



*The Newsletter for  
Indiana Early Intervention*



**Christina Commons**  
*First Steps director*

*In this issue:*

- Interagency Coordinating Council
- EI Hub update
- Family-Guided Routines-Based Intervention
- DEC Recommended Practice: Transition
- Training info
- Much more!

## Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week

Dear First Steps stakeholders,

The month of May is a wonderful time to highlight the importance of mental wellness. As Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week is May 7 through the 13th, it is essential that we recognize the significance of promoting mental health in our youngest and most vulnerable Hoosiers. Research has shown the first few years of a child’s life are critical in shaping their future mental health and wellbeing. This underscores the need for early intervention and support for young children and their caregivers.

As First Steps providers, you have a unique opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children and families. Raising a child can be a challenging and demanding task, and it is crucial that we provide caregivers with the resources they need to support their own mental health. By prioritizing caregiver wellness, we can help ensure that children receive the nurturing and supportive environment they need. It is also important to recognize when a family may need additional Individual Family Service Plan supports. If you feel these services might be appropriate for a child and family you serve, reach out to the child’s service coordinator to discuss a referral.

Understanding the importance of and being invested in infant and caregiver social emotional health, First Steps has partnered with Infancy Onward to host the [Indiana Early Intervention Conference](#) June 8 and 9. The in-person portion of the conference is sold out; however, you can register for the live-stream option offered on Friday, June 9 for \$25. First Steps encourages those who work with young children and their families to consider looking into the Infant Mental Health Endorsement®. You can learn more at [Infancy Onward](#).

Finally, I want to emphasize the importance of mental wellness among service providers. The work you do is vital to the wellbeing of children and families in our community, and it is important you have the support and resources necessary to maintain your own mental health. By taking care of yourselves, you can better serve those who rely on you for support and guidance.

I urge you to use Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week as an opportunity to promote mental wellness in your work with young children and their families. By working together to prioritize mental health, we can create a healthier and more resilient community.

Be well,  
*Christina*

Please like and follow us on Facebook  and Instagram 

You can find us by searching @FirstStepsIndiana.

**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, July 12, 2023, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., ET**. We will also have an online option to attend virtually via Zoom. Please [click here for meeting details](#).



## EIHub updates

The First Steps data and quality assurance team and the folks at Public Consulting Group have been hard at work continuing to improve the modules within EIHub.

Presently, we are testing many updates to the case management module, including a focus on reports to be used at the local and state levels. These reports will provide an overview of the work being done in the field as well as assist in the early identification of data quality issues and compliance issues for federal reporting. Knowing where improvements can be allows for technical assistance and trainings to be delivered in a timely manner.

In addition to the updates to the case management module, we are currently in the process of testing the provider enrollment management module in preparation of the launch of PEM 2.0. These improvements to PEM will create a simplified path for enrollment of new providers to the First Steps system.

With many updates to EIHub in our queue, we would like to share the workflow for identifying and implementing changes in the system. We start with the identification of a needed improvement or issue within a module. Reports from end users are key to the identification process.

PCG and state staff work together to discuss the issue

and brainstorm possible solutions. The PCG development team then designs a solution. After the development work is completed, the state data and quality assurance team tests the proposed solution.

If testing passes the review of the state team, end users (e.g., service coordinators or providers) test the proposed solution. If the state team does not pass the solution, it goes back to PCG's development team to rework and then back through the testing cycle. There will always be a minimum of two testing cycles.

Once testing is completed, training materials are developed by the PCG training team for any updates to system functionality. Training may be delivered as live webinars, recorded trainings and/or written guidance. All training material will be posted within the Learning Management System of EIHub. After each of those steps are completed, the final solution is deployed in the production environment of EIHub.

Your voice is important and we want to hear from you! If you experience an issue with EIHub, have concerns regarding system speed or have questions when navigating EIHub, please reach out to the EIHub Helpdesk by emailing [infirststeps@pcgus.com](mailto:infirststeps@pcgus.com) or calling 877-522-1065, weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET. Help Desk.



## FGRBI: family routines

*Familiar context is helpful for families*

By Katherine Hargreaves

It is no surprise that Family Guided Routines Based Intervention is centered around family routines. What is a routine and why are they important to early intervention? Routines can be any activity that occurs on a regular basis and is frequently repeated. Routines are not schedules. They are family experiences that are systematic and have a predictable sequence.

Family routines can fall into a number of different categories, including play routines, caregiving routines, educational routines and unique community or family routines. But why are these routines important in early intervention?

