

First Steps Exit Family Survey

Monthly Summary

August 1, 2004-January 1, 2009

Total surveys sent: 10479

Total surveys returned: 2959

1. How old is your child?						
37 (1.25%) < one year	109 (3.68%) 1 yr - < 2 yrs	210 (7.10%) 2 yrs - < 3 yrs	2,580 (87.19%) 3 years and over	23 (0.78%) Did not answer		

2. When did your child begin receiving First Steps services?						
828 (27.98%) < one year	697 (23.56%) 1 yr - < 2 yrs	1,297 (43.83%) 2 yrs - < 3 yrs	53 (1.79%) 3 years and over	84 (2.84%) Did not answer		

The next items ask how strongly participants agree or disagree with statements about their experience with First Steps.

4. It was easy to learn about First Steps, to find out if my child was eligible for services, and to obtain the early intervention services that were needed for my child and family.						
1,014 (34.60%) Strongly Agree	1,375 (46.91%) Agree	369 (12.59%) Disagree	152 (5.19%) Strongly Disagree	21 (0.72%) I Do Not Know	11 Does Not Apply	16 Did not answer

5. The results of my child's assessments or evaluations were explained to me in ways I understood.						
1,544 (52.41%) Strongly Agree	1,342 (45.55%) Agree	46 (1.56%) Disagree	8 (0.27%) Strongly Disagree	6 (0.20%) I Do Not Know	8 Does Not Apply	3 Did not answer

6. I feel the service coordinator and early intervention providers listened to me and respected my opinions and participation.						
1,797 (61.23%) Strongly Agree	1,017 (34.65%) Agree	68 (2.32%) Disagree	45 (1.53%) Strongly Disagree	8 (0.27%) I Do Not Know	2 Does Not Apply	19 Did not answer

7. I received information and explanations about our family's legal rights such as child complaints, due process and procedural safeguards.						
1,563 (53.66%) Strongly Agree	1,135 (38.96%) Agree	96 (3.30%) Disagree	23 (0.79%) Strongly Disagree	96 (3.30%) I Do Not Know	35 Does Not Apply	9 Did not answer

8. In creating our Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), I was asked about areas where our family felt things were fine and where we felt we needed help.						
1,845 (62.80%) Strongly Agree	1,035 (35.23%) Agree	33 (1.12%) Disagree	9 (0.31%) Strongly Disagree	16 (0.54%) I Do Not Know	12 Does Not Apply	8 Did not answer

9. Our family routinely used the help of our service coordinator.						
884 (31.04%) Strongly Agree	1,284 (45.08%) Agree	509 (17.87%) Disagree	143 (5.02%) Strongly Disagree	28 (0.98%) I Do Not Know	84 Does Not Apply	17 Did not answer

10. Our service coordinator helped my family, in a timely manner, get the services we needed.						
1,475 (50.70%) Strongly Agree	1,104 (37.95%) Agree	182 (6.26%) Disagree	127 (4.37%) Strongly Disagree	21 (0.72%) I Do Not Know	33 Does Not Apply	13 Did not answer

11. As a result of my participation in First Steps, I have gained skills to work with professionals and advocate for what my child needs.						
1,371 (48.12%) Strongly Agree	1,197 (42.01%) Agree	164 (5.76%) Disagree	61 (2.14%) Strongly Disagree	56 (1.97%) I Do Not Know	88 Does Not Apply	14 Did not answer

12. We received all of the services listed in our Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).						
1,626 (55.70%) Strongly Agree	1,062 (36.38%) Agree	103 (3.53%) Disagree	45 (1.54%) Strongly Disagree	83 (2.84%) I Do Not Know	21 Does Not Apply	13 Did not answer

