage of Children
Children Moving to Preschool Special Education	4,944	47%
Children Under 3, Services No Longer Needed	229	2%
Eligible Children Who Declined Services	1,268	12%

## IV. Paid Services

	Number of Children	Percentage of Children
Children w/IFSP Served Primarily in the Natural Environment	22,841	99%
Total Amount Paid on Behalf of Children Served	\$41,035,349.61	
Average Paid on Behalf of Each Child Served	\$1,546.93	

## V. Race Information



## VI. Children Receiving Each Service Type

Service Type	Number of Children Served	Percent Receiving Service
Assistive Technology	178	1%
Audiology	1,029	4%
Developmental Therapy	14,256	54%
Health Services	0	0%
Interpreter Services	442	2%
Medical	0	0%
Nursing	0	0%
Nutrition	329	1%
Occupational Therapy	14,198	54%
Other Services	20	0%
Physical Therapy	13,382	50%
Psychology	181	1%
Social Work	35	0%
Speech Therapy	16,754	63%
Vision	0	0%

Source: First SideHatch Database

# Understanding Part C federal indicators

## Federal indicator 3: Child outcomes

In this newsletter issue, we will take a look at Federal Indicator 3: Child outcomes.

The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center defines an outcome as “a benefit experienced as a result of services and supports provided for a child or family. The fact that a service has been provided does not mean that a positive outcome has been achieved. Likewise, an outcome is not the same as satisfaction with the services received. The impact that services and supports have on the functioning of children and families constitutes the outcome.”

When we collect child and family outcomes, we are looking at the effectiveness of the services provided on the lives of the children and families we serve. As part of the Annual Performance Report, we must report the percentage of infants and toddlers with individualized family service plans who demonstrate improved positive social-emotional skills, acquisition and use of knowledge and skills and the use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs. These outcomes “address three areas of child functioning necessary for each child to be an active and successful participant at home, in early care and education settings, and in the community.”

With each child outcome, we are required to break down the data under two outcome summary statements: the percentage of children who entered or exited the program below age expectations who substantially increased their rate of growth by their third birthday or exit from the program; and the percentage of children who were functioning within age expectations by their third birthday or exit from the program.

We collect child outcome data by comparing the child’s initial Assessment, Evaluation and Programming System scores to the progress documented on the Exit Skills Checklist. The Exit Skills Checklist is completed by ongoing providers for children exiting (prior to the child’s third birthday) or transitioning (on the child’s third birthday) from First Steps.

How can First Steps providers help our program meet these targets? As an assessment team member, you collect the first data point for child outcomes. It is important that you accurately report the child’s current skill level using the Assessment, Evaluation and Programming System at both the initial and annual assessment. The arrow sheet you complete with the assessment can

help guide the service provider when completing the Exit Skills Checklist.

Direct service providers have the important task of completing the Exit Skills Checklist. It is imperative that you complete the entire Exit Skills Checklist and accurately report the child’s skill level at the time of exit/transition. Remember, you are completing the Exit Skills Checklist as an early interventionist and are more than qualified to score each item. If you are unsure how to respond to a specific item, ask the child’s parent or caregiver, review the most recent Assessment, Evaluation and Programming System completed by the assessment team or reach out to another provider on the child’s Individualized Family Service Plans team. As a designated service provider, you are also tasked with ensuring the service coordinator receives the Exit Skills Checklist so that the data can be reported.

The service coordinator’s role is to calculate the Assessment, Evaluation and Programming System exit score from the information reported by the service provider on the Exit Skills Checklist. Without these scores, we cannot report child outcomes. Additionally, we encourage you to contact the ongoing service provider if you have questions about the scoring of any item.

Finally, the data entry specialist is crucial to the collection of child outcome data. Without you, the information collected by the assessment team, service providers and service coordinator would not be available at the state level.

If you have questions about child outcomes, please contact your agency/system point of entry supervisor or read [the ECTA Center Outcomes FAQ](#).

### The 11 indicators

- 1 **Timely service delivery**
- 2 **Services provided in the natural environment**
- 3 **Child outcomes**
- 4 **Family outcomes**
- 5 **Child find (birth-to-1 population)**
- 6 **Child find (birth-to-3 population)**
- 7 **Initial IFSP complete within 45-day timeline**
- 8 **Early childhood transition**
- 9 **Hearing requests resolved**
- 10 **Mediation agreements**
- 11 **State systemic improvement plan**

At the 2019 First Steps Conference from June 13–14, Christina Commons moderated an informative panel session with state partners and stakeholders who work alongside the First Steps program to provide much needed services for children and families. The panel included program directors from the Indiana Department of Education, the

Department of Child Services, Healthy Families, Head Start and Nurse Family Partnership. Each partner shared information about their program and how it intersects with First Steps. Conference attendees had the opportunity to text questions and receive answers live from the panel. Click the links below to read a summary of their answers.



