

**First Steps South East
LPCC Quarterly Meeting
Cluster J
May 15, 2020**

- I. Call to Order
Called to order at 9:34am.
- II. Introductions and Inspirational Story.
Introductions were completed.
- III. Consent agenda items reviewed.
Consent agenda items reviewed.
Teri Williams motioned to approve consent agenda items. Tillie Allgood seconded. Motion approved.
- IV. Financial Report
Financial report reviewed by Becky Haymond. By explained that the fiscal year will end on June 31st. The personnel costs are over the projected budget after several retirements, but planned expenses in other areas have been reduced to plan for a balanced budget at the end of the financial year.
- V. Other Business
 - Cluster Oversight and System Updates
 - Provider Networks:
 - Becky Haymond reported that the SPOE was contacted by an SLP who was looking to relocate into our area from Hawaii.
 - Janice Hensley reported that Bedford Outpatient Therapist Services just hired a DT.
 - Ben Faulstick reported that All Kids Can is hiring an OT from Alaska.
 - Overall, Sara Cummins reported that the parent feedback she has heard from families and parents through her work with FUSE is very positive regarding the consistency of First Steps services during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Sara would like to praise all of the providers in all of the networks, all of the SPOE staff, and all of the state staff for quick, clear, and effective policy changes and outreach regarding accommodating safety concerns as COVID-19 public health emergency has unfolded.
 - Quality Assurance - State Concern Log Report: There was one concern logged this quarter. It was a concern about a Service Coordinator getting paperwork to a network agency. Technical assistance has been provided to the service coordinator to help prevent future issues.
 - Cost Participation Suspensions – Currently effective as related to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the policy is to not suspend any family for non-payment. There is one family that has been on the log for several months for unresolved insurance billing issues. It is typical for insurance issues to take several months to get resolved.
 - Training Opportunities – The 2020 First Steps Conference has been cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. The scheduled keynote presenters from the Mr. Rogers Institute will now be speaking on a free webinar scheduled for June 12, 2020. See handout for details. The State First Steps team has recently offered lots of no cost professional development (PD) plus discipline specific and general technology trainings in a virtual format for the system workforce. This has helped to compensate for the absence of the annual conference that many Early Intervention workers in Indiana rely on to meet continuing education requirements. The trainings have also helped providers to learn strategies for delivering interventions virtually. Funmi Ige-Wright was curious to know the effectiveness of therapies being administered to families this way. Others added that ECPC (Early Childhood Personnel Center) has been a good source of many trainings for professionals and families recently.
 - Statistics – The number of referrals to First Steps in our area has been lower by 21 referrals weekly, though currently referrals are starting to rebound. SPOE staff have sent a letter and

updated referral form to all doctor offices informing everyone that First Steps is still serving families during the public health emergency. The letter is one of the meeting handouts. The same letter was also adapted for community partners and sent out selectively. Doctors are usually the number one referral source for First Steps. An announcement about First Steps operations during the public health emergency was also posted to our local website and local Facebook page. The number of First Steps assessments has also dropped. All assessments are now provided virtually or by phone. The number of IFSPs has gone down. Reviewed the profile report, and reminded those present to complete the U.S. Census. The SPOE office is sending weekly reports to the State regarding referrals and IFSPs as well as keeping track of Service Coordination only plans. Several families have chosen to not have therapy services until the therapy can be delivered in-person. Missy Moore added that IRCA (Indiana Resource Center for Autism) is offering parent webinars.

- Old Business
 - Quality Review Monitoring Update – The quarter from January-March reviewed. Forty-seven files were randomly selected for review by the State. Of those 47, there were 7 late services starting over 30 days from being put onto the family service plan. The late start of service was most often related to no providers available. 100% had timely transition meeting with only 1 “excused” late when family didn’t keep originally scheduled meeting. There was 1 late six month review meeting due to an error. All income calculations, written prior notices, and insurances were completed correctly.
Based on the findings of the review, the State requires that a CQUIP (Continuous Quality Improvement Plan) is submitted by our SPOE outlining how we intend to address and resolve that the Cluster has not met the target of 95% of children receiving services within 30 days from plan being written. In the 47 reviewed files, the 7 that were over 30 days ranged from seven to seventy-five days late. A possible strategy may be a tool for tracking when there is no provider available (NPA) to gain a detailed understanding of what geographical areas of our Cluster J have provider capacity difficulties. The SPOE would like ideas from the group. Internal reviews for the next period (April-June) have begun.
 - LPCC Office Elections + Current Roster – Activities for completing local officer elections are on hold due to distractions created by the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- New Business
 - Transition MOA Update for 2020 – The MOA update will be to complete signed extension of the current MOA which expires June 30. The MOA has no changes due to no changes from state level. The MOA agreements have been sent by e-mail to all transition partners and about half have been returned back with signatures so far. LEAs have understandably had challenges in how school evaluations are completed during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The federal government has suggested that perhaps Early Intervention services should continue past age three until school evaluations and services can be completed, but this is only a proposal and there have been no changes. Angie Vaughn, the LEA from Madison Community Schools, shared an update on how her school system is operating. Angie reports that she got guidance from the State Department of Education yesterday. Evaluations are not provided face-to-face. School will attempt as much of the evaluation as possible. Compensatory services are coming later. Her school system can offer virtual services through google meetings and are working with parents of three and four year olds. Angie is hopeful that face-to-face services can be offered again in July. Sarah Cummins has concerns about families falling through the cracks – getting no services while waiting on preschool services. IN*Source is a resource organization for parent rights in educational services that has recently offered question and answer forum for families. Questions and concerns of families on the forum include mask requirements issues and homebound services. Angie shared that guidance from the DOE on many of those issues is still in the works. There is currently no mask guidance or guidance about nursing services. Angie commented that since her school typically does not offer services over the summer, those with upcoming birthdays will not start services until the school year anyway in a typical year, so the gap hasn’t changed. Becky Haymond shared that First Steps Service Coordinators give options

for clinics when available. If needed, the Cluster provider group meeting next Wednesday can have an agenda item to discuss extended services.

