

# INvision

Indiana Division of Disability &  
Rehabilitative Services Newsletter

## HOPE NOTES

### A message from Director Kylee Hope

*We are all better when we uplift each other*



What a year it has been! No one could have predicted the challenges that a global pandemic and public health emergency would bring. For many of us when this started back in March, we believed that by now this would be past us and we would back to what was our “normal.” It is clear that COVID-19 and its impact are not going away any time soon. With that, we are all continuously learning and pivoting to move along our positive trajectory to ensure individuals and families are receiving the various and often critical supports provided through DDRS programs.

The impact of COVID-19 has presented DDRS and its bureaus with challenges and roadblocks that will affect how our envisioned pathway to systemic transformational change. Our vision remains the same and we are dedicated to developing creative solutions and avenues that lead to all our services providing you with the support you need and desire to live your defined best life. We have valued your collaboration, feedback and input this past year and hope to continue to work with you on this pathway that leads to strength based, person centered services that empower and support you and your family. We remain grateful and appreciative of our industry's front-line workforce, provider network, staff, families, individuals and community partners.

It is easy during these times to feel tired and defeated. This year has been emotionally and physically exhausting. If we take a closer look, we can also find good times over the last several months where we were able to create new memories, explore interests, build skills and foster relationships. As we move into 2021, I challenge you to connect to someone who is struggling with a shared experience by lending a kind word, giving a helping hand or sharing an innovative idea that may make things a little easier for them. We are all better when we uplift each other. See you in 2021!

*Kylee B. Hope*

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### STORIES IN THIS NEWSLETTER

- **Bureau bits:** Updates from your First Steps, Bureau of Developmental Disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation teams.
- **Making the LifeCourse work for you:** All over the country, individuals with developmental disabilities and their families are embracing the LifeCourse framework and using it to explore opportunities and solve problems during COVID-19.
- **News you can use:** CDC offers online resources to help plan holiday celebrations and still protect families and communities from COVID-19.
- **Featured story:** Despite the pandemic, the holidays can still be a special time for you and your family. It just means that we may need to be creative and try new ideas to help get the most out of our celebrations and traditions this year.
- **Events you don't want to miss:** The quarterly Building Bridges events create direct avenues for individuals and families to share their feedback.

### Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services

With the holidays approaching, you may be considering what steps you need to take to keep yourself and your family healthy. You may be talking with family and friends about what traditions and celebrations you feel comfortable participating in or how to do them differently this year. You may also be concerned about your waiver service providers' participation in their own family traditions and celebrations and how that increases the risk for exposure. The Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services currently has flexibilities in place that will allow you to receive some of your waiver services virtually if and when you choose. The following waiver services can be provided virtually until Dec. 31, 2020:

- Case Management
- Behavior Management
- Therapies, including PT, OT, Speech, Psychological, Music and Recreational
- Extended Services
- Wellness Coordination
- Family and Caregiver Training

We have developed fact sheets discussing how to use these services virtually which can be found on [our DDRS COVID-19 webpage](#). Please keep in mind that all of your waiver services may be delivered in person if you would prefer. You should speak to your case manager to discuss what makes sense for you and your family.

### First Steps early intervention program

First Steps is dedicated to helping families advocate for their infants and toddlers, so they may grow and flourish to their highest potential. We recognize that the past few months may have been confusing and filled with a lot of unknowns and new learning experiences for everyone.

In these stressful times, First Steps is committed to ensuring we connect families to services that help promote their child's development. During this public health emergency, First Steps has developed flexible policies and procedures to allow families and early interventionists to decide together how children will receive services including, participating in tele-intervention.

We understand that for many families this is a very different way to engage in their early intervention services. We have First Steps [COVID-19 policies and resources here](#). We would also like to share some [helpful tip sheets](#) for parents and caregivers as to what tele-intervention looks like.

The state First Steps office encourages families to speak with their service coordinator and early intervention home visitors to discuss service delivery options that best fit each families' needs. Your IFSP team can be a great support to your family as you navigate the upcoming holiday season. As the holidays are approaching, the next few months may be hectic and a little more uncertain than usual. Please reach out to your early intervention team to discuss recommendations, tips and service delivery options.

### Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation helps eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment goals. VR has implemented several safety measures to ensure that services continue to be available during the current public health situation. VR also continues to accept new VR applicants in all 92 counties.

- Do you need help finding available employment opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Are you interested in preparing now for future employment?
- Has your employer asked you to work from home and you need some support to successfully perform your job duties?
- Have you returned to work and need assistance in adjusting to changes in your work environment or job duties due to COVID-19?

VR can also provide help with the following:

- Exploring your employment interests and skills
- Helping you to find your first job
- Providing assistive technology or other services to help you keep your job
- Re-entering employment in the same or different type of employment
- Providing services necessary for career advancement

VR staff throughout the state of Indiana have been utilizing virtual platforms to meet with current VR participants and new applicants, and have also resumed some in-person meetings at local offices with appropriate safety measures.

Please stay in contact with your VR Counselor to determine how we can best meet your employment needs. We also encourage individuals with disabilities to apply for VR services by contacting their [local office](#). Please [click here](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding VR services.

## LIFE DOMAINS AND STAGES

# Making the LifeCourse work for you

## Charting the LifeCourse during the pandemic

Charting the LifeCourse offers individuals and families tools and resources that allow them to have conversations differently, explore options for support and identify their vision for a good life. The key principles were originally developed to create a vehicle for true person and family centered thinking. It has quickly become a value base to drive transformational change in practices, organiza-



tions, policies and communities. All over the country, individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, advocacy organizations, service agencies and state systems are embracing the framework and using it to develop visions, explore opportunities, solve problems and communicate wants and needs. To get ideas and see how the framework is being used during COVID-19 across the country, [visit this site](#).



**Daily Life and Employment:** What a person does as part of everyday life – school, employment, volunteering, communication, routines and life skills.



**Community Living:** Where and how someone lives—housing and living options, community access, transportation, home adaptation and modification.



**Safety and Security:** Staying safe and secure—finances, emergencies, well-being, decision making supports, legal rights and issues.



**Healthy Living:** Managing and accessing health care and staying well—medical, mental health, behavior, developmental, wellness and nutrition.



**Social and Spirituality:** Building friendships and relationships, leisure activities, personal networks and faith community.



**Advocacy and Engagement:** Building valued roles, making choices, setting goals, assuming responsibility and driving how one's own life is lived.

For more information on the LifeCourse framework and principles, [visit: www.lifecoursetools.com](http://www.lifecoursetools.com).

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

# Online resources to help you plan holiday celebrations

## CDC offers considerations to help protect families and communities from COVID-19



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a number of [easy-to-read resources](#) available on their website as you continue to navigate living life during a pandemic. You can find information specific to people with developmental and behavioral disorders, children and teens, stress and coping, daily activities and going out, travel, pets and other animals, and much more! Recently, the CDC added [a page](#) specifically for information you should know and consider as you plan for holiday traditions and celebrations. The topics on that page include:

- Virus spread
- Who should avoid in-person celebrations
- General considerations
- Before the celebration
- During the celebration
- After the celebration
- Fall holiday celebrations

The information can be also viewed in multiple different languages!



## FEATURED STORY

# Getting the most out of your year-end celebrations

*Your holiday traditions may look a little (or a lot) different this year*

The pandemic and public health emergency has lasted much longer than most of us anticipated back in March. The turn of the seasons, the major life events and simple gatherings have caused us all to think about what are the ways to safely continue in the activities, events and celebrations that we are used to or have looked forward to for many years. So, it comes as no surprise that your holiday traditions and celebrations may look a little (or a lot) different this year.

That doesn't mean that the holidays can't still be a special time for you and your family. It just means that once again we may need to be creative and open to trying new experiences. Following are a list of ideas to help you get the most out of your celebrations and traditions this year.

