



FIRST STEPS

KENTUCKY'S EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM

FALL 2014

STATE LEAD AGENCY UPDATE

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Working Together with the Division of Early Childhood (DEC)

DEC, a division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), is the professional organization for anyone working in early intervention. First Steps was contacted by the KYDEC for presentation ideas that would be of interest to providers in First Steps. DEC established a tract of early childhood sessions for the November CEC conference to be held in Louisville at the Galt House and they wanted to provide professional development for First Steps. We jumped on this opportunity!

There will be several great sessions of interest to First Steps providers on Sunday, November 23—sessions on working with young children with visual impairments, transition, and DEC Recommended Practices. State Lead Agency staff will be presenting on the Future of First Steps—the State Systemic Improvement Plan. We are working with KYDEC to approve sessions for training credits. We are really honored that DEC included us—the support for early intervention is critical as we develop and implement the State Systemic Improvement Plan in First Steps. For more information, check out the website: http://www.kycec.org/cec_2014_Conference_Page.html.

Be sure to mark your calendars—the conference is Nov. 23-25.

Achieving Improved Results for Infants and Toddlers and Their Families

Since January, the ICC, State Lead Agency (SLA), and other interested stakeholders have examined Child and Family Outcomes as part of the development of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). The SSIP is a new requirement of the State Performance Plan that challenges states to achieve higher results so that children in First Steps will be college and career ready in the future. States are to identify the barriers to improvement and design a plan to overcome those by embedding evidence-based practices. We must identify evidence-based practices (EBPs) designed for infants and toddlers and their families that, when implemented with fidelity, lead to better outcome data (State Performance Plan Indicators 3 and 4). The results that the state achieves will be used as a factor in the annual IDEA Determination conducted by the Office of Special Education Programs.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that early intervention use programs, curricula, and practices based on "scientifically-based research" "to the extent practicable." This requirement incorporates the definition of evidence-based practices from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This means that whenever possible, the early interventions strategies being used must be strongly supported by evidence from well-conducted research studies. Research may be said to be scientific when it:

- Uses a sound research design. The outcomes of children receiving a tested intervention strategy are compared to similar children who do not receive the intervention.
- Is based on high quality data analysis. Researchers must be sure to carefully collect, store and examine the data.
- Involves other researchers to review the results (peer review). The study should be reported



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in a journal so other researchers can review the methods used and repeat the research in other settings.¹

Identifying the EPB that may influence the specific outcome data in need of improvement and that the state can implement and sustain over time is a daunting task by itself. EPBs based on infants and toddlers are few.

The stakeholder group has engaged in thoughtful discussions of the current state of early intervention practices in First Steps. Extensive data informed the group. There are providers using clinical-type services that are evidence-based when implemented with fidelity. The problem is that a home or childcare setting is not a clinic. Effectiveness then is questionable because the model has been altered. Some providers use practices that have no evidence-base that meets the standards of IDEA in any setting. Service Coordinators continue to struggle with monitoring IFSP services to ensure that evidence-based practices are implemented.

This deliberate focus on results is a system change that impacts every provider's practice at a fundamental level. First Steps has accomplished tremendous systems change since 2004 when the Department for Public Health became the lead agency. Successes include:

- Resolution of compliance issues cited by OSEP
- Operation of system within budget (despite budget reductions)
- Implementation of TOTS
- Establishment of one system of Service Coordination with direct authority
- Achieving "Meets Requirements" four years in row

None of the achievements came easily—it took everyone's work and dedication to make it work. The success of the SSIP will require a deeper examination of practice and conscious effort to change. History proves we can do this!

Where's the Data?

The SLA began Provider Reviews earlier in the summer. One of the most critical items we expect to see in the provider's work file is evidence of progress monitoring. So far, many files reviewed do not have this evidence. The lack of evidence that progress is continually being monitored is concerning.

Each provider on the team may use a different way to collect the data—graphs, frequency counts, assessment probes, structured observations, etc. The important factor here is data is collected routinely and with fidelity. This data is critical for determining the effectiveness of the interventions and status of progress. Many request for Intensive Level Evaluations are returned to the IFSP team because of the lack of progress data in the child's record. The IFSP team bases the request on the lack of progress but often have nothing qualitative or quantitative to support the assertion of child's functioning.

