



*The Newsletter for  
Indiana Early Intervention*

**March 2025**

**FirstSteps.IN.gov**

***In this issue:***

**Interagency  
Coordinating Council**

**El Hub update**

**Family-Guided Routines-  
Based Intervention**

**Supporting the  
communication of  
infants and toddlers**

**Training info**

**Much more!**

## Take the First Steps Professional Development Needs survey

We are excited to announce that we are conducting a [Professional Development Needs survey](#). This survey will help us understand your training needs and preferences so we can tailor future professional development to support you better.

### *Why participate?*

We want to hear from you! Your responses will help us to:

- Ensure content meets your needs: Your feedback will directly influence the content of upcoming training opportunities.
- Offer content in formats that work for you: Let us know if you prefer online training, in-person workshops or alternative formats.
- Tailor opportunities to Indiana's early intervention professionals: Help us create professional development that supports your career growth and enhances our collective impact on children and families in the state.

### *What are we asking of First Steps personnel?*

We are asking service coordinators and providers to complete the brief Qualtrics survey to share your honest feedback. The survey can be taken on your phone, tablet or computer. The survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete and responses are completely confidential.

We value your insights and encourage everyone to participate. Visit the Professional Development Needs survey and share your voice today.

If you have questions or would like to share more information, please contact the staff at the Early Childhood Center at [ecc@iu.edu](mailto:ecc@iu.edu). Watch for more information about the survey request in the next several months and please share this opportunity widely with other professionals in the First Steps system!



Thank you for your commitment to excellence in early intervention,

*Dr. Katie Herron,  
Director, Early Childhood Center,  
Indiana Institute on Disability and Community,  
Indiana University*

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 **from 10 to 11 a.m. ET on Wednesday, May 7**. 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 January 25, we implemented the smoothest case management and service logging release to date.

Within the Case Management module, updates included fixes to concerns introduced within the last release, validations to improve data quality and

functional changes that are foundational for upcoming releases. Specifics to Case Management include:

- Addition of the blue loading screen
- Ability to re-exit a child record after it is opened to view or modify
- Doctor panel updates
- FCP process safeguards
- Validations to ensure quality data at every stage

This release also introduced new workflow to the Service Logging module including:

- Introduction of the Missing Reasons for Delay report
- Editing access following finalization of a service log

The Bureau of Child Development Services is aware that old claims are populating to the Missing Reasons for Delay report. We are working with PCG currently to get all old claims removed from that report. So you will not need to perform any actions for the claims that occurred before the release on January 2025. Those will be deleted in the near future.

On March 7, progress note functionality was released into Service Logging. Users are now able to document IFSP outcomes which correlate to their service authorizations as well as create progress notes.

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.



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. Our latest additions include comprehensive child development trainings as well as the Introduction to Service Coordination modules.

## Welcome Sam Murtiff to First Steps



Samantha “Sam” Murtiff is a doctoral student in occupational therapy at Indiana University Indianapolis. She is completing her capstone project with Indiana First Steps from January to April 2025. Her project will focus on Family Guided Routines Based Intervention and identifying the individual needs of First Steps families.

Sam is spending part of her experiential practicum with the Bureau of Child Development Services learning about the administrative responsibilities of running a statewide

program for children and families including data collection, quality reviews, contracts, policies, regulations, training and professional development. On the other days, Sam is working with direct service providers with Easterseals Crossroads in order to obtain clinical and home visiting skills. Sam has completed clinical experiences in several different settings, including The James Cancer Center and Riley Hospital for Children. Currently, her clinical interests include acute care pediatrics and First Steps.

Sam is originally from Ohio and graduated from Ohio University in 2021 with a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Physiology. She relocated to Indianapolis in May of 2022 to begin her graduate degree and will graduate this May! She plans to stay in Indianapolis upon graduation.

When not busy with school, Sam enjoys spending time with friends and family, reading and working out. She is looking forward to a great semester of learning and fun with Indiana First Steps!

## BISC information sessions

The [Building Interactive Social Communication for Toddlers](#) research team is providing additional informational sessions. As a reminder, BISC supports early intervention providers to guide parents in promoting interaction-based communication for children aged 30 months and younger.

If you would like to be contacted directly, please complete the [BISC Interest Form](#).

### BISC informational sessions:

[March 28 at 12 p.m. ET](#)

[April 18 at 12 p.m. ET](#)

[April 25 at 12 p.m. ET](#)

## FGRBI: Caregiver coaching

### *Encourage consistent, meaningful interactions essential for early development*

As early interventionists, we all care about helping children reach their full potential. We know that caring about children also means caring about families.

That’s where caregiver coaching comes in—a powerful approach that enhances both the caregiver’s confidence and their child’s progress.

Caregiver coaching goes beyond traditional therapy by providing personalized guidance to caregivers, helping them integrate developmental strategies into daily routines. This approach allows caregivers to actively engage in their child’s intervention, promoting a sense of agency and ownership over their child’s progress.

