



2024 Annual Report

Presented by the **Interagency Coordinating Council
on Infants and Toddlers**

A message from the ICC Chair Cory Best

Dear Governor Holcomb,

On behalf of the members of the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) on Infants and Toddlers, I respectfully submit the annual report of the ICC.

It has been my pleasure to serve as Chair of the ICC for the past year, working alongside the dedicated parents, providers, service coordinators, system partners, and our dedicated state team, led by Christina Commons, who represent our early intervention community. These devoted volunteers serve our state's most vulnerable children. Their commitment and enthusiasm are essential to the program's success.

The First Steps early intervention program provides an essential service to Indiana families in need. Eligible infants and toddlers are treated in their homes and childcare facilities by skilled providers to help them reach important developmental milestones before they start school.

The ICC thanks you and the General Assembly for your continued advocacy for First Steps and the increase in First Steps appropriations in the last budget. This investment allowed the ICC to take many small steps this year that had big impacts on our ability to continue providing services to families in need.

We began this year with a strategic planning session in January taking an in-depth look at where we stood with many key metrics. Identifying areas of opportunity, we created new subcommittees with the goals of increasing the early intervention workforce through recruitment, training, and collaboration with high schools and colleges to encourage early intervention careers, identifying ways to use technology, and examining other states' strategies for addressing areas of improvement.

There must be continued investment if we are to meet the growing demand for early intervention services. First Steps must offer competitive compensation to attract and retain providers, but the 2023 rate change was based on outdated wage data from 2018. Investing in early intervention reduces the need for additional services in school and ongoing medical treatment. First Steps sets children on a path to lifelong self-sufficiency as productive members of their communities. I ask you to continue to invest in First Steps to ensure that all Indiana children have available resources and support to reach their full potential.

Thank you,

Cory Best
ICC Chair



What is First Steps?

Indiana's First Steps System is a family-centered, locally based, coordinated system that provides early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities or who are developmentally vulnerable. First Steps brings together professionals from education, health, and social services agencies to provide skilled therapeutic interventions that promote age-appropriate development of infants and toddlers experiencing developmental delays.



What is the ICC?

Indiana's ICC is a Governor appointed body required by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and established under IC 12-12-7-2. The Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (DDRS), a division of the Family and Social Services Administration, is designated as the lead agency. The ICC is charged with advising and assisting DDRS in its responsibility to develop an early intervention system of the highest quality, balancing family-centered services with fiscal responsibility. Comprised of members representing parents of children with special needs, state agency groups, early intervention service providers, legislators, and others, the ICC is committed to holding the vision of First Steps and to keeping abreast of issues, concerns, and trends which may affect the First Steps system.

What Research Says About Early Childhood Services

- 90% of brain development happens before age 5. The most pivotal time for brain development is during the first three years. Children's brains are creating critical connections needed for higher-level abilities later in life. Experiences are just as important as the child's environment.
- The architecture of the brain can be changed or altered by a young child's positive and negative experiences.
- Approximately one out of every six children in the U.S. faces a developmental disability or a disabling behavioral problem. Yet fewer than 50% of these children are identified before they start school.
- Research shows that children who receive intervention services save schools an average of \$16,067 per child over the course of childhood compared to children who do not start school until age six.

The Haug Family's Story

My family and I got into First Steps two years ago when Greyson was 7 months old. Greyson was a twin. They were born at 25 weeks. Greyson weighed 1 pound 13 ounces. We lost our daughter almost a month after the twins were born. My son was in the hospital for 6 months. He has cerebral palsy and developmental delays. He also has a ventriculoperitoneal shunt for his brain bleed and issues with his eyes caused by hydrocephalus.

We first started our First Steps journey back in October 2022. At first, we just received physical therapy. Now we have physical therapy twice a week, developmental therapy twice a month, and occupational therapy weekly. He also just started getting vision services through Visually Impaired Preschool Services once a month. So far everything is going great.