Routines provide families and caregivers with a framework to implement strategies that will help the child learn. Routines allow families to embed the work of early intervention into naturally occurring times of their day which is likely to result in an increased intensity of implementation. Routines also give early intervention providers a familiar context to embed intervention strategies and targets. This familiar context is helpful for families as they work to repeat these intervention strategies between visits.

On your next home visit, take some time to observe a family within a routine. Think about how you could coach the family to embed an intervention strategy into that routine. Have the family member try it out right then and there. Take some time to problem solve with the caregiver about what worked and what could feel better. When you focus on promoting positive interactions between the child and caregiver within naturally occurring family routines you will be offering individualized and family guided early intervention services.

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## National webinar coming May 19

*Picky eating: When to be concerned*

On May 19, 2023, from noon to 1 p.m. ET, Jaclyn Pederson will host a webinar entitled, "Picky eating: When to be concerned."



With more than a decade of experience in program development, Ms. Pederson develops energized and efficient workgroups that influence significant organizational and systemic change for all affected by pediatric feeding disorder—such as the development of the expanded PFD Alliance. Jaclyn also manages Feeding Matters' strategic partnerships with numerous professional associations including American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, American

Society of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition, and the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition.

You may [join from computer or mobile](#). ASL interpretation will be provided. If you need other accommodations, please contact Joy Jones at [jsj5@iu.edu](mailto:jsj5@iu.edu).

## Welcome to our new First Steps team member

*Training manager  
Amy Torres*

Amy Torres is coming to First Steps with more than 20 years' experience in the field of early childhood education and a master of arts in education from Ball State University.

Some of these professional experiences include positions at a local child care resource



and referral agency that allowed her the opportunity to develop and present professional development trainings in both English and Spanish, provide onsite coaching to educators, assist families in identifying high-quality child care, and assist in organizing and developing local conferences.

Amy developed and facilitated Indiana's first in-person Spanish language child development associate program. You can learn more about her initiative in the [Council for Professional Recognition newsletter](#). Amy is also teaches early childhood courses as an adjunct professor for a local university.

Outside of work, Amy enjoys traveling, spending quality time with loved ones and baking up sweet treats for her family and friends! Amy is excited to be a part of the First Steps team to serve the children and families of Indiana in new and inspiring ways.



# Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

*WIC provides grants to states for women and children who are found to be at nutritional risk*

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children is a federal supplemental nutrition program that helps pregnant clients, breastfeeding clients (up to a child's first birthday), non-breastfeeding postpartum clients (up to six months after delivery or a loss), infants and children (up to a child's fifth birthday) eat well and stay healthy.

WIC eligibility is determined by a client being in one of the categories mentioned previously, residency in Indiana and income. WIC services are not limited just to women or mothers, but all eligible pregnant people as well as infants and children in the care of their father, grandparent, foster parent or other caretaker.

WIC provides:

- ▶ Nutrition and health screening and assessment
- ▶ Nutrition education and counseling
- ▶ Breastfeeding promotion and support
- ▶ Referrals to other health, family and social services
- ▶ Supplemental healthy foods designed to meet special nutrition needs



WIC certification appointments are completed by WIC competent professional authority staff, including registered dietitians, nutritionists and registered nurses. All WIC staff are trained to provide lactation support. WIC breastfeeding teams in Indiana include breastfeeding peer counselors, certified lactation specialists and international board certified lactation consultants.

A [list of all Indiana WIC clinics](#) can be found on the [WIC website](#). Health care providers and staff members from agencies such as First Steps can refer patients and clients to WIC by using the [Indiana WIC referral form](#). This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



## 2023 Indiana Early Intervention Conference

June 8-9, 2023, in Bloomington

*Indiana First Steps and Infancy Onward have partnered with the Early Childhood Center at Indiana University to bring together national and local experts to address research and best practices in Early Childhood Intervention.*

*In-person registration is SOLD OUT but there is unlimited availability for the live-stream option! To register, visit the [2023 Early Intervention Conference website](#).*

*It is only \$25 and includes both Friday keynote speakers, Dr. Gina Forrest and Sonia Manzano, and three pre-determined breakout sessions. Attendees may receive up to five hours of professional development.*

*[Register today!](#)*

## DEC RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

# Transition

### *Having good collaborative processes can help families feel confident*

According to the [Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices](#), “Transition refers to the events, activities and processes associated with key changes between environments or programs during the early childhood years and the practices that support the adjustment of the child and family to the new setting.”

Transitions happen at many times during a child’s life. These changes may be from the hospital to home and can include entering into the First Steps/Part C early intervention program or other services to meet the needs of the child and family. Other transitions may include exiting the early intervention system and enrolling into Part B/619 services or another community early childhood setting. All decisions made by a family from one point to another require thoughtful consideration and planning by everyone the family relies on for support. This may be an overwhelming and scary time for families, but an exciting way in which First Steps providers and service coordinators can offer the help needed to guide families through the process.

