



## Compensatory Services

### **Question 1: What are compensatory services and when should they be offered?**

Compensatory services are services provided to the family to compensate for a lapse in services attributed to the First Steps system. Compensatory services should be offered:

- When the initial Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting date exceeds the 45 day timeline due to system (Service Coordinator or provider) delays.
- When the early intervention services cannot begin because there are no providers available to implement services.
- When the service provider has not made up missed services due to provider illness, vacation, or scheduling conflicts.
- When the annual IFSP meeting did not take place in a timely manner and services lapsed because providers did not have authorizations.
- When First Steps personnel fail to conduct the Transition meeting and referral to ECSE in a timely manner resulting in a delay of timely ECSE services, or a lapse in First Steps services for children with summer birthdays.

### **Question 2: What if children miss services due to illness or family scheduling conflicts?**

If children miss services scheduled on a specific day due to child or family illness, appointments, or family scheduling conflicts, compensatory services are not required to be offered. This is also true if the child receives services in a center and the center is closed on the day(s) the child is scheduled to receive services.

For example, if a child receives early intervention services at an agency and that agency is closed for Christmas vacation or other scheduled breaks, no compensatory services are required for services that were missed during that time. If a provider in these situations is willing and able to reschedule such services, they may, but are not obligated to do so. Families should be made aware that this is not an obligation under First Steps requirements.

It is important for service providers to keep complete and accurate records of when services are scheduled, and when/ why services were not provided. In addition, the parent should be kept informed if and when services missed because of SPOE or provider reasons will be made up.

In light of these issues, it is also important that providers have a set schedule for service delivery so that it is clear to all involved what day and time the child is to receive a specific service. Without this specificity, it is difficult to determine whether compensatory services are due, and consistency and communication are compromised. It is also important to show the frequency and intensity of the service on the IFSP in the smallest increment appropriate (e.g., per day, per week, per month). It is not appropriate to show the total units per year or per month if the time can be expressed in units per week or per day.

**Question 3: Do children referred late to First Steps receive compensatory services?**

If the child is almost three when referred to First Steps and the First Steps personnel address transition promptly, it is likely that no compensatory services will be owed by First Steps, even though the child may not be able to start ECSE services by his/her third birthday.

For late referrals or children referred to First Steps after age 2 ½, discussions about compensatory services will need to be based on a variety of factors. IFSP teams need to consider:

- Did the SPOE take prompt action in facilitating eligibility determination and the initial IFSP meeting?
- Did the SPOE take prompt action in making the referral to the school, with parent permission?
- Was ECSE invited to the initial IFSP meeting?
- Did ECSE attend the initial IFSP meeting?
- Did ECSE have adequate time to evaluate, determine eligibility, and develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) if the child is eligible?

Keep in mind ECSE is not required to conduct evaluations over the summer or during periods of scheduled school breaks. The school's timelines for making eligibility determination are outlined in the Part B Special Education Compliance Program Review Standards and Indicators <http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Compliance/StandardsManual/index.html>

**Question 4: How are compensatory services determined and authorized?**

The IFSP team will meet to determine what, if any, compensatory services are necessary based on the circumstances related to the individual child and family. Compensatory services should be documented in the IFSP and discussions should be summarized in case notes.

Compensatory First Steps services can only be authorized and reimbursed if they are provided by an enrolled First Steps provider.