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July 1, 2010

To: Regional Managers
Directors, Local Offices, Department of Child Services

From: James W. Payne, Director
Angela Green, Deputy Director of Practice Support
David Judkins, Deputy Director of Field Operations
Lisa Rich, Deputy Director of Programs and Services
Department of Child Services

Subject: First Steps
DCS-10-09

This administrative letter, effective July 1, 2010, outlines the collaborative efforts of the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) and First Steps to provide effective early intervention services to children from birth to age three (3). Any child victim under the age of three (3) at the time that DCS makes a finding of “substantiated” will automatically be referred to First Steps through the Indiana Child Welfare Information System (ICWIS). ICWIS will generate a detailed quarterly report with pertinent information on the child, caregiver, placement and Family Case Manager (FCM) contact information to assist First Steps in initiating contact with families.

The FCM will not be required to submit a referral for this service; however, the FCM should have some knowledge of First Steps and the services available to families. When the FCM makes a finding of “substantiated”, a conversation regarding the referral process and the First Steps program should take place. The FCM should ensure that the caregiver is aware of the process and understands that First Steps will contact them regarding an assessment for their child.

Below is an overview of the First Steps program for FCMs to share with families:

First Steps is a family-centered voluntary program designed to provide early intervention services to infants and children with developmental delays or diagnosed conditions that may lead to a developmental delay. A child referred to First Steps may, with parental consent, be assessed and evaluated to determine eligibility for services. Eligibility is determined by a multidisciplinary team and must be re-determined annually.



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The goal of First Steps is to assist families in assuring that their children receive services that will meet their future needs. First Steps partners with families to provide a total of 16 services including vision, nutrition, health, family education, training and counseling services. First Steps also offers speech, developmental and occupational therapy.

If you have any questions regarding the information presented in this administrative letter, please address them to the DCS policy mailbox at DCS.Policy@dcs.in.gov.

Sincerely,

James W. Payne, Director
Department of Child Services



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