Research has shown that children achieve better developmental



outcomes when their caregivers are well-supported and empowered to take part in their learning journey.

Coaching is a partnership between the caregiver and the coach, focusing on developing skills, problem-solving strategies

and the confidence needed to implement techniques at home. This collaborative model fosters a deeper connection between the caregiver and child, encouraging consistent, meaningful interactions that are essential for early development.

# National Webinar Series

## Strengthen First Steps team collaboration

First Steps recently hosted Dana Childress, Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator of Early Childhood Special Education at Old Dominion University, to speak as part of the First Steps National Webinar Series. In her presentation, which can be found on the Learning Management System, Childress emphasized the importance of teaming in early intervention. While acknowledging there are challenges, she highlighted the benefits of Individualized Family Service Plan teams working collaboratively.

When IFSP teams communicate consistently and effectively, families experience seamless support that boosts their confidence and involvement in their child's growth. Childress highlighted the Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices, which were developed by national experts to support early interventionists to identify research-based best practices and incorporate them into their daily work.

The following suggestions were made for successful IFSP team collaboration:

- Make teaming an expectation and part of the culture of the early intervention system. For example, schedule time for service coordinators and providers to meet, share information and problem-solve together.
- Service coordinators and providers should take the time to read and review reports from the other team members and use that information to work more holistically. An example of this would be for service coordinators to take time to read progress reports so they can share the information

effectively with families and other team members. Providers should also take the time to read and review the reports from the ED team, the IFSP and Family Assessment to really know the child and the family's goals and outcomes for their child.

- Partnership needs to be prioritized. Team members are encouraged to be present for IFSP, transition and review meetings and recognize that ALL decisions are team decisions.
- All early intervention team members are encouraged and should make time to get to know each other and network. Communication is important and crucial in the work we do as early intervention home visitors. Some examples of this could be attending the annual Indiana Early Intervention Conference, attending SPOE and agency staff meetings, and definitely making time to call, text and email to discuss IFSPs, goals, outcomes, frequency of visits and individual family and child's needs.
- Communication and collaboration among team members are vital components to providing quality early intervention services. It is the responsibility of all team members to ensure they are doing their part to share information and complete reports on time, so children receive the best possible services.

To access the National Webinar Series session, entitled "Supporting Families as an IFSP Team," facilitated by Dana Childress, please visit the Indiana Early Intervention HUB Learning Management System.

## National Webinar Series: Navigate early intervention resources

The next event in the National Webinar Series will be "Stay Informed, Stay Supported: Navigating EI Resources." It will be from noon to 1 p.m. ET on Wed., April 9, 2025. Register for this webinar at <https://go.iu.edu/8sxd>.

The presenters will be Sarah Nichols and Ted Burke. Sarah, a professional development specialist with the Early Intervention Training Program at the

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, designs and facilitates evidence-informed professional development for adult learners in both community and virtual settings. Ted, president of the Executive Board of Directors for the Division of Early Childhood, has created comprehensive statewide training programs that have been recognized as models for the past decade.



*Sarah Nichols, Professional Development Specialist, Early Intervention Training Program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*



*Ted Burke, President of the Executive Board of Directors for the Division of Early Childhood*





# Environments and experiences

## Support the communication of infants and toddlers

*Adapted from Virtual Lab School's "Communication and language development: Lesson 4."*

It is important to provide a variety of experiences to support infants' and toddlers' communication and language skills. As an infant and toddler caregiver, you play an important role in each infant's and toddler's communication and language development. The environment makes a difference in how they develop and learn new skills and depends in large part on the caregiver creating responsive, engaging learning opportunities within the environment.

### Reflect on communication and language learning

One of your starting points can be to reflect on the language and communication development of the infants and toddlers in your care. Start with your observations, communication with families, the developmental screening and assessment information you collect, and questions about each infant's and toddler's development and the interests and discoveries they are making. For example:

- What sounds is each infant using?
- What languages is the infant or toddler learning at home? To which language is the infant or toddler most responsive?
- Are there words or phrases that the infant or toddler is learning at home that are different from communications with the caregiver?
- How does each infant or toddler communicate that he or she is hungry, tired, bored or ready for play?
- How is each infant or toddler enhancing in language and communication development?
- How does each infant or toddler communicate with peers? Adults?
- How does each infant or toddler respond to books? Being read to? Being shown pictures?
- What types of books are each family reading to their infant or toddler?
- How are other areas of development being supported through books and reading?

By asking these questions, in collaboration with families, you have an opportunity to document and learn how each infant or toddler in your care develops language and communication skills while considering other areas of development, culture and temperament. This process can help you and families gather information and work

together to support the development of language skills. It will also assist with your planning of responsive environments to foster communication growth.