13. The people who worked with my child knew a lot about my child's disability and how to work with him/her.						
1,644 (56.30%) Strongly Agree	1,039 (35.58%) Agree	159 (5.45%) Disagree	53 (1.82%) Strongly Disagree	25 (0.86%) I Do Not Know	25 Does Not Apply	10 Did not answer
14. I received information and explanations about the services my child needed and believe the services my child and family received were appropriate.						
1,603 (54.69%) Strongly Agree	1,149 (39.20%) Agree	114 (3.89%) Disagree	44 (1.50%) Strongly Disagree	21 (0.72%) I Do Not Know	13 Does Not Apply	8 Did not answer
15. First Steps helped my family and my child's caregivers increase our confidence and competence.						
1,506 (52.35%) Strongly Agree	1,158 (40.25%) Agree	140 (4.87%) Disagree	43 (1.49%) Strongly Disagree	30 (1.04%) I Do Not Know	66 Does Not Apply	10 Did not answer
16. The early intervention services in my family's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) had a significant impact in my child's development.						
1,778 (61.14%) Strongly Agree	891 (30.64%) Agree	134 (4.61%) Disagree	46 (1.58%) Strongly Disagree	59 (2.03%) I Do Not Know	33 Does Not Apply	14 Did not answer
17. The information and help my family received through First Steps made our family better off.						
1,740 (60.12%) Strongly Agree	944 (32.62%) Agree	121 (4.18%) Disagree	38 (1.31%) Strongly Disagree	51 (1.76%) I Do Not Know	37 Does Not Apply	21 Did not answer
18. The ability of our family to work and play together as a family is pretty normal even though we have a child with special needs.						
1,648 (60.92%) Strongly Agree	916 (33.86%) Agree	98 (3.62%) Disagree	22 (0.81%) Strongly Disagree	21 (0.78%) I Do Not Know	227 Does Not Apply	21 Did not answer
19. First Steps has enhanced/increased my child's participation in family and community activities.						
1,364 (49.67%) Strongly Agree	1,031 (37.55%) Agree	224 (8.16%) Disagree	46 (1.68%) Strongly Disagree	81 (2.95%) I Do Not Know	189 Does Not Apply	17 Did not answer

Questions Relating to Transitioning Out of First Steps

1. My service coordinator informed our family about the transition process and options available for our child.						
1,466 (51.66%) Strongly Agree	1,128 (39.75%) Agree	149 (5.25%) Disagree	71 (2.50%) Strongly Disagree	24 (0.85%) I Do Not Know	96 Does Not Apply	24 Did not answer
2. The information provided helped me understand the transition process.						
1,317 (46.99%) Strongly Agree	1,230 (43.88%) Agree	164 (5.85%) Disagree	59 (2.10%) Strongly Disagree	33 (1.18%) I Do Not Know	130 Does Not Apply	26 Did not answer
3. It was easy to learn about First Steps, to find out if my child was eligible for services, and to obtain the early intervention services that were needed for my child and family.						
1,237 (48.85%) Strongly Agree	965 (38.11%) Agree	181 (7.15%) Disagree	104 (4.11%) Strongly Disagree	45 (1.78%) I Do Not Know	376 Does Not Apply	39 Did not answer

Questions Relating to Experiences After Leaving First Steps

1. Is your child eligible for early childhood special education (ECSE) services through your local school district under Part B of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?		
2,090 (70.63%) Yes (continue on to question #2)	564 (19.06%) No (skip to question #7)	106 (3.58%) I do not know (continue to question #2)
2. Is your child receiving ECSE services?		
1,941 (65.60%) Yes (continue on to question #3)	408 (13.79%) No (skip to question #7)	1 (0.03%) I do not know (continue to question #2)

