



This guidance is to address those situations in which the Service Coordinator (SC) has not had success in locating a parent in order to schedule an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting or a First Steps provider has not had success in contacting families in order to schedule a home visit.

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has indicated it is not acceptable for states to establish policies that allow a child to be exited (i.e., inactivated) from an early intervention program unless the parent withdraws consent. The state must continue to provide evaluations, assessments, service coordination, IFSP development and meetings, and parental rights at no cost to the family, unless consent is withdrawn.

The following is an explanation of documenting contacts with families, scheduling an IFSP meeting without parent participation and holding an IFSP meeting to consider suspension of services.

I. Documenting contacts with families

Service Coordinators and service providers must document all dates and times of attempted contacts with families in case notes and progress notes, respectively. The following guidelines are suggested to maintain contact with families:

For Service Coordinators:

- Explain to families that regular contacts will be made by the SC to ensure that IFSP services are being delivered or to convene an IFSP meeting if changes need to be made.
- Maintain regular contact with families utilizing a variety of contacts with the family, including phone calls, letters, emails, or home visits, as appropriate. When making these contacts, SC should determine if the family is planning to move, planning to take a vacation, etc.
- Attempt to make contacts to schedule meetings well in advance, especially if the parent has been hard to reach (at minimum, 30 days prior to the required meeting date).
- Review provider progress notes on a regular basis. If a provider note indicates problems with service delivery, this could be indicative of the family's need to change the level of frequency or intensity of service. The SC should attempt to contact the family and schedule an inter-periodic IFSP review to discuss the possible need for change in service.

For Service Providers:

- Keep detailed documentation of contacts and attempted contacts with the family.
- Inform the SC immediately if there is a problem with the parent not keeping appointments, phone number is disconnected, the home is vacant, etc.

- Maintain monthly progress notes. Document the times and dates the services were provided in that month. For example, Sally was seen for 45 minutes 4 out of 4 times in December – 12/2, 12/9, 12/16, 12/23. OR Sam was seen for 60 minutes 3 out of 4 times in July – 7/7, 7/14 and 7/28. Sam’s mother cancelled one visit due to an illness.
- Do not cancel appointments for services unless absolutely necessary.

If the SC has difficulty locating or contacting the family, several steps need to occur:

- The SC conducts a variety of attempts to contact the family as soon as the SC is aware of difficulties in locating or contacting the family. The attempts must include at least two (2) phone calls and at least one (1) letter sent regular mail to the family’s last known address. Home visits and emails are helpful, but optional.
- The SC must keep detailed documentation (i.e., case notes) of contacts and attempted contacts as well as information from service providers about their contacts and attempted contacts with the family.
- The SC must continue to schedule and conduct all required IFSP meetings (e.g., 6-month review and Annual IFSP) for the duration of the time s/he is trying to contact the family. NOTE: Because the transition meeting can be delayed for parent/child reasons, the SC is not required to hold the transition meeting without the parent; however, the LEA must be notified of a potentially eligible child by providing directory information with the last known address for the family, even if contact with the parent has not been made.
- If the provider and SC are both unsuccessful in their attempts to contact the family, the SC should schedule an inter-periodic IFSP meeting to determine what services should continue through the IFSP.

II. Scheduling an IFSP meeting without parent participation

The SC must make **two attempts** to schedule the IFSP meeting with the family. Each attempt must include written meeting notification through the United States Postal Service (does not have to be certified letter). For each of the two attempts, the written meeting notification must be provided at least 10 calendar days prior to the meeting, unless the parent waives the 10 days and agrees to hold the meeting earlier, in which case the written meeting notification may be provided in less than 10 days, including the day of the meeting.

The SC may wish to schedule IFSP meetings for families with whom they have been unable to establish any contact at the SPOE office or another neutral site, so that if the parent does not attend after the second attempt, the other participants may proceed with the meeting.

III. Holding an IFSP meeting to consider suspension of services

If the family does not appear for the second scheduled meeting, the SC and other participants will proceed with the meeting. If the IFSP team decides to suspend the child’s authorizations for services (other than evaluations, assessments, service coordination, IFSP meetings), the SC must conduct the following steps:

- a. Complete a “Notice of Action – change in IFSP” that reflects the reason for the change (e.g., OT and PT services have been suspended until the family establishes contact with the SC).

- b. Mail the Notice of Action, Parental Rights Statement, and letter of explanation* to the family. The family must have 10 days prior notification of a change in service; therefore the SC must wait 10 days before making changes to services.
- c. Complete changes to the IFSP, after 10 days have passed, as necessary (e.g., address the status of outcomes, cancel authorizations, etc). Keep in mind service coordination is listed as a required service for all families with an IFSP, and this is documented with an authorization in the “services” section on the IFSP.
- d. Do not inactivate the child’s record.
- e. Continue to provide service coordination and attempt contacts [i.e., notification(s) of 6-month and annual IFSP meetings] with the family until child ages out, or parent withdraws from the program.
- f. Continue to conduct all required IFSP meetings (e.g., 6-month review and Annual IFSP) with the family until the child ages out, or parent withdraws from the program.
- g. Determine if the family has re-established contact at any time. If at the age of 3, the family has not re-established contact with the SC, the child’s record can be closed with the reason “unable to locate/contact.”

IV. Moved out of state

If it is clear that a family has moved out of state because:

- a. The family told the SC they were moving, AND the SC sent a letter to the new address and it was delivered, OR
- b. The SC sent a certified letter to the home and it was forwarded to a new address out of state,

then the SPOE Director and SC can review the documentation and inactivate the child due to “Moved out of state” because this documentation would be considered **“first-hand” information** that suggests the family has moved.

However, the SC may receive **“second-hand” information** that the family has moved from a provider, parent educator or other entity involved with the family. In this case, the SC would investigate the information to determine the family’s whereabouts using the guidance outlined above.

*Letter of Explanation (template) is attached.

[Insert Parent Name]
[Insert Address]
[Insert City, State, Zip]
[Insert Phone Number]



RE: Suspension of First Steps services for: ***[Insert child's name]***
DOB: ***[Insert child's DOB]***

DATE:

Dear ***[Parent name]***,

This letter is to inform you an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting was held on ***[DATE]*** to review and/or revise your child's IFSP. You were invited to attend, but did not respond to the attempts made to contact you; therefore, the meeting was held without your participation.

The enclosed Notice of Action explains the changes to IFSP services, to which you previously consented, that will occur ten days from the date of this letter unless you contact me by phone, email, or postal service at:

[INSERT SC PHONE NUMBER]
[INSERT SC EMAIL]
[INSERT SPOE ADDRESS]

Service coordination (including periodic and annual IFSP meetings) will continue until your child reaches the age of 3 years unless you contact me to withdraw from First Steps. Please contact me to discuss your participation in First Steps.

A copy of the updated IFSP will be mailed to you when your current address is provided.

Sincerely,

[INSERT SC NAME]
Service Coordinator

Enclosure: Notice of Action
Parental Rights Statement