

**First Steps South East
LPCC Quarterly Meeting
Cluster J
February 17, 2023**

I. Call to Order

Called to order by Tillie Allgood, Chairperson.

II. Introductions and Inspirational Story

Three inspirational stories were shared:

Kim Fledderman of Developmental Services Inc therapy group shared that she went to a middle school basketball game with her own family, and recognized a player on the line-up that she had served as an infant and toddler. Before birth, the basketball player had in utero repair for spina bifida and had delays in motor skills. While an atypical gait was still evident for the young adult, the doctor had evidently okayed her participation on the team and she was on the floor and fighting for the ball.

Ella Boyd of the Arc of Indiana shared that just three weeks ago, her brother who is 47 years old and has Down Syndrome, moved into his own apartment. She is excited for him that he has the ability to live independently. Supports provided to him in the past have made this possible for him.

Becky Haymond shared a story that a parent recently called the First Steps office wanting to speak to the Program Director regarding her Service Coordinator. The parent had called not because she was having a problem, but because she wanted to share how much she appreciates her Service Coordinator. She wanted Becky to know that her Service Coordinator really listens to her.

Introductions were made for four attendees:

Barbara Sanders is the First Steps Family Engagement Manager for FSSA. This is a new position. She is eager to make connections with families and help build local family connection efforts.

Sharon Schwering is a Service Coordinator hired for Madison County (Cluster H).

Audery Burgess is a Service Coordinator hired for Bartholomew and Dearborn Counties (Cluster J). Audery has served as a Service Coordinator with Cluster F in the past.

Connie Hempstead introduced Inga Moore, who will be taking Connie's position with the Greensburg Community School Corporation upon Connie's retirement at the end of the school year.

III. Consent Agenda Items

Consent agenda items reviewed. Kim Fledderman motioned to accept the consent agenda including the minutes. Missy Myers moved to second. Approved by consensus.

IV. Financial Report

SPOE Financial report handout reviewed by Becky Haymond. The report shows the SPOE expenses for the first half (July-Dec) of the current grant year starting July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. The budget presented on the report does not include an allocation increase from the state which started Jan 1, 2023. The allocation increase will be reviewed in new business.

V. Other Business

- Cluster Oversight and System Updates
 - Provider Networks-
 - Marissa Horvath, KORT-Select Medical, shared that they have a new DT who is serving Jefferson and Jennings Counties. All Kids Can therapy group has been acquired by KORT-Select Medical. All of the therapy staff had to be re-enrolled into the EI Hub as staff of KORT-Select Medical in order to continue serving families through First Steps, but that process is complete and everything is going smoothly.
 - Training Opportunities –
 - Becky Haymond shared more information about the upcoming Indiana’s Early Intervention Conference scheduled for June 8-9, 2023 in Bloomington. The SPOE is supporting the costs for local Service Coordinators, office staff, and Assessment contractors to attend if they are interested. The Conference is still welcoming sponsors and exhibitors. See meeting handout.
 - Sara Cummins, FUSE Inc., shared that the Inspiring Abilities Exo is coming up on March 4th. Heather Dane from the Division of Disability and Rehabilitation Services will be a special guest sharing information about the Waiver Re-design. Sara will provide an event flyer to the group after today’s meeting.
 - Statistics – Referrals, Evaluation, and IFSPs counts totals for 2022 were shared in the chart format developed by the SPOE office. Referrals appear to have rebounded fully year over year after a dip during COVID. Evaluation numbers have increased over time, and the evaluation numbers by county for 2022 have been calculated by the SPOE office and presented with the totals. Even more specific data about evaluations are being collected such as the number of cancellations, and the number held in person versus virtual. Becky read out the breakdown for December. Becky asked if there was any other data the group would like in the future and there was no comment.
 - Staffing Update – Two new Service Coordinators positions have been created due to the large caseloads in Dearborn and Madison Counties. Sharon Schwering and Audery Burgess, both introduced earlier, have been hired to fill those positions.
 - EI Hub –

Becky reported that the SPOE staff continue to use 100% of the areas of the EI Hub System that are running. Service Coordinators are doing intake with families, changes to IFSP, and exits within EI Hub. SPOE data entry staff enter initial and annual IFSP authorizations and do data checks. Marie Smith is the state’s new First Steps Data Manager. She will be looking at data within the EI Hub functions and reporting information needed. There are hopes for a future data reporting roll out. Missy reported that EI Hub is working well in the field with therapists. There is a sense that any new software features will also mean new software glitches to troubleshoot, but the Helpdesk is responsive. A return therapist loves the EI Hub. Becky reported that monthly meetings have resumed between the SPOE, PCG (EI Hub system vendor), and state staff to provide guidance and status updates. The SPOE’s next big wish is for improvements to the Parent Portal for cost participation statements. Some parents have been contacting the SPOE office with understandable anxiety and concern after inconsistent bills and confusing answers through the Helpdesk. These parent questions are being fielded by Whitney Austin at the SPOE office, who has been trying to get help from the state to resolve the issues. Whitney is away on a well-deserved vacation this week. Connie Young from the state shared at the meeting today that Marie Smith is very happy to have the help of our SPOE office staff to identify and explain data system use and issues. Becky shared that the SPOE office staff have been really impressed with Marie and it makes them hopeful that ongoing data issues will get resolved.

