



*The Newsletter for  
Indiana Early Intervention*

**November 2024**

**FirstSteps.IN.gov**

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## **Procedural safeguards and dispute resolution**

Procedural safeguards and dispute resolution under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C are crucial for protecting the rights of infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. These measures provide a structured way to address conflicts and ensure services are delivered as intended. They cover areas such as parental consent, confidentiality of information, prior written notice, dispute resolution processes and grievance procedures for early intervention services.

The Bureau of Child Development Services is required to ensure that service coordinators, providers, families and advocacy organizations have access to current policies and procedures and information about procedural safeguards and dispute resolution. This transparency fosters trust and facilitates collaboration, empowering families to advocate for their child's needs and helps ensure that our early intervention system delivers consistent, quality services.

Over the past year, while preparing for federal monitoring by the Office of Special Education Programs, the BCDS policy team has worked to address gaps and enhance policies and procedures related to procedural safeguards and dispute resolution.

In parallel with updating policies and procedures, the BCDS has launched several initiatives to improve how family rights are communicated. Over the next few months, you will see a newly revised procedural safeguards notice, titled "A Guide to Family Rights and Procedural Safeguards," the launch of a new First Steps webpage outlining formal dispute resolution options under IDEA and the introduction of uniform Prior Written Notice state forms. Additional trainings will be developed around these topics and incorporated into existing materials and learning opportunities for personnel as well as for families.

By improving our policies, procedures and sharing information effectively, we can make sure we respect and uphold the rights of all the families we serve.

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 on **Wednesday, Jan. 8, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. EDT**. There will also be an online option to attend virtually via Zoom. Please [click here for meeting details](#).



## EIHub update: Service Logging Module

While we continue to smooth the bumpy path of the user experience in the Service Logging Module, it's important to reflect on what the module does allow and the processes that have improved:

- Providers can type directly into the system and no longer have to hand-write their visit notes.
- Visits notes can be easily emailed to families.
- Providers can utilize the calendar function.
- Providers can retain documentation of visit cancellations and attempts to contact the family in the EI Hub system.
- Visit notes can be electronically stored, relieving agencies of having to store paper copies.
- Providers are able to enter their visit information directly without having to complete documentation and then send them to agency administrators to enter for billing.
- We have the ability to bill family public and/or

private insurance more quickly, which reduces families' cost participation copayment.

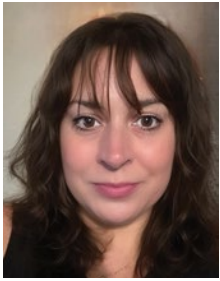
- In most cases, records requests are able to be completed more quickly and without requesting documentation from agencies and providers.
- The module collects data on how and where services are delivered to children and families in the state of Indiana. This data is regularly shared with federal and state partners.
- The module collects data about workforce utilization. This data has been shared with the ICC and other state partners to identify strengths and opportunities for recruiting new providers.

There are still many improvements to be made to the Service Logging Module and the entire EIHub system as a whole but we are on the right path. Thank you for your continued partnership and patience as we make improvements to the system allowing all users to focus on what truly matters—partnering with Hoosier families to promote their child's development.



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 to First Steps, Andrea and Danielle!



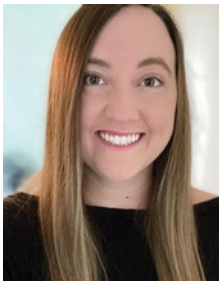
## Andrea Dickerson

Andrea Dickerson is a graduate from Indiana University-Purdue University Kokomo. She began her career with the state eight years ago with the Department of Child Services in Madison County as a family case manager. In 2019, Andrea was promoted to a family case manager supervisor, leading a team focused on helping families identify and address their underlying needs and supporting adoption and adoption recruitment efforts.

Andrea served on local and regional teams to assess the effectiveness of permanency efforts while ensuring that those efforts were effective as well as family-centered. Collaboration with community organizations, local courts and other stakeholders was a key component of the work Andrea participated in, helping her to bring a wide range of experience and knowledge to her current role with First Steps.

Andrea joined the Bureau of Child Development Services recently as the family engagement manager for First Steps. She has a passion for helping support Indiana's families and children and is eager to bring her knowledge and unique perspective to the First Steps program.

Andrea is a mother to three children, Holly, Drew and Blake, and is married to Andrew. She loves spending time with her family, being outdoors and drawing and painting.



## Danielle Ruffino

Danielle Ruffino is new to the state of Indiana coming all the way from Reno, Nev. She is a graduate of The University of Nevada, Reno, receiving a Master of Science degree in Human Development and Family Studies. In Reno, Danielle was a supervisor and a developmental specialist for Nevada Early Intervention Services. She also has previously worked in inclusive Head Start classrooms as a teacher and a disability services case manager.