The Indiana Department of Education works closely with First Steps not only on fulfilling the federal

requirements of IDEA ensuring a smooth transition from early intervention to developmental preschool but also on a variety of initiatives and projects.

[www.doe.in.gov](http://www.doe.in.gov)  
[specialeducation@doe.in.gov](mailto:specialeducation@doe.in.gov) | 317-232-0570

**CLICK TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DOE**



The mission of Healthy Families Indiana is to promote

nurturing relationships as the foundation for optimized development and resiliency of strong families. Healthy Families home visitors partner with parents to develop positive beliefs about their role as parents.

[www.in.gov/dcs/2459.htm](http://www.in.gov/dcs/2459.htm)

**CLICK TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HEALTHY FAMILIES INDIANA**

**2019 FIRST STEPS CONFERENCE**  
**STAKEHOLDER PANEL**



Nurse-Family Partnership is grateful to the First Steps program for giving parents support and skills to help every child reach their potential!

[www.nursefamilypartnership.org/locations/Indiana/](http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/locations/Indiana/)

**CLICK TO LEARN MORE ABOUT NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP**

As part of the DCS child and family team meeting, it is helpful when a First Steps provider participates in the family's plan.



[www.in.gov/dcs/](http://www.in.gov/dcs/)  
 Indiana Child Abuse Hotline:  
 800-800-5556

**CLICK TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DCS**



Head Start/ Early Head Start wants First Steps providers to know that parent volunteers help Head Start and Early Head Start programs work.

**CLICK TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HEAD START**

[www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/2679.htm](http://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/2679.htm) | Toll-free 866-763-6481





## Indiana Chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association update

*SEA 586 updated the Indiana Physical Therapy Practice Act*

On May 1, 2019, Gov. Eric J. Holcomb signed Senate Bill 586 into law. The updates to the Indiana Physical Therapy Practice Act went into effect on July 1, 2019.

The following are some of the key updates:

- Creation of a five-person physical therapy board to regulate the practice of physical therapy in Indiana
- Providing improved title protection for licensed physical therapists and for the term “physical therapy”
- Removing the ability of a physician to supervise a physical therapist assistant; and
- Limiting the times that the National Physical Therapy Exam can be taken to six.

[Click here](#) for a full review of SEA 586.

### Key dates to remember:

**Oct. 11-12, 2019:** First Steps PTs and PTAs should consider attending the upcoming INAPTA Fall Conference at the University of Indianapolis. There will be great programming including an ethics and jurisprudence class, which will fulfill requirements needed for license renewal. A link to the conference details can be [found here](#). This year, the conference is an even greater value to PTAs as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Physical Therapy



Assistant with a \$50 registration for these professionals.

**Oct. 12, 2019:** INAPTA Pediatric Special Interest Group will meet at 7 a.m. at the University of Indianapolis. Breakfast will be provided! If you are interested in learning more about the Pediatric Special Interest Group meeting, please contact Stasia Tapley, PT, DPT at [Stasia.Tapley@indstate.edu](mailto:Stasia.Tapley@indstate.edu).

**June 30, 2020:** The license renewal deadline for Indiana PTs and PTAs.

If you cannot make the conference but would like to take a jurisprudence course that highlights all the updates to the Indiana Practice Act, [click here](#) to enroll in the online course hosted by INAPTA.

If you have any questions regarding physical therapy in Indiana or are interested in joining the Indiana Physical Therapy Association, please do not hesitate to contact INAPTA president Emily Slaven, PT, PhD., at [slavene@uindy.edu](mailto:slavene@uindy.edu).







First Steps

# First Steps National Webinar Series 2019–2020

Free and open to everyone—one hour credentialing provided



## Cultural and linguistic competence: What every home visitor needs to know

Nov. 13, 2019, at noon (EST)

## Cultural and linguistic competence: Essential skills for home visitors

Dec. 20, 2019, at noon (EST)

**Presenter: Wendy A. Jones, M.Ed.**, is a bilingual early childhood special educator and social worker. Ms. Jones has been on the faculty of the Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development for more than two decades. In this capacity, she has provided clinical services and supports, and coordinated community-based parent training on screening and referral to early intervention programs. She has served as a home visitor with teen parents, parents with limited English proficiency and home visitor/parent educator for parents with intellectual and developmental disabilities and has provided early childhood mental health consultation within the District of Columbia. Ms. Jones has been associated with the Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence since its inception.

