



**The Newsletter for
Indiana Early Intervention**

June 2026

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In this issue:

Interagency
Coordinating Council
EI Hub update
First Steps technical
assistance
Family-Guided Routines-
Based Intervention
Building Interactive
Social Communication
Training info
Much more!



Christina Commons
First Steps director

Dear Colleagues,

As we look ahead, I've been reflecting on the everyday practices that make early intervention effective, family-centered and truly collaborative. At the heart of our work are two essentials: how we communicate and how we collaborate, not as slogans, but as consistent habits that help Individual Family Service Plan teams support children and their families in meeting their outcomes and the objectives of early intervention.

Strong teams build shared understanding and keep the family's priorities at the center. That shows up in the way we prepare, how we listen and how we follow through. Across roles and settings, a few simple, concrete behaviors can make a big difference:

- Write clear, family friendly progress reports that connect observations directly to the IFSP outcomes.
- Share those reports ahead of IFSP meetings so the team arrives ready to discuss, plan and decide with shared context.
- Provide timely information to the Eligibility Determinations Team before annual evaluations so evaluators have an accurate, complete picture of the child's development and daily routines.
- Attend IFSP meetings and participate fully—contribute your expertise, invite others' voices and ensure the plan reflects the child's strengths and the family's priorities.
- Call or check in with other IFSP team members between visits to clarify questions, coordinate approaches and keep everyone aligned.

When we practice these consistently, we reduce confusion, strengthen trust and create cohesive support for families. These are small shifts that add up: clearer expectations, timely updates, shared language and steady follow-through, all with the goal of supporting families to help their children make meaningful progress toward their IFSP outcomes.

Thank you for the dedication, compassion and expertise you bring to this work every day. I'm grateful for your partnership and excited to see how our continued focus on communication and collaboration strengthens the experiences of the children and families we serve.

Warmly,
Christina Commons

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 **Aug. 12, 2026, 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

Updates specific to Case Management included:

- Emphasis on performance
- FCP process safeguards
- IFSP services entered via IFSP panel
- Variety of bugs fixed
- Re-open menu clean-up
- Menu behavior is evolving
- Family member address linking

This release also included improvements to the service logging module, including:

- Locked PDFs to ensure fraud protection
- Addition of the third birthday transparently available

Following this final EI Hub gap release, the state team will begin implementing the IFSP in EI Hub. Staff from SPOE offices across the state have been graciously participating in an IFSP workgroup to assist in 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 EIHub when needed. We are working diligently to ensure the system improves one release at a time.

First Steps Family Rights and Procedural Safeguards training

In accordance with the federal Office of Special Education Programs and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act/Part C (IDEA/Part C) all enrolled First Steps personnel are required to complete the Family Rights and Procedural Safeguards training, which has been posted in the [EI Hub First Steps Learning Management System](#), by June 30, 2026.

This 30-minute training provides guidance on procedural

safeguards and dispute resolutions and is aligned with latest federal and state policies and procedures. Once you have completed the required training, you will receive a certificate toward your First Steps annual credentialing.

For additional information on Indiana First Steps' procedural safeguards please visit the [Family Rights and Resolution Options page](#) on the [Bureau of Child Development Services website](#).

New guidance highlights

Supporting strong practice across First Steps

The First Steps [Technical Assistance webpage](#) continues to expand, adding new resources to address common questions and strengthen practice across the system. Recent additions focus on key areas that impact daily work for providers, service coordinators and agency staff. Here are a few highlights:

Child care partnerships

[New guidance](#) from the First Steps Child Care Task Force offers practical guidance on building and maintaining effective partnerships with child care providers. These resources clarify expectations for collaboration, communication and service delivery within community-based settings, helping teams better support children in their natural environments.