For the Head Start program, Tillie Allgood shared her program is trying to figure out how to reopen – no solid plans yet.

- Doctor Referrals Form and Outreach – The doctor referrals was covered in earlier discussion about statistics. Connie Young, the State First Steps Outreach Coordinator, shared several updates with the group. She shared that an announcement was sent via a state texting service to over 26,000 recipients across the state including child care, that First Steps is open. Connie shared recruitment efforts that hiring has slowed down during COVID-19 public health emergency. Connie shared that she continues to maintain and build on relationships with universities and colleges to recruit providers into early intervention. Connie reported on the recent OT Forum that was helpful to providers to connect and share with each other. Funmi Ige-Wright asked Connie how the state system is preparing for lower developmental outcomes do to an unavoidable slide in skills and participation in First Steps in the current environment. Connie replied that the State has adjusted policies to allow some services to continue in alternative ways in order to maximize possible intervention. Becky Haymond added that measuring the long-term outcome data would be possible if the State ID number was implemented, so the current situation is another good argument for the State ID number implementation. Sara Cummins shared that she is hearing good things about the virtual intervention, that it is better than expected for families and children. Funmi Ige-Wright has concerns that for a conscientious parent, virtual therapy may work, but it will not work for all parents.
- COVID-19 Update – In addition to the COVID-19 items shared in the Consent Agenda handout, Becky Haymond gave an overview of the successes, challenges, and current plans. The SPOE office had technology in place before the onset of the COVID-19 restrictions so that offering assessments virtually was implemented immediately. Whitney Austin, SPOE Supervisor, did a fantastic job rolling out virtual assessment and only one day of assessments was lost. There are currently 22 families who are wanting in-person assessments only, and those will be rescheduled for June when it is allowed for safety reasons. Assessment team members report that families are very engaged in the assessment process when conducted virtually. There are materials offered to families in advance of the assessment to help prepare them for the virtual assessment that are provided to families by the assessment team schedulers and service coordinators. Because IFSP meetings are being held by phone, the SPOE office has reminded and emphasized to service coordinators the importance of inviting assessment team members to the IFSP meeting, and more assessment team members have been able to attend those meetings and answer questions about the AEPS and provide input on the strategies of the IFSP. There are plans under development for staff to transition back to either working in the office and/or home visiting. Currently the Columbus office building is locked down from the public, and the SPOE office is being manned by one person. Starting this week the SPOE is bringing in staff for filing. A survey has been sent to Service Coordinators and Assessment Team members about PPE needs, and the office is ordering masks and hand sanitizer. For services, providers are offering virtual sessions or home programs to families and children. There are currently 82 kids who want no services until providers can come back in person, but the rest are accepting the virtual or home program option for now. Missy Meyers from All Kids Can reports some really positive feedback from providers about virtual therapy. Parents are forced into participation when doing virtual therapy. Teri Williams from Peditplay reports that some providers are not as good on virtual platforms, so Peditplay has been doing some internal coaching on technology. The virtual therapy option has contributed to a reduction in the Peditplay waiting list. Virtual therapy option has opened doors for families otherwise isolated by language barriers or other specialized needs. Tillie Allgood from Head Start reports that the Head Start teachers check in with families and the parents have reported they are really excited for First Steps virtual therapy. Becky Haymond reports that Service Coordinators have been directed to check-in with the families who have chosen to wait for in-person therapy to see if they now want to try virtual. Brittney

Dick, a Service Coordinator, is hoping that networks would perhaps offer virtual therapy even after the COVID-19 public health emergency, because otherwise in some cases there are no other providers available. Teri Williams from Peditplay responded that she is hopeful it might be an option and that the state has a task force to consider this. There are temporary licensing and insurance payment policies that have allowed the virtual visits during COVID-19, so those need to be looked at long term to make that possible. Connie Young from the State reported that there is a group working on policies for transition to face-to-face. The State has employed flexibility so far, and sees it as a valuable priority to consider an ongoing virtual option. The State is looking at a hybrid. The State has identified that there seems to be a need to promote virtual options. Becky Haymond shared that service coordinators are offering resources to families for free internet or devices as well as other resources such as mortgage or employment. The transition to face-to-face is still to come and still working out plans.

- PCG Requirements Sessions – The State is still moving forward with new case management system. Connie says the roll out is still on track and the state team is very excited. The testing is being planned.

VI. Announcements and Updates

- FUSE is not working in their office, however they have been attending lots of virtual meetings. FUSE is offering a parent meeting every Friday night. A kids meeting is offered at 4pm Saturday. Connie would like links from Sara about the meetings.

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:02. Next meeting August 21, 2020.