

# PARENT CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for First Steps Families ♦ Summer 2009

## Did You Know? First Steps Families' Rights Under IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides certain rights to families participating in the First Steps program. Briefly summarized, they are as follows:

**An Evaluation:** In order to participate in First Steps, your child must meet eligibility criteria. This is determined through an evaluation conducted within 45 days of the referral. The evaluation is completed by a team of two or more qualified professionals who review your child's medical history and developmental status.

**An Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP):** If your child is determined to be eligible, an initial IFSP meeting must be held within 45 days of referral. At this meeting, you will help develop a plan for early intervention services (including your family's concerns, priorities and resources for your child). The IFSP is binding for one year and is reviewed at least every six months.

**Consent:** Informed, written consent must be obtained before conducting an initial evaluation or before beginning early intervention services. You may choose to withhold consent for one service without jeopardizing other services.

**Privacy:** The law provides for the protection of your privacy at all times. Unless an exception applies under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, your written consent must be obtained before personally identifiable information is disclosed to others.

**Destruction of Records:** Three years after your child leaves First Steps and is no longer receiving early intervention services, First Steps will notify you that the personally identifiable information and records collected regarding your child will be destroyed unless you request them in writing.

**Prior Notice:** You must receive written notice before any changes are made concerning the identification, evaluation or placement of your

child, or concerning the provision of early intervention services to your child and your family. This notice should be written in an understandable manner and (if possible) in the language that is native to the family.

**Review Records:** You have the right to request an opportunity to review records relating to your child and family. The request should be granted without unnecessary delay and no later than 45 days.

**Due Process Hearing:** Families and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have the right to resolve, through a procedure called due process, concerns about your child's eligibility, evaluation, placement and/or the provision of early intervention services. You and DESE also have the opportunity to try and resolve concerns through mediation. Mediation is voluntary and does not delay your right to a hearing.

**Child Complaints:** A child complaint can be filed with DESE if an individual or organization thinks the public agency has violated any state or federal regulation relating to First Steps (Part C of IDEA). The signed, written complaint must explain the facts on which the statement is based. The complaint will be investigated and resolved within 60 days; a written decision will be sent to the party filing the complaint.

**Educational Surrogate Services:** If a child is a ward of the state or does not have a parent who can be identified or located, DESE will assign an educational surrogate to represent the child in all necessary educational matters.

*(A complete explanation of parental rights can be found at <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/Parentalrightspg2.html>.)*





# A Missouri Family's Story

By Susan of Springfield, Mo.

When our daughter was born with cerebral palsy and went into the First Steps program, our life was pretty stressed and seemed out of control. Lots of different people were coming into the home, lots of doctors appointments were scheduled – there was a lot going on! The last thing I wanted to do was to think about what I needed to know about the process and our rights. But, I was lucky enough to be able to attend a conference. I met other parents there and learned that there's a lot going on in the disability world. Another parent said to me that they had made the decision to let other people be out in front advocating, going to trainings and becoming educated on how everything is supposed to work for children with disabilities. Originally I thought that sounded pretty good, but I soon realized that our family wanted to be out there learning and doing.

It has been helpful to me to become as educated as I can on how First Steps works and on what my parental rights are. There are many good Web sites and publications, and lots of information exists out there on the Internet. Remember that the more you learn, the more you'll understand and be able to advocate for your child.

## Just For Fun

# GREEN SLIME TIME!

### YOU WILL NEED:

- 1 teaspoon Metamucil or psyllium husks (pronounced *silly-um*)
- 1 cup water
- Jar with lid
- Green food coloring
- Microwave-safe container

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Combine the Metamucil/psyllium husks and water in a jar. Tightly seal the jar, and shake for several minutes.
2. Pour the mixture into a microwave-safe container, and stir in a few drops of green food coloring. Microwave on high for 3-5 minutes.
3. Watch the mixture carefully, and press *stop* if the liquid begins to ooze out of the container. Do not remove. Wait for 3 minutes, then microwave again for 5 more minutes.
4. Remove the container. When the slime has cooled, you can play with it. Store it in a resealable plastic bag.
5. Don't stop once you have made the slime. Investigate the effect of temperature on the slime (warm it by rubbing it with your hands, cool it by placing it in the fridge), how far it can stretch before breaking, and what happens if you change the amount of water or psyllium husks used.
6. Watch your kids as they play, and don't eat the slime!

*Activity reprinted from "Fun With Science," a publication of the Government of Western Australia, Department of Education and Training*



Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
 Division of Special Education  
 205 Jefferson St., P.O. Box 480  
 Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480

Phone: (866) 583-2392  
 Web site: <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced>  
 (click on First Steps)

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to Department programs may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Title IX Coordinator, 5th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-751-4212.

The Division's services are primarily supported by federal funds appropriated in accordance with provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.