Child progress reports and face-to-face contact requirements

To support consistency and com-

pliance, updated guidance outlines expectations for completing [child progress reports](#) and documenting [face-to-face contacts](#). These materials help ensure that documentation clearly reflects child outcomes, aligns with timelines and meets



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First Steps requirements, reducing confusion and supporting quality assurance efforts.

Supporting staff across agencies

Recognizing the importance of a supported workforce, new materials have been created to address [strat-](#)

[egies and resources](#) to aid staff managing grief associated with losing a child on their caseload.

Why these updates matter

New guidance documents provide clarity in areas that generate technical assistance questions. By offering consistent, accessible direction, First Steps technical assistance aims to reduce practice variability, strengthen quality practices and ultimately improve outcomes for children and families.

We encourage all First Steps partners to explore these new resources and check back regularly as additional guidance is added in response to system needs. Technical assistance requests continue to come in and can be submitted at any time by visiting the First Steps [Technical Assistance webpage](#).



Photo credit: Yuri Arcurs, peopleimages.com



Family-Guided Routines-Based Intervention

2026 Professional Development Cohort now open

Indiana First Steps providers are invited to register for the 2026 Family-Guided Routines-Based Intervention Professional Development Cohort. This comprehensive learning experience is designed to strengthen caregiver coaching practices and support high-quality, family-centered early intervention services across the state.

FGRBI supports providers in coaching caregivers to embed learning opportunities within everyday routines and activities that are meaningful to families. This approach promotes stronger caregiver confidence and competence, leading to more consistent and impactful outcomes for children.

“FGRBI completely changed the way I approach home visits. I feel more confident supporting families and I see caregivers using strategies between visits in ways I hadn’t before.”

Participants in the FGRBI cohort will:

- Complete self-paced online learning modules
- Engage in interactive webinars
- Join a monthly professional learning community
- Use video reflection and feedback to support real-world application
- Learn alongside colleagues in a supportive, collaborative environment
- Receive stipend payments for participation and completion

Learn more and register at the [2026 FGRBI Professional Development Cohort page](#).

We encourage all First Steps providers to take advantage of this opportunity to deepen their practice, connect with peers and continue building a strong, family-centered early intervention system across Indiana. For questions and more information, please email Katherine Hargreaves at khargre@iu.edu.

The First Steps National Webinar Series

First Steps is pleased to be able to offer a national speaker’s series on popular topics related to early intervention. Over the years we have hosted many incredible sessions. This year was no exception!



In the fall, we were honored to have Dr. Heather Risser, Assistant Professor and Director of the Family CARE Parenting Lab at Northwestern University present on her

topic, “Rooted in Relationship: Helping Parents Cope with Diagnosis, Delays and Disabilities.” She highlighted the importance of recognizing the various reactions parents can have and how to communicate with empathy and support each family individually.



This spring, we had the pleasure of hearing from Dr. Rick Solomon, who is a developmental pediatrician and founder of the PLAY Project. The title of his talk was “Rooted in Relationships: Supporting Families of Children with Autism.”

Dr. Solomon emphasized meeting the child where they are and understanding their strengths, interests, sensory-motor needs and developmental levels. He mentioned the importance of strengthening interactions within routines, empowering parents through coaching and focusing on joyful, relationship-based interactions.

All of the First Steps sponsored National Webinar Series presentations, including the 2025–2026 sessions, are posted on the [Learning Management System](#).

Plans are in the works for the 2026–2027 NWS! Be on the lookout for the presenters, topics and dates to be announced soon.

Perceptions of Water Safety survey

Help keep our kids splashing safe this summer!



Jodi Sarno, a student at Huntington University's Doctor in Occupational Therapy program, is conducting research in water safety education for parents and caregivers who care for children under the age of 18. The purpose of the project is to understand parents' and caregivers' perceptions of water safety, the benefits and risks of water, and water play.

The [research study survey](#) closes on June 15, 2026. Contact Jodi A. Sarno, occupational therapy doctoral student at Huntington University, sarnoj@huntington.edu with any questions.