My son is now rolling over and playing with his toys. He also has great head control. He is using his right hand more and is starting to crawl. He is babbling more sounds during play. First Steps has collaborated with our insurance to get valuable adaptive equipment for Greyson that has helped with his development.

Without First Steps my son would not be as far as he is now. We are so grateful for the program and what our providers do for our family.



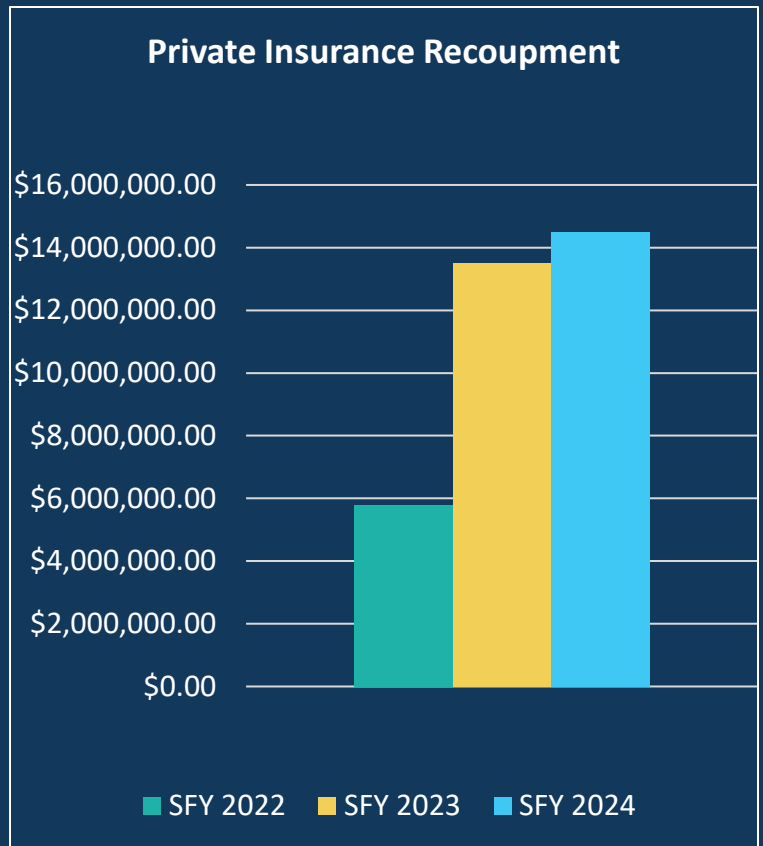
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**Indiana Children
Were Referred To
First Steps in SFY 2024**

**One in three infants and
toddlers who received
early intervention
services do not require
special education in
preschool.**



- A 2023 provider rate increase has positively influenced the number of early intervention professionals enrolled providing First Steps services.
- The rate increase has led to significantly fewer children and families waiting for Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) services due to statewide provider shortages.
- A 2023 SPOE (System Point of Entry) contract combined with increased salaries and decreased caseloads has significantly decreased staff turnover.
- Diversifying the funding streams available to cover the cost of services as well as improving private insurance recoupment has been a high priority of the ICC and FSSA. These efforts have increased recoupment by \$8,700,000 since 2022.



State Fiscal Year Funding Summary

Funding Source	Amount of Funding	Percent Funding for SFY24
State Part C	\$18,560,068.44	21.89%
Federal Part C	\$10,731,877.53	12.66%
Medicaid/CHIP	\$17,479,599.05	20.62%
Private Insurance	\$14,705,134.94	17.15%
Family Cost Participation	\$1,181,696.05	1.39%
TANF	\$14,705,134.48	17.34%
Social Services Block Grant	\$7,585,065.27	8.95%

First Steps accesses a variety of funding sources. The ICC works to help DDRS identify and coordinate all available resources from federal, state, local and private sources, and use all applicable resources to the full extent possible.

The total amount spent on eligibility determination and direct services for children in SFY 2024 was \$84,788,966 excluding the SPOEs. The total cost of SPOE contracts that deliver Service Coordination was \$16,764,245.