As we know, the transition process involves many people and a lot of moving parts.

Having good collaborative processes that are streamlined can help families to better understand next steps and feel confident in their decisions. Transition process components should include good working relationships and a mutual respect for all IFSP team members, which includes the family. This fosters a sense of satisfaction and comfort with the process, which leads to a smoother adjustment and better outcomes for the child and family.

To help with transitions, DEC recommends that early intervention personnel and the programs in which the child is transitioning to send frequent communications, not only before but during the process and as a follow-up after the transition has occurred. Consistent reciprocal communication sets the stage for a successful transition.

First Steps Local Planning and Coordinating Councils in each cluster work closely with their local special education preschool liaisons. Many school systems have transition events for families to visit the developmental

preschools and meet the staff, see the classrooms and sit on a school bus. These are terrific opportunities to help support the child and their families transition successfully from early intervention to preschool special education/Part B 619 services.

LPCCs also build strong relationships with other community-based services to support families in the transition to other programs that best meets their family’s needs and vision for a good experience, which may include to a community-based child care center, Head Start, a mother’s day out program, music and other opportunities for socialization within the family’s community.

For all transitions to be supportive and positive for the child and family, DEC recommends that programs and personnel use a variety of strategies that are both “planned and timely.” The First Steps state office has worked very closely with the Indiana Department of Education’s Preschool Special Education program, or Part B

619 services, to ensure streamlined communications and processes are in place when a family chooses a smooth transition as defined in IDEA. Between nine months and at

least 90 days before a child’s third birthday, the First Steps service coordinator will invite the local special education services Part B 619 representative or preschool coordinator to the child’s transition planning meeting. This gives the local school district the opportunity to make sure families know about the services they can provide for their child, should they qualify, when he or she ages out of First Steps. If a child is not transitioning to Part B 619 services, timelines remain in place to ensure a plan has been discussed in a timely manner with the family and the family is prepared for the next chapter beyond the First Steps program.

We all know the early years go very fast and from the very beginning of a child’s time in First Steps, our personnel are working with the family to plan for their child’s exit from the program and how that those next decisions can fit into the family’s vision for a good life for their child. This is why it is so important we begin discussing transition and exit from the very first Individual Family Service Plan meeting.

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**“The transition process involves many people and a lot of moving parts.”**

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First Steps webinars and trainings, including those required for initial credentialing, are now located on the [IN EI Hub Learning Management System](#). [Watch this video](#) to learn more about the LMS! All registered IN EI Hub users are encouraged to visit the [Learning Management System](#) to check out the new trainings that have been added. Look for some exciting changes to come to the LMS in 2023, including brand-new service coordination and direct service provider trainings.

The 2021 Early Intervention Conference recorded webinars are now posted on the LMS and are a great way to get those 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 ECHO sessions.** ECHO (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. ECHO uses technology to facilitate mentoring and knowledge sharing, enabling local primary care clinicians to provide best practice care for patients when they need it, close to home. Experts at Indiana University School of Medicine and the IUPUI ECHO Center are leading ECHO clinics that are freely available to all providers. Visit the individual project sites at <https://echo.iu.edu/> to learn more about ECHO clinics and how to participate.
- **58th Annual Riley Childrens' Health Pediatric Conference, May 10 & 11, 2023.** The theme for the 58th annual conference is "Filling the Gaps: Managing COVID's Impact on Child Health." This conference brings together more than 250 pediatric primary care providers from all over Indiana and surrounding states. The majority of the clinicians come from outpatient settings and has interests in learning more about current evidence-based diagnostic and management tools pertinent to their pediatric practice. The first day of the conference will be virtual via Zoom and the second day will be in-person at NCAA Hall of Champions in Indianapolis. All registered attendees will receive a pre-conference email one week prior to the activity with the Zoom link and other important instructions. [Registration is open](#).
- **2023 Indiana Early Intervention Conference, June 8 & 9, 2023.** In Bloomington. First Steps and Infancy Onward have partnered with the Early Childhood Center at Indiana University to bring together national and local experts to address research and best practices in Early Childhood Intervention. In-person registration is SOLD OUT but there is unlimited availability for the live-stream option! To register, visit the [2023 Early Intervention Conference website](#).
- **Division for Early Childhood 39th Annual International Conference on Young Children with Disabilities and Their Families, Nov. 28 to Dec. 1, 2023.** Attend the premier annual international conference for professionals who work with young children with disabilities and their families. 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](http://www.deconference.org) to plan your conference. The full schedule will be published summer 2023.



**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

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