Each provider needs to review the service logs and reports as well as their own progress data worksheets in preparation for each visit. The team as a group needs to review and discuss the child's progress at every IFSP meeting. The most critical question to answer is, "What is the data saying and why?"

¹ Adapted from: [Pacer Center, 2011](#): "Evidence-Based Practices at School: A Guide for Parents".



Upcoming Changes-- 2014 First Steps Regulations

A major impact for early intervention providers, including service coordinators, is the reduction in the reimbursement for late service logs that becomes effective with the 2014 First Steps regulations.

On Sept. 12 State Lead Agency (SLA) staff attended the Legislative Research Commission (LRC) Administrative Regulation Review Subcommittee hearing on the proposed First Steps regulations. The committee passed the regulations without comment. The SLA anticipates that the proposed regulations will move forward through the second committee review some time the month of October. If the second committee does not meet in October the regulations will be effective around Oct. 15. If the committee meets, the regulations will be effective Nov. 1.

Request for assistance with service log entry should be sent to chfs.firststeps@ky.gov. These requests will be processed in the order received. Information necessary for the SLA to create a service log includes the TOTS ID of the child, date of service, start and end times, location and service delivery method. If insurance is the first payor source, the CPT and ICD-9 codes for the service will also be required. The service log started by the SLA will be disapproved as the account payable event until the complete note has been entered in the correction/addendum box and the SLA notified of the correction. SLA staff do not receive a notification from TOTS that the note has been entered—notification that the note has been entered is the responsibility of the provider. The amount of payment reduction will be based on the number of days between the service log being created by the SLA and the notification by the provider back to the SLA that the note has been entered. It is vital that the provider give notice back to the SLA timely in order to avoid a costly reduction in payment. Remember, all claims must be entered no later than 60 days from date of service.

There are times when a provider is unable to save the service log in TOTS due to an error on the IFSP. One common error is inaccurate or forgotten planned service authorizations by the service coordinator. For example, a service coordinator forgets to include the authorization for a collateral service for an IFSP meeting before saving the plan as final. When it is discovered that the provider cannot enter a service log for attending the IFSP meeting, the service coordinator must prepopulate a requested review IFSP and add the authorization to that plan. The authorization will be for the date of the meeting but the requested review IFSP date will be after the date of service. TOTS will not save a service log for the provider when this occurs; even when the provider is timely with entering the service log. At this point the SLA will have to enter the complete note for the provider.

For the above scenario the SLA will not penalize the provider by reducing the payment but will withhold funds from the POE. POEs will have funds withheld for each late note occurrence and for errors in IFSPs that prohibit providers from entering service notes.

NEW PROVIDER ORIENTATION DATES

Face-to-Face Provider Orientation

Oct 23 Nov 5 Nov 18 Dec 2

Face-to-face orientation is held in Frankfort



PROVIDER ENROLLMENT

In order to better serve you, we have made adjustments to the provider enrollment process. Please review the following to ensure that the appropriate First Steps staff member receives the forms.

Send Provider Enrollment Documentation to Theresa James

- * Applications
- * Licensure Documentation
- * Record Checks
- * Professional Liability Insurance
- * All forms received at the First Steps face-to-face orientation
- * Addendum to add provider to an existing contract

Theresa.James@ky.gov

502-564-3756 ext. 4378

Fax: 502-564-0329

Send additions and/or updates to TOTS to Jenna Bobbitt

- * Addendums - all other purposes including address or email changes or deletions etc...
- * All training certificates

Jennifer.Bobbitt@ky.gov

502-564-3756 ext. 4380

Fax: 502-564-0329

NEED TO UPDATE YOUR CONTRACT?

When submitting RF 6 Addendum forms to the State Lead Agency, please remember to list one provider per form. Recently, our office has received several addendum forms with requests for changes for multiple providers on the same form.

If you have any questions, please contact Jenna Bobbitt at jennifer.bobbitt@ky.gov.

LATE NOTE ENTRY

When submitting late note requests, please send directly to chfs.firststeps@ky.gov. The subject line of your email should read: Late Note Request for TOTS id _____ [child's initials] for [name of your POE] POE.

Please allow time for processing. Sending multiple submittals of the same late note becomes confusing and causes a delay in completing the request.