### Identify the traditions you can safely continue or expand upon

- ▶ You can still decorate your house and yard to show off your holiday spirit. This year you may want to add in more creative projects for the entire family to do together that can be displayed throughout the season. Looking through apps like Pinterest will give you ideas that may inspire and excite you.
- ▶ Send cards and sweet treats to those who you will not be able to spend time with this year. As a family you can work together to create a story or letter sharing how your year has been and the successes you have achieved.
- ▶ Create a vision board for the new year. This can allow every family member to express what they would like to achieve in 2021 through magazine cut-out pictures, drawings, words and symbols.

### Take advantage of socially distancing festive events

- ▶ Visits to Santa may not include sitting on his lap this year but look for virtual options that may include pre-recorded messages, live chat or phone messages.
- ▶ Check out outdoor parades that have spaces available to socially distance or ability to remain in your car to view.
- ▶ Drive around your local neighborhoods to look at holiday lights or attend a drive-through light show in your community.
- ▶ Watch for new opportunities in your community that may include drive-through festivals or virtual options for gatherings.



### Virtual family gatherings

- ▶ Schedule calls or video chats with family members to make favorite dishes together.
- ▶ Coordinate with family members to create shared experiences virtually. For instance, use the same tablecloths, decorations or even candle scents to create spaces that look, smell and feel very similar while eating dinner and celebrating traditions together virtually.
- ▶ Create new family traditions, such as asking family members to take turns giving a toast or share an old family photo or story while gathering virtually.
- ▶ Have fun with porch drop-offs! Surprise family members by leaving their favorite holiday dish, a homemade gift or a card on their porch throughout the season.

### Spread kindness

- ▶ Put together care packages to send to local homeless shelters.
- ▶ Cook and deliver dinner to your local fire house.
- ▶ Send notes and drawings to the troops who are away from their family this season.
- ▶ Bake treats for your neighbors.
- ▶ Include messages of kindness in your outdoor decorations by making signs.

No matter how you choose to celebrate this holiday season, make sure to take time to relax, have fun, create memories and spend time (virtually or in person) with those people who are important to you.



## Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services

Indiana Family and Social Services Administration

Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services

402 W. Washington St., W453/MS 26  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

You can sign up to receive this newsletter by [clicking here](#).

For updated meeting information, as well as agendas and past meeting minutes, visit [the DDRS Commissions & Councils page](#).

The Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services is a program of the Indiana Family & Social Services Administration. If you have questions about DDRS programs and services, [visit us online](#).

Did you know that families can sign up to receive text messages and email updates from First Steps? Families will learn more about policy issues, how to become an effective advocate, how to be involved in your local planning and coordinating council, how to connect to events and groups, how to tell your family story and more. Go to [this site to sign up!](#)

## EVENTS YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS

Following are the current commission, council and public meetings that you may be interested in learning more about and/or attending in the future. To find the most current information, including next meeting dates and locations, [please click here](#).



## Building Bridges

These meetings are an opportunity for families and self-advocates to meet and speak with the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services state staff. These sessions are an important part of the Bureau's efforts to create direct avenues for individuals and families to share their feedback. These meetings are solely for families and individuals with disabilities to provide a forum for constructive and valuable conversations on successes or concerns, as well as suggestions or input regarding BDDS programs and services.

## INSILC public meeting

The Indiana Statewide Independent Living Council provides oversight of the Indiana State Plan for Independent Living and assists the Centers for Independent Living with the SPIL's implementation and coordination of services. For more information, visit [the Statewide Independent Living Council webpage](#).

## DDRS Advisory Council

The DDRS Advisory Council was established to assist the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services in ensuring that individuals with disabilities are as independent and self-sufficient as possible. For more information, visit the [DDRS Commissions & Councils webpage](#).

## ICC meetings

The Interagency Coordinating Council for infants and toddlers with disabilities is the state's federally mandated early intervention council. The council 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. The council is comprised of parents, state agency groups, early intervention service providers, legislators and others. The meetings are open to the public. For more information, visit [the DDRS Commissions & Councils webpage](#).

## Commission on Rehabilitation Services

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services works with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' Vocational Rehabilitation Services on matters such as the effectiveness and customer satisfaction with the services provided to individuals participating in the VR program. The commission is also involved in matters affecting VR policies and procedures, goals and priorities, and the state plan.