Danielle is excited to join the state team to use her early intervention knowledge to provide high quality and accessible services to children and families across the state of Indiana.

Outside of work, Danielle enjoys spending time with her husband Vince, her dog Jeter and her cat Marsh. She also enjoys going to live sporting events, live music (especially Taylor Swift), reading, working out and watching the occasional reality TV show. While she is new to the state, she is ready to dive in and experience all things Indiana.

## Early Intervention Conference call for proposals

### Addressing research and best practices in Early Childhood Intervention

The [2025 Indiana Early Intervention Conference](#) is June 12–13 in Bloomington. First Steps has partnered with the Early Childhood Center at Indiana University to bring together national and local experts in early childhood intervention. The conference is now accepting [proposals for presentations and posters](#).

The conference planning committee invites professionals, researchers and advocates to share their expertise and innovations with Indiana's early intervention providers and service coordinators. We are seeking proposals for:

- **Interactive sessions.** Presentations that offer practical strategies, tools and hands-on activities for participants to implement in their practice.
- **Research presentations.** Original research findings or evidence-based practices that contribute to the field of early intervention.
- **Poster sessions.** Visual presentations of research, programs or initiatives that promote knowledge exchange and networking.

To submit a proposal to present your evidence-based research or innovative ideas at the conference, please complete [the proposal survey](#) by Jan. 10. Notification of acceptance will occur by March 1. Accepted presenters will receive further instructions regarding registration and presentation details.

Join us in the heart of Bloomington for two days of networking, learning, good food, fun and recharging. For more information about the conference, including event updates, please contact Joy Jones at [jsj5@iu.edu](mailto:jsj5@iu.edu).

# FGRBI and BISC

## Both highlight the importance of coaching caregivers

Caregiver coaching is not unique to Family Guided Routines Based Intervention. Within the field of early childhood, caregiver coaching has emerged as a powerful tool for supporting the development of young children. Caregiver coaches, including early intervention providers, offer tailored guidance, feedback and resources to encourage caregivers to implement effective strategies in everyday routines and interactions.

Many Indiana First Steps providers are participating in a Family Guided Routines Based Intervention professional development sequence to begin to learn to use effective caregiver coaching practices in home visiting. For more information on FGRBI Professional Development in Indiana, visit Indiana University's [Early Childhood Center website](#).

Concurrently, a research team at Indiana University is enrolling providers in a research study, [Building Interactive Social Communication for Toddlers](#), a federally funded randomized controlled trial study. This study supports early intervention providers to guide parents in promoting interaction-based communication for children aged 30 months and younger, when this learning most readily occurs.

Providers are supported to promote active parent engagement in the learning process using mediated learning practices by following a developmentally sequenced program to build foundational competencies. Providers then guide parents to apply newly learned concepts to help their child learn through everyday parent-child interactions.

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

Although these are two separate and distinct projects, one a professional development experience and the other a research study, the content is quite complementary. Indiana First Steps providers that have participated in both experiences have noted the alignment of messaging about the importance of coaching caregivers to apply intervention strategies within their natural environments and routines.



## Request for testimonials

As we continue to promote First Steps on our social media platforms we would like to [request testimonials](#) from parents, providers, service coordinators and others about how much they love our program and all things First Steps!

Will you please help us in reaching out individuals who may be interested in sharing a quick testimonial about their experience in Indiana early intervention?

Testimonial messages may be a quote, a photo or a recorded mes-

sage on a smartphone and may be emailed to James Vaughn, FSSA Deputy Communications Director, at [james.vaughn@fssa.in.gov](mailto:james.vaughn@fssa.in.gov). Helpful tips for recording a video on a smartphone are available.

Please reach out to Connie Young at [constance.young@fssa.in.gov](mailto:constance.young@fssa.in.gov) or Hannah Freeman at [hfreeman@cvrindy.com](mailto:hfreeman@cvrindy.com) with any questions you may have.

Thank you in advance for assisting with this project.



# What is BISC?

## Early intervention support for Indiana providers

Building Interactive Social Communication is a federally funded research study. It supports early intervention providers to guide parents in promoting interaction-based communication for children aged 30 months and younger, when this learning most readily occurs. Providers are supported to promote active parent engagement in the learning process using mediated learning practices by following a developmentally sequenced program to build foundational competencies. Providers then guide parents to apply newly learned concepts to help their child learn through everyday parent-child interactions.

### How does the randomized controlled trial work?

Providers are randomly assigned to an intervention or control group. Providers in the intervention group will be guided to deliver the BISC intervention for about 20 weeks and integrate it within their regularly scheduled intervention sessions. Those in the control group will deliver their usual intervention to families for 20 weeks and will receive self-study materials at the end. Regardless of group assignment, providers and families will receive a stipend for participation.