3. In creating our child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), I was asked about areas where our family thought things were fine and where my child and family needed help.						
1,089 (51.47%) Strongly Agree	911 (43.05%) Agree	69 (3.26%) Disagree	22 (1.04%) Strongly Disagree	25 (1.18%) I Do Not Know	64 Does Not Apply	586 Did not answer
4. The special education services our child currently receives are appropriate to meet our child's needs.						
1,087 (52.46%) Strongly Agree	748 (36.10%) Agree	142 (6.85%) Disagree	52 (2.51%) Strongly Disagree	43 (2.08%) I Do Not Know	108 Does Not Apply	591 Did not answer
5. We are receiving all of the services listed in the IEP.						
1,096 (53.39%) Strongly Agree	781 (38.04%) Agree	65 (3.17%) Disagree	25 (1.22%) Strongly Disagree	86 (4.19%) I Do Not Know	118 Does Not Apply	602 Did not answer
6. Special education services are helping our family improve our child's development.						
1,234 (60.20%) Strongly Agree	702 (34.24%) Agree	57 (2.78%) Disagree	24 (1.17%) Strongly Disagree	33 (1.61%) I Do Not Know	122 Does Not Apply	601 Did not answer
7. Our family is accessing other community services and resources such as Parents as Teachers, Head Start or child care to support our family and our child.						
1,038 (43.98%) Strongly Agree	931 (39.45%) Agree	282 (11.95%) Disagree	66 (2.80%) Strongly Disagree	43 (1.82%) I Do Not Know	449 Does Not Apply	140 Did not answer

Questions Related to Community Resources

What community resources were you made aware of through First Steps?

(Question added for February 1, 2006 mailing)

509 (27.26%)	Parent support groups	221 (11.84%)	SSI	239 (12.80%)	Childcare services
267 (14.30%)	DSS	277 (14.84%)	DMH regional centers	168 (9.00%)	Co Health Services (WIC)
110 (5.89%)	DHSS	235 (12.59%)	Medical services	179 (9.59%)	Transportation services
207 (11.09%)	Library	23 (1.23%)	CPD	53 (2.84%)	Chrch/Relig. facility
				95 (5.09%)	Service organization
				183 (9.80%)	Other

621 (33.26%)	*Chose more than one resource
718 (38.46%)	*Chose no resources or N/A
56 (3.00%)	*Chose no Ethnic/Race group

Question Related to Race/Ethnicity

What is your race/ethnicity?

(Question added for February 1, 2006 mailing)

1,581 (84.68%)	White
139 (7.45%)	Black/African-American
34 (1.82%)	Hispanic/Latino
37 (1.98%)	Asian/Pacific Islander
19 (1.02%)	American Indian/Alaskan Native
56 (3.00%)	No Response

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August 1, 2004 through January 1, 2009

Note: Comments are typed as written on the surveys with the exception of the correction of most misspellings. Names and other personally identifiable information of children, families and providers have been redacted.

I can't express in words how First Steps has helped my child. This program is very beneficial not only to the children, but the parents as well. Please see the attached letter. Thank you.

August 29, 2005

Ms. Melodie A. Friedebach
Assistant Commissioner
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
PO Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480

Dear Ms. Friedebach,

Thank you for the survey regarding the First Steps program. Although you asked for comments regarding the program, I thought this letter written in February, 2005 would be the best way to describe my feelings on how the program has helped us.

Governor Blunt, I have a few questions for you. What hopes and dreams do you have for your children? Do you wonder what college they will they go to? What will they be when they grow up? When will they get married and have children of their own?

Oh, the hopes and dreams for people with children without genetic or health problems. My hopes and dreams are a little different. My hopes and dreams started with would he talk, would he walk and now at will he stay age appropriate. We don't venture much further down the time path than that. I live in a different world than you do.

I know the Missouri First Steps program works because I used it. My son has a genetic disorder. The first diagnosis was a horrible disorder called Rubinstein-Tabias. Our son was six months old at the time. To put this mildly, this was very hard news to receive. Our 'best case' scenario was hoping one day he could live in a halfway house for the disabled. There is no treatment or cure for this genetic syndrome.

