



**The Newsletter for  
Indiana Early Intervention**

**December 2025**

**FirstSteps.IN.gov**

***In this issue:***

Interagency  
Coordinating Council  
EI Hub update  
Family-Guided Routines-  
Based Intervention  
First Steps technical  
assistance  
Indiana Head Start  
Partner Survey  
Training info  
Much more!

## Unexpected challenges

Dear Colleagues,

Families often face unexpected challenges that can disrupt access to essential services. Even brief interruptions create uncertainty and stress, underscoring the importance of strong local community connections.

In these moments, the strength of our communities and the social service infrastructure surrounding families becomes critical. Schools, health providers, social service agencies and community organizations—together with First Steps—ensure families are not left to navigate challenges alone.

We also want to recognize the extraordinary efforts of our providers and service coordinators, who work tirelessly to connect families with food, resources and local supports. Your commitment ensures families remain supported and cared for during times of uncertainty. This dedication reflects the very heart of our mission.

These experiences remind us of the fragility of systems, but they also highlight the resilience of our work—and the people who carry it out every day. Together we will continue to ensure families remain connected to the resources that matter most, regardless of external circumstances.

In appreciation,

*Christina*



**Christina Commons**  
*First Steps director*

## Food pantry resources

First Steps Local Planning and Coordinating Council Coordinators at your local System Point of Entry offices across the state have compiled lists of food pantries and resources to share with families. Here are just a few statewide resources:

[Arc of Indiana](#)

[Firefly](#)

[Purdue Extension  
Food Pantry  
Directory](#)

[Community  
Compass](#)

[FullCart](#)

[Indiana 211](#)

[FindHelp](#)

[Women, Infants  
and Children](#)

Of course, First Steps LPCC coordinators are available to provide local resources and connect you and your families with valuable community partners. Please reach out to your local SPOE office to contact them.

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 **Friday, Jan. 16 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.** There will also be an online option to attend virtually via Zoom. Please [click here for meeting details](#).



## Check out these EIHub updates

The Bureau of Child Development Services continues to work collaboratively with Public Consulting Group to increase user effectiveness of EIHub. On Dec. 11, we will be implementing our fourth and final case management and service logging gap release. The updates within the case management module include ease of data entry, validations to improve data quality and functional changes that are foundational for upcoming releases. The specific updates to the case management module include:

- An emphasis on speed enhancement
- Child record re-open reasons have been reworked

- EI Hub menus have been simplified
- Family cost participation data entry was improved
- The ability to link family member addresses added
- Repairs to a variety of smaller system bugs

This release also included improvements to the service logging module which included:

- Locking PDFs to ensure fraud protection and
- The user will be able to see the child's third birthday on My Active Authorizations report

Following this final EI Hub gap release, the state team will begin implementing the Individual Family Service Plan in EI Hub. Staff from System Points of Entry offices across the state have been graciously participating in a work group to assist in IFSP design and implementation. The first tier of implementation will include family information, IFSP services and parental consent panels. Each upcoming IFSP release will include more panels until the entirety of the IFSP will be present in EI Hub.

Thank you for your partnership and willingness to test aspects of EI Hub when needed. We are working diligently to ensure the system improves one release at a time.



Do you or a member of your team need assistance logging into our First Steps EI Hub Learning Management System? Whether you require individualized support or guidance for a group, our state training team is here to provide the assistance you need. Email the First Steps web at [firststepsweb@fssa.in.gov](mailto:firststepsweb@fssa.in.gov) to be connected to technical assistance support. We encourage you to log into the EI Hub Learning Management System and explore the new training modules that have recently been added as well as keynotes and break-out sessions from previous Indiana Early Intervention Conferences.

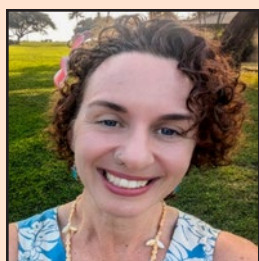
# Everyday routines and activities in Early Intervention

One key element of caregiver coaching within early intervention is the use of everyday routines and activities. Providers can support caregivers to turn everyday moments into learning opportunities—from mealtime to bath time, diaper changes to play. When intervention is embedded in familiar, meaningful routines, it becomes more consistent, accessible and impactful.