### Why should I enroll?

If you serve a family whose toddler has difficulty learning language, you may submit the [BISC interest form](#). Your participation will support you in guiding families to help children learn to communicate through natural interactions. By doing so, you will learn to implement a research-based intervention approach to supporting early interaction-based communication. At the same time, you will contribute to research by helping the field understand how providers can be best supported in this work.

### How will I learn BISC?

If assigned to the intervention group, you will learn through self-study and weekly 30-minute virtual meetings with an intervention consultant, scheduled at your convenience. Additional time is scheduled before the intervention begins and periodically to review progress. Control group providers will learn through self-study materials. Participation, including initial activities, will last approximately 24 weeks.

Please send questions to Addison McGeary, BISC Project Associate, at [amcgeary@iu.edu](mailto:amcgeary@iu.edu).

### Highlights

- Federally funded research study
- Supports providers to guide parents to promote communication for children 30 months and younger
- Supports providers in promoting active parent engagement to help parents apply concepts in everyday interactions
- Professional development hours
- Stipend for providers and families
- Preparation to serve toddlers with communication concerns
- Preparation to support active family engagement



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All registered IN EI Hub users have access to the Learning Management System in the [IN EI Hub!](#) First Steps webinars and trainings, including those required for initial credentialing, are located on the IN EI Hub Learning Management System. [Watch this video](#) to learn more about the LMS.

The Indiana Early Intervention Conference recorded webinars are now posted on the LMS and are a great way to obtain required First Steps credentialing hours!

As always, if you are looking for professional development hours, you may always take courses outside of the LMS. However, as documented in the [First Steps Policy Manual](#), you must retain your certificate of attendance documentation for a period of seven years.

To access over the over 100 trainings posted on the IN EIHub Learning Management System, First Steps-enrolled personnel can log into the [EIHub home page](#) and click on the Learning Management System. For assistance, you may contact the First Steps Training Manager, Amy Torres, at [amy.torres@fssa.in.gov](mailto:amy.torres@fssa.in.gov).

- **ECHO sessions, Jan. 13, March 10, May 12, July 14 and Sept. 8.** You are invited to the Perinatal Home Visitation ECHO (or Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) series. This ECHO track is intended to provide education and support for home visitors in the maternal-infant health field. These sessions are from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. EST on the second Monday every other month, from now through September 2025. Participants will meet via Zoom platform. The training session will follow the ECHO Model, which includes review of an educational topic, sharing a challenging case and an opportunity for resource sharing. [Register for the Perinatal Home Visiting ECHO sessions](#). If you are interested in submitting a case, please email Ally Worden at [alworden@regenstrief.edu](mailto:alworden@regenstrief.edu).
- **Ski-Hi Parent Advisor sessions, Jan. 24–25, Feb. 21–22, April 11–12, Indianapolis.** Our network of providers educates and supports families throughout the state of Indiana when their child is identified as deaf/hard of hearing. We will train and support you as a member of this unique network! Minimum requirements: Degree in deaf education, early childhood, or speech and hearing sciences; work with families from birth to age 3; educate and support families as their child transitions into school; family-centered service delivery. Two three-hour virtual sessions will follow; dates TBD. Contact [the Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education](#) at [cdhhenetwork@isdh.in.gov](mailto:cdhhenetwork@isdh.in.gov).
- **The Indiana Early Intervention Conference, June 12–13, 2025.** Plan to join your colleagues in Bloomington, Ind. at the Monroe Convention Center! We are now accepting [proposals for breakout sessions](#) until Jan. 10. Notification of acceptance will be given by March 1. To find out more [about the conference](#), please contact [jsj5@iu.edu](mailto:jsj5@iu.edu).

## Research study opportunity for First Steps' speech therapists

Attention: First Steps' speech therapists are needed for a research study! Participation from early intervention SLPs is being requested for a research study conducted by a graduate student at the University of Tulsa.

The study is focused on assessing the understanding of postpartum depression among speech-language pathologists who provide early intervention services. The study involves brief inquiries about demographics, duration spent in early intervention, as well as knowledge and practices related to postpartum depression.

[The online survey](#), which is IRB approved, will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Upon completion, survey participants who have completed the survey will have the opportunity to submit their email address for the chance to win one of eight \$25 Amazon gift cards. Winners will be notified via email by Dec. 1, 2024.

The password to complete the survey is "EISLP". Your participation is greatly appreciated. For questions, please contact: Cate Trizza at [cate@utulsa.edu](mailto:cate@utulsa.edu).



**Division of Disability 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.

### 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.

### 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](#).



Save the date for the **2025 Early Intervention Conference:**  
**Thursday & Friday, June 12 & 13**  
**Bloomington, Ind.**  
We would love to have you!  
**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**



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.