



Eric Holcomb, Governor
State of Indiana

Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services

First Steps

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Interagency Coordinated Council Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2023

10am to 12:30pm

ICC members in attendance: Mark Guyer – Chair, Cory Best – Co-chair, Laura Burklew, Representative Ed Clere, Erica Deathe, Robyn Duffy, Rachael Foster, Mariann Frigo, Alexandra Hall, Lindsay Holley, Kristi Linson, Jennifer Owens, Courtney Penn, Sarah Sailors, Angie Vaughn, Stacy Williams, Deanna Woodruff, Kristi Linson

ICC Members not in attendance: DJ Glander, Jason Berty, Tanya Merritt-Mulamba, Erica Miller, Charie Gibson, Megan Purcell

First Steps State Staff in Attendance: Christina Commons, David Brandon-Friedman, Katie Goodwell, Maggie McCall; Barbara Sanders, Marie-Therese Smith, Jessica Tomasino, Connie Young

Welcome and Introductions

Mark Guyer, ICC Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:07am.

He welcomed everyone to the meeting and attendance was taken. Members were asked to introduce themselves and what brings them to the table today.

A new video created in partnership between First Steps and marketing firm, CVR was played. This video was created in an effort to inform families of First Steps as well as to recruit new providers to the system. The video can be viewed at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=582378933759861>

Approval of September 2022 minutes (Vote on Approval)

The meeting minutes were shared and reviewed. Mark Guyer asked the council if anyone had any edits or additions to the January meeting minutes. Alexandra Hall and Robyn Duffy stated there were corrections needed as their names were spelled incorrectly. The final minutes will reflect these corrections. Mark asked for a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Cory Best moved to accept the minutes as corrected and Alexandra Hall seconded the motion. The council voted to accept the minutes as corrected by a vote:

16 Yes

0 No

0 Abstained

The motion was carried.



First Steps Update

Christina Commons, First Steps Director, provided the state update (see attached Power Point).

- The 2023 Indiana Early Intervention Conference in Bloomington June 8 and 9 2023 is sold out for in person attendance. Participants can still sign up for \$25 to attend the live stream on June 9 (Friday) and see the two keynote speakers and three breakout sessions.
- EI Hub launched 2 years ago to the date. The state team is currently testing over 40 items in the system. A few key items currently in the testing phase are the service coordination role, agency role, the new provider enrollment and management module, and canned reports including federal reporting indicators.
- Federal monitoring is set to begin February 2024 starting with a document request and review. The Indiana team was selected to participate in a topical working series around monitoring and improvement. Christina stated that she would be providing an update around the States preparation and that the ICC would be part of the engagement phase in August 2024.
- Personnel Update: The team is monitoring enrollment data to assist in determining if the newly implemented rate increase is improving program capacity. The system has 119 newly enrolled personnel as of 1/1/2023 which includes direct service providers, ED Team members, and service coordinators. Council members asked if this is improving access to services for children and families. Christina indicated that she is hearing anecdotally that fewer children and families are waiting for services due to newly enrolled personnel as well as current personnel serving more children.
- Christina shared a slide with the council illustrating the funding that First Steps received for SFY2022 (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022) to explain the variety of funding sources available to implement the First Steps system. She also explained why there was a discrepancy in the funding request between what the Council identified as needed for a rate increase and what was in the Governor's budget. Christina shared that public and private insurance recoupment has increased significantly. Due to this increase the funding gap is smaller thus less State money is required to sustain the recently implemented rate increase.
- The federal grant application is due 5-24-2023. Public comment will be 3/24/2023-5/23/2023. Christina outlined what the State's FFY23 funding considerations such as salaries for state staff, professional development system, child find and provider recruitment, and services.
- Jessica Tomasino, Assistant Director, announced that the state office was seeking stakeholders to participate in 3 engagement committees (State Systemic Improvement Plan, State Identified Measurable Result, and Infrastructure Improvement Plans). She asked for people to volunteer to be a part of a stakeholder engagement committee that will meet quarterly for a guided discussion around the data. Stakeholders should email Jessica indicating their interest. Jessica.Tomasino@fssa.in.gov
- Jessica provided an update on the data reported at the January ICC meeting around the State's Quality Review data submitted in the FFY21 Annual Performance Report. Many findings of noncompliance reported in the FFY2021 APR have been corrected and will be reported as closed in the FFY2022 APR which will be submitted in February 2024. Jessica clarified that the data reported within the APR is in arrears and we will continue to see

findings until there is correction of noncompliance. The corrections made in 2023 will be reported when the State completes their FFY23 APR in 2025.

Council discussion – Rate increase and noncompliance:

- Jennifer Owens, SPOE Director for Cluster F and I with Blue River Services, Inc., said that the increase in the SPOE contract allocations have led to increased starting salaries for the service coordinator position. She had 8 positions open for service coordinators and only one remains vacant. This will hopefully help with the 45-day timeline as caseload are being re-distributed to new staff. She stated it takes about 3 months to properly train a service coordinator before they can work independently. Stacy Williams with ProKids, Inc. also echoed what Jennifer Owens stated about getting new staff in the door at the SPOE office.
- Mariann Frigo, agency director at Jacob’s Ladder, said the additional money will help get providers and SC in the door but physician signature has been an issue. Office staff at physician offices is also an issue so getting signatures timely to complete the 30 days remains difficult.
- Christina stated that the Physician’s Health Summary (PHS) has been change to Medical Health Summary (MHS) to allow for a variety of medical office staff to sign rather than just the physician. MHS was also amended to include “evaluate and treat”. She indicated she is aware of this barrier and the office has reached out for national TA around this issue.

Sub-Committee Summary: Each subcommittee met for 30 minutes and reported the following:

Advocacy

Stacy Williams stated the fiscal information that was shared in the state update was very helpful. The committee would like to circle back with legislators and inform them how the program has utilized the additional funding. The sub-committee suggests bringing families to tell legislators how First Steps has helped their family. It is difficult to keep the momentum going but it is important to continue with advocacy.

Fiscal

Mark Guyer reported that families are the most important part of First Steps; therefore, we need to explain to families about their cost share. Families need to understand their Explanation of Benefits (EOB). The system needs to train SCs and providers on how to speak to any questions families have around cost share and EOB. The committee brainstormed ways to better support service coordinators in learning and sharing family cost participation information with families at various stages of their child’s enrollment in the program.

Professional Development

Leann Faust reported the committee is researching child assessment tools used in early intervention. The subcommittee has a list of tools other states are using and will identify the tools to take a deeper look and research how these tools might be utilized in the First Steps system. The subcommittee will develop workgroups and utilize a rubric created by Indiana University (IU) to determine which tool is best suited for Indiana.

Legislative Updates

Representative Clere reminded the Council that the Governor's budget is based on the recommendations from the rate study Public Consulting Group conducted in 2018. He suggested that the Council needs to talk about how the workforce needs have changed since 2018 due to the pandemic and inflation costs when advocating for the program.

Public Comment

- A parent of a child who received First Steps services asked if there was funding to help families with their co-pays. She stated that the cost her family incurred was significant.
 - Christina clarified that Family Cost Participation is within Indiana Code.

Adjourn

Mark Guyer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Cory Best seconded the motion and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 12:29pm.

The next meeting is May 10, 2023.

Minutes were respectfully submitted by Janet Ballard, ICC Staff Support