Working within everyday routines benefits everyone involved. For providers, it offers a clearer picture of the child's typical environment and the family's priorities, leading to more relevant and sustainable strategies. For families, it reduces stress by integrating support into what they're already doing, without needing to add extra tasks to their day. Most importantly, for children, it creates a natural and engaging learning

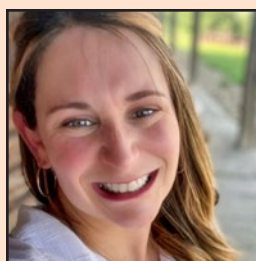
context where skills are practiced repeatedly in real-life situations, promoting stronger developmental outcomes. By embracing caregiver coaching and everyday routines, we ensure early intervention is not only effective but truly family-centered.

Visit [the FGRBI website](#) for resources to support your use of everyday routines and activities in your early intervention practice.



**Robyn Morton** holds a master's degree in philosophy from Kent State University and a master's in social work from Indiana University-Indianapolis. She has spent a decade as a field social worker before transitioning to state-level policy work. She recently spent the 2025 legislative session as a policy analyst

with the Indiana Senate, which was her catalyst into state leadership. She has always been passionate about policy, firmly believing that good policy is what makes our systems work for who it serves. She hopes that her social work field experience and philosophy background will provide a good grounding for creating solid, workable policy for the important work that First Steps does. Outside of work, Robyn is a passionate outdoors person. She enjoys long-distance hiking and backpacking trips, camping, kayaking, mountain summiting and rock climbing. She also loves alpine skiing and snowshoeing, so you can usually find Robyn outside somewhere no matter what the season is. If she's not outside, she's at the climbing gym preparing for going outside!



**Jamie Le Sesne Spears** is an early childhood leader with over 15 years of experience which includes teaching, family advocacy, curriculum development and adult learning. Her career reflects a deep commitment to early intervention and family engagement, with a focus on building systems that support

children, families, specialists and educators alike. She is adept at fostering cross-sector partnerships, aligning policy with practice and designing professional development that empowers educators, families and specialists. Jamie is excited to be a part of the Bureau of Child Development Services team as the policy and family engagement manager for First Steps. Her drive to make policy more accessible to First Step families comes from her own journey as a mother of a First Steps graduate. She has two daughters, Freya and Felicity, and is married to her husband, Cory. When she is not working, Jamie is fueled by coffee and loves to explore local playgrounds, restaurants and museums with her family.



**Rachel Turner** is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with a Master of Social Work degree, with a focus in macro-social work. Rachel has a background in direct behavioral health care, journalism and violence prevention. She is passionate about advocating for justice within social systems and is

excited to use her experience to ensure families have equitable access to care across Indiana. Rachel loves spending time outside, listening to audiobooks, embroidering and creative writing.



**Regina** is a seasoned professional with a diverse background spanning publishing, project coordination and government contract administration. A former attendee of IUPUI, she began her career with a prominent Indianapolis book publisher known for producing iconic "...for Dummies" series, Frommer's

Travel Guides and Cliff Notes, as well as other technology guides. Regina later transitioned into public service in 2010 for the state of Indiana, where she has spent 10 of those years in contract management between the Department of Workforce Development and the Family and Social Services Administration. Outside of work, Regina is a proud mom to Jocelyn, a young adult who's carving out her own path and sees the world in her own thoughtful way.

## NEW STATE STAFF



## First Steps technical assistance through the Early Childhood Center

**Q: What technical assistance does the Early Childhood Center provide for First Steps?**

**A:** The Early Childhood Center is here to support SPOE and agency leaders by locating and compiling helpful resources, clarifying policies and procedures, developing resources and/or professional development to address issues, and problem-solving challenges that come up in the field. Everything we offer is based on federal requirements, state guidance and best practices in early intervention.

**Q: What kinds of questions or issues can ECC help with?**

**A:** A little bit of everything. If it affects First Steps service delivery, we can likely help. In the past year, we've helped teams with:

- Documenting services and completing notes
- Understanding 30-day service start requirements and exit checklist steps
- Navigating virtual or mixed service delivery models
- Addressing make-up visit questions and ensuring proper documentation
- Policy writing

**Q: When will I receive a full response?**

**A:** Every question goes through a careful process. Our team researches the issue, looks at relevant policies and links to appropriate resources. Before we share the final answer, the First Steps state team reviews and approves it to ensure consistent statewide guidance. Because of this process, final responses may take several weeks. If you need an answer within a particular timeframe, let us know and we'll do our best to accommodate your needs.