## Family-guided routines-based intervention – Part 1

Jan. 9, 2020, at noon (EST)

## Family-guided routines-based intervention – Part 2

Feb. 13, 2020, at noon (EST)

**Presenter: Juliann Woods, Ph.D., CCC-SLP**, is professor emeritus in the School of Communication Science and Disorders and the director of the Communication and Early Childhood Research and Practice Center in the College of Communication and Information. She is project director of a doctoral leadership grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education focusing on autism. She serves as a co-principal investigator on additional projects in the Autism Institute, where she serves as an associate director. She has more than 35 years of clinical experience, research and teaching in early communication intervention for young children and their families.

Join these Zoom webinars from:  
<https://iu.zoom.us/j/647850205>



# Infant Mental Health Endorsement®

## What is it?

Infant Mental Health Endorsement® is a credential that can be earned by anyone working with or on behalf of very young children and their families, with a focus on strengthening and supporting early relationships that are so crucial to a child's social and emotional development.

Endorsement® by Infancy Onward will verify that an applicant has acquired knowledge to promote the delivery of high-quality, culturally sensitive, relationship-focused services to infants, toddlers, parents, other caregivers and families.

## Who can get it?

Four categories of Endorsement® represent the varied disciplines that contribute to the field of infant mental health.

**Infant Family Associate** - for individuals whose primary focus is **promotion** of infant mental health. This includes child care workers, non-profit coordinators, play group leaders, doulas and midwives, lactation specialists, school counselors, and many others. This category is also available for professionals who may fit into a different category of Endorsement but do not yet meet all of the eligibility requirements.

**Infant Family Specialist** - for individuals whose primary focus is **prevention**. This includes home visitors, family support specialists, First Steps providers, parent educators, inclusion specialists, NICU nurses and many others.

**Infant Mental Health Specialist** - for individuals whose primary focus is therapeutic **intervention**. This includes mental health clinicians, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, licensed clinical social workers and others.

**Infant Mental Health Mentor** - for individuals demonstrating **leadership** in the field. This includes a broad range of professionals under three separate designations: policy, clinical and research/faculty. Some examples include psychologists, pediatricians, policy specialists, university faculty and researchers.

## How do I earn it?

The specific requirements for Endorsement® vary for each category, however eligibility is based on the level of education, work experiences, in-service training hours pertaining to the promotion of social-emotional development and/or the practice of infant mental health, hours of reflective supervision received from an eligible provider and three professional reference ratings. The applicant must also be a member of an infant mental association, such as Infancy Onward or the World Association for Infant Mental Health.

## Where can I learn more?

For more information about the Infant Mental Health Endorsement®, including how to apply, please visit our website:

[www.infancyonward.org](http://www.infancyonward.org)

You may direct any additional inquiries to our director, Becky Gee, by sending an email to [beckygee@mhai.net](mailto:beckygee@mhai.net)





# First Steps

*The Newsletter for  
Indiana Early Intervention*



**Division of Disability and  
Rehabilitative Services**

Indiana Family and Social Services  
Administration  
Bureau of Child Development Services  
402 W. Washington Street, W453  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

We would like to include ideas from First Steps providers in upcoming newsletters! If you have an idea that works well with families or an article to share, please submit to: [FirstStepsweb.fssa@fssa.in.gov](mailto:FirstStepsweb.fssa@fssa.in.gov).

## 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](#).

## Event calendar

- Indiana Chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association [Fall Conference](#), October 11 and 12 at University of Indianapolis.
- Indiana Speech-Language-Hearing Association [Fall Conference](#), October 12 at Purdue University, West Lafayette.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children [Annual Conference](#), November 20-23, Nashville, Tenn.
- Indiana Occupational Therapy Association [Fall Conference](#), November 9 at University of Indianapolis.

## SAVE THE DATE



The third annual First Steps conference will be held on June 11–12, 2020, at the Monroe Convention Center in Bloomington. This two-day conference will feature keynote speakers, dozens of breakout sessions and

opportunities for networking and resource-gathering. For information about sponsorships, submitting a proposal and more, go to [First Steps Conference 2020](#). We are currently seeking a dynamic keynote speaker for the First Steps conference. If you have any suggestions or recommendations please contact Katie Herron at [kgherron@indiana.edu](mailto:kgherron@indiana.edu).