- Old Business
 - State Quality Review of Records – The final determination report for the state’s quality review of SPOE records has been received. A random sample of Cluster J records were reviewed for compliance with the federal standards. Cluster J, like all but one other cluster in the state, was out of compliance for Timely Start of Service, meaning that not all services written onto IFSP plans are starting within 30 days. The delay in services is largely due to provider shortages. Becky shared that the SPOE has asked Service Coordinators to track and report details about all instances of lack of providers for plans. The SPOE has shared appropriate details with provider agencies and Service Coordinators for brainstorming a variety of ways to offer alternate arrangements for meeting needs, such as consideration of all appropriate types of therapists to meet a need. Becky has developed a training video for Service Coordinator staff to understand the range of skills offered by the different kinds of therapists and helps staff brainstorm all options. Missy Myers of Collaborating for Kids therapy group says the video sounds awesome as her agency has some Developmental Therapists who sometimes go unutilized. Missy appreciates that Cluster J does a good job with agency consultation and flexible thinking to maximize therapy staff. Sara Cummins suggested that to address a parent’s point a view, can something similar to the video for Service Coordinators be created for parents. Doctors will say to a parent, “You need speech!”, so a parent may not understand that a Developmental Therapist could be effective at meeting a speech need. Christine Waters of the Bartholomew County Early Learning Coalition is glad to hear there is some positive momentum in addressing provider shortages. Maggie Matthews, who is a Service Coordinator, noted that therapists themselves can reassure families about the training, experience, and skills they have to meet various needs. Connie Young recognizes the team effort to get the message out so that doctors refer to early intervention in general, and not limit referral for one specific type of therapist such as Speech Therapy. Beth Ann Thompson of Kids Only therapy group mentioned that she has had push back from a Service Coordinator when offering a Developmental Therapist when a Speech Therapist has been requested. Becky Haymond that decisions about therapies are made by team consensus, so when there is disagreement there must be continuing conversations.
 - LPCC Officer Elections: Nominating – Anne Dolan gave an update that the nominating committee has met to identify candidates for Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary. Candidates will be contacted in advance of the May meeting to see if they would accept being nominated. Elections will happen during our May LPCC meeting. Please strongly consider accepting if you are contacted about being nominated. Any LPCC member can also volunteer themselves to be nominated. If anyone has questions, feel free to contact Anne at any time.

- New Business
 - SPOE Allocation Increase – The First Steps State office was able to issue an increase in the SPOE allocation granted by the State that occurred January 1, 2023 through the remainder of the grant year ending June 30, 2023. The additional dollars are being used by our SPOE to provide cost of living increases for staff wages and the addition of Service Coordinator positions to address high caseload sizes. Becky reported that giving raises was very exciting and that staff were very excited to receive them. The staff wage adjustment also allowed the SPOE to be more competitive in filling the new positions.
 - Provider Rate Increases – The First Steps State office was able to issue a significant increase in pay rates for therapy and other direct service providers. A comparison chart was shared with the adjusted rates showing the significant increases for all types of providers. Missy Myers reported that the rate increase is leading to recruitment. There has been additional interest from new providers about working for First Steps. Missy says, “Thank you!” to everyone who had any part of advocating for the provider rate increase.
 - State Budget Bill – The Indiana State legislature will be working to plan and adopt a two-year state budget during the current legislative session which includes the amount of future funding for the First Steps program. The ARC of Indiana promotes legislative advocacy education related to individuals with disabilities and actively issues updates about opportunities for legislative

advocacy. A recent example video was shared to the group during the meeting today:

<https://youtu.be/Byuq8Jyc-Kc>

- Request for Proposals for First Steps System Point of Entry (SPOE) via Event ID #10000073695 – Becky shared that our current SPOE (Aging and Community Services dba Thrive Alliance) submitted a proposal by the due date in December 2022 to continue serving as the SPOE for both Clusters H and Cluster J. The state asked for an oral presentation from the SPOE for this week which was completed. The state will notify applicants of awards in March 2023 for a contract date to begin July 1, 2023.

VI. Announcements and Updates

- Medicaid Unwinding from Public Health Emergency – Anne Dolan shared information about changes in April 2023 to the process for families to renew Medicaid coverage since the COVID-19 public health emergency has ended. A flyer for families was included in today's meeting handouts.
- Hands & Voices Coffee Connection 2/24/23 – see related meeting handout. Facilitator of the event also is fluent in Spanish.

VII. Adjournment

Missy Myers motioned to adjourn today's meeting. Sara Cummins seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:40am.

Attendees:

Amy Marine	CASY Child Care Resource and Referral
Anne Dolan	First Steps South East
Audery Burgess	First Steps South East
Barbara Sanders	First Steps Family Engagement Manager, FSSA
Becky Haymond	First Steps South East
Beth Anne Thompson	Kids Only, Inc.
Christine Waters	Bartholomew County Early Learning Coalition/ Ivy Tech
Connie Hempstead	Greensburg Community School Corporation
Connie Young	First Steps Outreach Manager, FSSA
Dakota Martin	First Steps South East
Daelynn Moore	
Ella Boyd	Arc of Indiana
Erin Bewley	First Steps South East
Inga Moore	Greensburg Community School Corporation
Jill Turner	King's Daughters' Health
Kim Amberger-Fledderman	Developmental Services, Inc.
Lorien Konietska	Kids Play Gym
Maggie Matthews	First Steps South East
Marissa Horvath	KORT Kids
Mikayla Cougill	First Steps South East
Missy Myers	Collaborating For Kids
Nate Landes	Pediplay
Sara Cummins	FUSE, Inc.
Sarah Bishop	First Steps South East
Sharon Schwering	First Steps South East
Tillie Allgood	South Central Community Action Program (SCCAP) Head Start