**Q: Can I request training to address something my team is dealing with?**

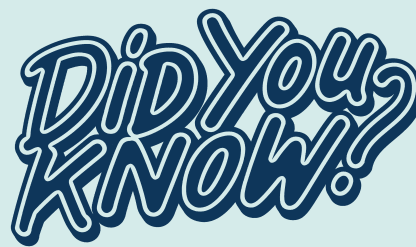
**A:** Yes. If your team is facing a recurring issue or a topic that would benefit from shared learning, your SPOE or agency leadership can request training from ECC. We regularly provide targeted trainings and guided sessions for staff meetings.

**Q: Who can request technical assistance?**

**A:** Requests should come from SPOE or agency leadership. Providers are encouraged to bring questions, concerns or tricky situations to their local leaders. Leadership can then reach out to our team if support or clarification is needed.

**Q: How do we request support?**

**A:** You can submit a request through [our online form](#) or send an email to [eccenter@iu.edu](mailto:eccenter@iu.edu) with your name, agency or SPOE, phone number and preferred contact method.



## Child Abuse and Neglect Training

**Did you know** that a NEW training entitled, "Nurturing Safety: Child Abuse and Neglect Training" has been posted to the First Steps Learning Management System?

This module equips professionals with essential knowledge to recognize, respond to and prevent child abuse and neglect. Each chapter takes about 15 minutes to complete, allowing you to learn at your own pace.

Key topics include:

- **Understanding child abuse and neglect in children under 3:** Explore unique vulnerabilities that occur in infants and toddlers.
- **Recognizing the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect:** Learn how to identify indicators early.
- **Understanding Shaken Baby Syndrome:** Gain insight into causes, prevention and the need for urgent response.
- **Understanding risk factors for child abuse and neglect:** Examine family, community and environmental factors that increase risk.
- **Legal and ethical responsibilities:** Build your knowledge and confidence in reporting procedures and fulfilling professional obligations.

By completing this training, you'll strengthen your ability to protect children, support families and contribute to a collaborative approach that prioritizes safety and early intervention.





## Northern Indiana professional development mini-conference

### *Jacob's Ladder and First Kids collaboration a success*

We would like to turn a SPOTLIGHT on the innovative professional development happening in northern Indiana. After our Early Intervention Conference in Bloomington last summer, Jacob's Ladder agency director Mariann Frigo had an idea for a "mini-conference." She reached out to First Kids executive director Clare Mann and her leadership to share her plan.

They collaborated to plan a wonderful half-day mini-conference, complete with registration, a hot breakfast and some swag. Attendees learned about state and local policy and procedure updates and a local

pediatric dentist presented a very informative keynote address. There were two sessions that attendees could choose from three topic specific breakout discussions and panel presentations.

Attendees received professional development hours towards their First Steps annual credentialing but, most importantly, they were able to network with their colleagues, learn from each other and enjoy a morning of quality professional development.

Kudos to Mariann Frigo, Tracy Hall and the team at Jacob's Ladder and to Clare Mann, Lily Osborn, Megan Kochvar and all the agency and SPOE personnel for showing what teamwork, collaboration and innovative ideas can look like.

Attendees received professional development hours towards their First Steps annual credentialing and were able to network with their colleagues, learn from each other and enjoy a morning of quality professional development.

If you have a colleague, agency, SPOE, family, early intervention practice you would like to "Spotlight" in the First Steps newsletter, please send your suggestions to [constance.young@fssa.in.gov](mailto:constance.young@fssa.in.gov).



## 2026 Indiana Head Start Partner Survey

### *We need your feedback!*

We need your feedback as a current, past or potential partner with Indiana Head Start organizations. The Indiana Head Start State Collaboration Office and Indiana Head Start Association are partnering with Transform Consulting Group to develop the [2026 Indiana Head Start Needs Assessment](#).

The needs assessment guides annual updates to IHSSCO's strategic plan and objectives. IHSSCO and IHSA also aim to use the assessment as a tool to inform the needs of Head Start programs and their partners. The survey should take 15-20 minutes to complete.