### Support communication for infants and toddlers

As a caregiver, you also become an infant's and toddler's language and communication partner. Infants grow from turning their heads and responding to familiar faces and voices to being able to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences in words as toddlers. This amazing development occurs primarily through the interactions and experiences created by adult caregivers who use communication and language with infants and toddlers in responsive and meaningful ways throughout the day. Each infant and toddler develops at his or her own rate and within a language-rich, responsive environment, the possibilities are endless!

Some infants and toddlers in your care may have conditions that affect their language and communication development, including developmental delays, autism, neurological and perceptual disorders, or vision, hearing, speech or language impairments. Children with Individualized Family Service Plans have a specific plan to help them meet their personal goals, and very often these infants and toddlers will need adaptations to daily routines, their care environment and curriculum.

### Develop language through media literacy

The use of digital technology and non-screen media is quickly becoming an important tool. Like traditional forms of literacy, media literacy helps children develop new skills and attitudes, expand their creative thinking, and become effective communicators in today's world. Having a robust library of children's books in the classroom environment and including many opportunities to read to young children supports their language and literacy development, as well as other areas of development.

Communication and language development at all stages is a complex process and involves other areas of development, such as cognitive skills, and is enhanced by input from the environment. Communication and language help us think, learn, problem-solve, remember and understand what we experience. It is important to offer learning experiences and activities that are appropriate, engaging and supportive of children's learning and development across various developmental domains.

[www.virtuallabschool.org/infant-toddler/communication-and-language-development/](http://www.virtuallabschool.org/infant-toddler/communication-and-language-development/)

## 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.

**LMS updates:** First Steps-enrolled personnel can log in to the EIHub home page and click on the Learning Management System to explore over 100 available trainings, including Indiana Early Intervention Conference sessions and the National Webinar Series recordings. Don't miss the module on Child Development, covering developmental milestones from birth to age three—a fantastic way to earn those required First Steps credentialing hours!

**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.

- **INAEYC Indiana Early Childhood Conference, March 28–29, Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis.** Join early educators from across Indiana. This two-day conference provides you the opportunity to earn continuing education hours while learning from industry leaders. The keynote speakers at the [2025 Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children conference](#) will be Ron Shuali, M.Ed. & Patty Shukla. [Registration is open.](#)
- **Stay Informed, Stay Supported: Navigating EI Resources, noon to 1 p.m. ET, Friday, April 9, 2025.** Register for this webinar in the National Webinar Series at <https://go.iu.edu/8sxd>.
- **Early Childhood Transition Workshop, April 22 to 30, 2025.** From Part C to Part B: Supporting Smooth Transitions from First Steps to Preschool is an interactive workshop designed for service coordinators, preschool coordinators, early childhood educators and families to enhance collaboration and best practices for successful transitions. This is eligible for First Steps credentialing. This session will be offered four times. Please choose the date and time that works best for you. Tuesday, April 22, 12–2 p.m. EST; register at <https://go.iu.edu/8sio>. Friday, April 25, 8–10 a.m. EST; register at <https://go.iu.edu/8siq>. Thursday, April 24, 3–5 p.m. EST; register at <https://go.iu.edu/8sip>. Wednesday, April 30, 3–5 p.m.; register at <https://go.iu.edu/8sir>.
- **HANDS in Autism DD/ASD ECHO Webinar Series: Caregiver Supports, Seeking Information and Resources, April 25, 2025, noon.** HANDS in Autism provides free weekly [Developmental Disabilities/Autism ECHO webinars](#). ECHO webinars are part of a collaborative learning model that connect providers, educators, justice personnel, individuals and family members of people with autism and/or developmental disabilities. These involve discussing real-world cases to help provide resources and supports to families that need extra assistance. [Register](#) to participate.
- **Spring 2025 Institute for Strengthening Families, April 28–29, 2025, Noblesville.** Dr. Brandy Terrell will be presenting a keynote on “The Soundtrack of Trauma: Using Music to Understand and Heal from Adversity.” CEUs will be provided for most sessions. [Registration](#) is open.
- **Birth to Three: Expanding Your Early Intervention Toolbox, May 7–29, 2025.** Offered by the [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association](#), this online/on demand conference is designed specifically for SLPs who work in early intervention. Over 13 days, explore innovative techniques for working with infants, toddlers and their caregivers.
- **The Indiana Early Intervention Conference, June 12–13, 2025.** Plan to join your colleagues in Bloomington, Ind. at the Monroe Convention Center! To find out more [about the conference](#), please contact [jsj5@iu.edu](mailto:jsj5@iu.edu).



## 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

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](#).

2025

INDIANA EARLY  
INTERVENTION  
CONFERENCE



Registration is now  
open for the [2025 Early  
Intervention Conference](#):  
**Thurs. & Fri., June 12 & 13**  
**Bloomington, Ind.**  
We would love to have you!



Please reach out to Joy Jones at [jsj5@iu.edu](mailto:jsj5@iu.edu) if you are interested in being part of the conference planning committee.