

First Steps Early Intervention System

Families Always
Have Rights.

You have the right to decide.

Our goal in Indiana's First Steps System is the same as yours: to help Hoosier families make sure their infants and toddlers receive services to help them in the future.

Every family with a child age birth to three years with a disability, a diagnosed developmental delay or who is biologically at risk may be eligible to be served by First Steps. All families served by First Steps are guaranteed these rights by federal law.

1. Families have the right to an evaluation.

The law provides that all eligible children will receive early intervention, Service Coordination and assessment/evaluation activities without regard to race, culture, religion, disability, or ability to pay. On-going early intervention services are based on a sliding scale fee, or co-pay. Eligibility is decided by an evaluation of the child within 45 days. The evaluation must be done by a multidisciplinary team of two or more qualified professionals who examine the child's medical history, development, and current abilities. If the child is eligible for services, the child and family also have the right to ongoing assessments of the child's strengths, skill levels, progress, and needs.

2. Eligible families have the right to a coordinated plan.

Also within 45 days, each eligible child and family should have a written Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for providing early intervention services that includes the family's resources, priorities, and concerns for their child. It includes the major outcomes for the child and family; how progress will be measured; what and where services will be provided; when they will begin and for how long; methods of payment; and transition upon the child's third birthday.

3. Families have the right to consent.

Consent or permission must be obtained in writing before conducting an evaluation, assessment, or beginning any early intervention services. Parents can choose to not give consent for a particular service without jeopardizing any other services, and they may refuse a service at any time, even after accepting it, without affecting other intervention services.

4. Families have the right to prior notice.

Parents must receive written notice before any changes in early intervention services are started. This notice, which must also inform parents of their rights, must give details of the decision and any reasons for the action. The notice must be in the families native language so they can be fully informed of their rights.

5. Families have the right to privacy.

The law provides for your protection at all times. Any information that personally identifies you, your child, or your family cannot be shared with any other agency without first receiving your permission. You don't have to give your permission, and refusing will not affect your services.

6. Families have the right to review records.

Parents may inspect, review, and amend records relating to their child and family. At any time, a parent may request a copy of their child's records (the System Points of Entry (SPOE) may charge a fee to cover the cost of duplication). Only persons with the parents' written permission can inspect records, and SPOEs must keep a record of anyone who looks at your child's file. If the parents ask that records be amended and the SPOE disagrees, the parents can request a hearing to challenge the information contained in the file.

7. Families have the right to participate.

Parents are important members of their child's early intervention team. So important, in fact, that no meeting where the IFSP for their child is developed, reviewed, or revised can be conducted without a parent present.

8. Families have the right to understand.

The First Steps Early Intervention System does not discriminate on the basis of race, culture, religion, or disability, so all families have the right to receive early intervention information in a manner they can understand. Notices must be written in a way that is understandable to the general public. If English is not the primary language of the family, the family has the right to receive information in their primary language, unless it is clearly impossible to do so. If a family uses another method of communication, such as sign language or Braille, then they have the right to receive information that way.

9. Families have the right to an advocate.

Sometimes, parents find that an IFSP meeting or assessment conference can be stressful or confusing. Parents have the right to bring a friend or advocate along. Parents may also wish to include other service providers who work with their child, i.e. a care giver or another family member.

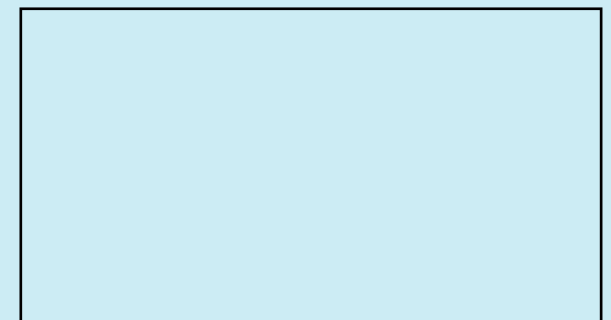
10. Families have the right to disagree.

If parents and the early intervention services providers disagree, the law provides for a timely resolution with three methods: file a complaint; request mediation or request an impartial due process hearing. While the disagreement is being resolved, the child must continue to receive early intervention services unless the parents and service providers agree otherwise. (For more information about mediation or due process hearings, families can request information by calling (800) 441-STEP.)



First Steps

To find out more about your rights or where you can find more information about the First Steps System, please visit the First Steps System web site at www.state.in.us/fssa/first_steps/index.html For information locally, please contact:



1-800-441-STEP