A summary report will be accessible to the public by mid-July 2026. Your response will only be shared at the summary level, unless you have a request for additional information on specific topic areas.

If you have any questions, please contact Ashleigh Moon, director of the Indiana Head Start State Collaboration Office, at [ashleigh.moon@fssa.in.gov](mailto:ashleigh.moon@fssa.in.gov) or Rhett Cecil of the Indiana Head Start Association at [rcecil@indianaheadstart.org](mailto:rcecil@indianaheadstart.org).

## Attention all early interventionists

**Registered IN EI Hub users:** The Learning Management System is at your fingertips! Dive into First Steps webinars and training, including those required for initial credentialing, all available on the IN EI Hub LMS. Curious to learn more? [Watch the video](#) to see the LMS in action.

**New training modules now available!** We have recently added exciting new modules to support your professional growth. You are encouraged to visit the Learning Management System and check out the new additions, including Foundations of Early Intervention, Developing High-Quality Outcomes, Benchmarks and Short-Term Goals.

**Professional development opportunities:** Remember, you can also take courses outside of the LMS for professional development hours. Just be sure to keep your certificate of attendance for seven years, as per the First Steps Policy Manual.

**For assistance,** contact First Steps training manager Amy Torres at [amy.torres@fssa.in.gov](mailto:amy.torres@fssa.in.gov). Stay engaged, continue growing and leverage all the resources available to you on the IN EI Hub.

- **First Steps Webinar: Effectively Addressing Challenging Behavior in Early Intervention, Jan. 13, 2026, Noon to 1:30 p.m. EST.** [Register](#) for an engaging and informative session designed for early intervention professionals who work with young children and their caregivers. This session will explore how to effectively address, and support families to navigate challenging behaviors within early intervention settings while fostering positive developmental outcomes. Participants will deepen their understanding of developmental milestones and age-appropriate expectations, as well as, how these factors shape behavior and influence responses. This webinar will also provide practical, proactive strategies to help both families and professionals reframe and deescalate challenging moments, whether involving the target child and/or siblings, during early intervention sessions. Attendees will gain tools to build stronger relationships, support emotional regulation, and promote positive engagement for every child and family they serve through reflection and real-world examples.
- **Rooted in Relationships: Supporting Families of Children with Autism, Feb. 4, 2026, 12 p.m. EST.** [Register to join](#) Dr. Rick Solomon for an engaging, practical conversation on strategies that help families connect with and support their children with autism. Drawing from decades of clinical experience and international training, Dr. Solomon will share tools that empower caregivers to build strong, joyful relationships and foster developmental growth, starting right at home. Dr. Solomon is a developmental and behavioral pediatrician with over 25 years of experience supporting children with autism. Known as “the fun doctor,” he leads The Ann Arbor Center for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics and trains families and professionals worldwide in evidence-based, relationship-based approaches.
- **Spring Institute for Strengthening Families, April 14–15 Embassy Suites, Noblesville, Ind.** Questions? Please contact [mendy@straightpathconsulting.org](mailto:mendy@straightpathconsulting.org).
- **Indiana Speech Language Hearing Association 89th Annual Convention, Friday, April 17, Wyndham Indianapolis Airport Hotel.** ISHA will be helping to coordinate the ASHA Convention in Indianapolis. ISHA is committed to providing continuing education hours for those not able to attend the ASHA event or for those needing professional development hours in the spring of 2026. ISHA has adjusted the [2026 Convention](#) format to offer a single day of sessions on Friday, April 17.
- **Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children Conference, May 15–16, 2026, Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis.** Join early childhood educators from across the state at this two-day event. Earn continuing education hours, connect with peers and gain meaningful insights from top voices in early childhood education. [Register now](#).



**Division of Disability, Aging  
and Rehabilitative Services**

## 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 Browse-Aloud 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](#).

### Get First Steps information directly via email

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

## What does leadership look like to you?



### Surveying the Field of EI & ECSE

Do you work in a field that represents or supports young children (birth through age 8) who receive early intervention or special education services? If so, we would like to [hear about your perspectives](#) on leadership! Participating individuals have the option to enter a raffle for a \$100 gift card to Amazon.

Questions? Contact Amanda Passmore at [amanda.passmore@elmhurst.edu](mailto:amanda.passmore@elmhurst.edu).