VIPS VIISA training

The next training from the Vision Impaired In-Service in America Cohort 2026, sponsored by Visually Impaired Preschool Services with support from Indiana Deaf-Blind Services, will be held virtually on **Tuesday, June 23, 3 to 6 p.m., EST.** [VIISA training](#) participants will meet virtually and in person once a month from June through October.

Participants will gain an understanding of the unique needs of infants, toddlers and preschoolers who are blind or have low vision. A \$300 registration fee will be used to purchase materials for make-and-take activities, lunch and snacks for in-person days. Registration is limited to 20 participants.

The other training dates are: **July 14–15, 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.**, Indianapolis VIPS campus; **Aug. 18, 3–6 p.m.**, virtual; **Sept. 22, 3–6 p.m.**, virtual; and **Oct. 21–22, 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.**, Louisville VIPS campus. Please direct any questions to Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education, kmullen@vips.org, 502-636-3207.



Building Interactive Social Communication

The [Building Interactive Social Communication program](#) at Indiana University is enrolling early intervention providers who serve families with toddlers with communication concerns, including early signs of autism and language delays. BISC is a federally funded research project that supports providers in guiding parents to promote interaction-based communication for children aged 30 months and younger.

Benefits include:

- Targeted, research-backed preparation to serve toddlers with communication concerns
- In-depth preparation to support active family engagement
- Stipends for providers and families
- 15 to 30 professional development hours

If you are interested in this opportunity, please add your name to our contact list by filling out the [BISC interest form](#).

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 onboarding trainings: Brand-new onboarding trainings have been created in partnership with the Early Childhood Center at the Indiana Institute for Disability and Community at Indiana University. These new online trainings, posted on the Learning Management System, are designed to be taken as individual self-paced modules. They are required for onboarding new providers and service coordinators, but anyone can take them at any time. Want to learn about the latest process, procedure or best practice? Feel free to pop on to the LMS and take a training! A bonus is that any training completed in the LMS is automatically recorded and a certificate of completion is provided. Email [Amy Torres](#) if you have questions about the trainings or the LMS.

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. Stay engaged, continue growing and leverage all the resources available to you on the IN EI Hub.

- **Indiana Family to Family Heart to Heart Conference, Sept. 24.** This annual conference is an opportunity for families and professionals to learn and connect in support of children and youth who have various health and mental health needs and/or disabilities. [Registration opened](#) June 1.
- **2026 Joint Indiana Pediatric Education Conference, Sept. 25 and 26, Carmel, Ind.** Registration is now open for the [2026 INAAP conference](#) at the 502 Event Center in Carmel. This year's conference offers 11 hours of CME credit, three meals, a full exhibit hall and expert faculty from leading institutions across Indiana and the Midwest. Topics include food allergy updates, autism, adolescent mental health, ADHD, pediatric infectious disease, sports medicine, aerodigestive updates and more.
- **Division for Early Childhood's 42nd Annual International Conference on Young Children with Disabilities and Their Families, Oct. 26 to 29, Omaha, Neb.** [DEC 2026](#) is focused on inclusive early childhood practices, early intervention and early childhood special education. It brings together practitioners, researchers, faculty, family members and community partners from around the world to engage in evidence-based learning, innovative research and collaborative dialogue grounded in the DEC Recommended Practices.
- **Zero to Three Learn Conference 2026, Oct. 27 to 29, Portland, Ore.** This [early childhood conference](#) at the Oregon Convention Center gives you cutting-edge research and professional development opportunities, access to experts across education, health, research and policy, early childhood conference sessions, and CEUs for all participants.



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.

Get First Steps information directly via email

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



Division of Disability, Aging and Rehabilitative Services

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](#).

Indiana Early Intervention Conference
June 11 and 12, 2026, Bloomington

The conference is sold out to attend in person, but you can still register to attend the virtual option.

INDIANA EARLY INTERVENTION CONFERENCE