We were told by his geneticist, his geneticist counselor and his physician early intervention was key. The first three years are critical. My husband and I thought, "What do we do?" We were told about a program called First Steps. They provide screening and services for people in our situation. At six months he was evaluated for the first time for cognitive, gross and fine motor skills. We had a wonderful therapist. She worked with our son and after one year he was age appropriate. He graduated from physical therapy. We are one of the lucky ones. She stated that it is not very often that she is able to release a child before he moves into the next stage of the program, Bright Beginnings, at age three. He was evaluated every six months to make sure he was age appropriate. At a year and a half, back we went to the geneticist. A new year; a new diagnosis. Now he doesn't have Rubinstein-Tabias but rather Blepharophthalmosis. Not as grim an outcome as the first diagnosis but, still not a shiny picture. He was evaluated again by First Steps and now he was in need of speech therapy. Once again we had wonderful therapists for speech therapy. He is still receiving speech therapy and will turn three at the end of this month. He has been tested by the next step to help these children, Bright Beginnings, and he will qualify for speech in that program as well.

We are happy to report that he is now in a Montessori program and doing fine integrating with the other children. We believe part of that was due to First Steps. Once again, we are one of the lucky ones. Please do not cut this program.

Not only has he been saved from trying to catch up later in life but also the ridicule of being different at a very young age when the mind and child are so fragile. The Kansas City Star stated that the funds are being cut to fund schools. Who do you think gets these children after age three? The answer is the public school districts and a program called Bright Beginnings. Maybe I should not mention it, for fear of it being cut as well. Would taxpayers rather spend the money up front to help challenged children or later when, because of the lack of early support, they require more assistance?

The problem with use of private insurance is that insurance currently covers disabilities from accidents not from genetic defects. I know this first hand since, prior to finding First Steps, I had spoken with our private insurer. I thought surely it must be covered. I found out quickly that it is not.

Most, if not all, of these children have struggled since birth fighting the odds. Now they have one more obstacle. These children cannot help the way they are. By eliminating this program you are saying they do not deserve help.

Governor Blunt says, "Missouri taxpayers can't afford the program". Well, guess what? I am a Missouri tax payer and I say we cannot afford not having this program. They are my tax dollars and I should say where they go. My vote is here.

This is a wonderful program and I hope others continue to receive the benefits and services it provides. Thank you again for asking and for listening.

We learned about First Steps from the hospital NICU when our son was born prematurely and diagnosed with ACC. This was critical, as I do not know where we would have heard about it later. The therapists that came to our house made a point to learn about ACC if they hadn't worked with it before. I think only the occupational therapist had. Having triplets, it was also very nice having the services performed at our home. It may have not been possible otherwise. By watching the therapists, we gained a lot of insights on how to help with our sons' development that we wouldn't have known otherwise. I wish our service coordinator was more involved. I had to initiate most of the changes by calling her including learning about the transition to the preschool. To hold the periodic review meetings were too formal and too far apart. I would rather have had more frequent phone contacts. I also think these meetings (and the preparation for them) was time that the service providers got paid for that wasn't necessary. Any changes that were need to the service had already been discussed during a regular appointment and could easily be approved or disapproved with just a phone call. Generally, I really believe the First Steps program was a big help to our sons and our family. The people involved were friendly and seemed to genuinely care about our sons' progress. I do think there is room for improvement in the administration of it.

More communication is required from representatives of the First Steps program with families that require the services. It would be helpful if there were documents complete with up to date information on the First Steps program. Response time of service coordinators is poor; most likely due to workload. It would be beneficial if all school districts followed the state in benefits for the children eligible for First Steps and IEP program. The school district does not allow some therapy, strategies or methodologies which are available to families with children in the IFSP program according to state law.

The First Steps program was a tremendous asset to our family at a very difficult time. It's never easy to find that a child of yours is having problems. What a relief to have people to turn to for help and advice. The therapists we used were very knowledgeable and helpful. They gave us a good foundation so that my child could make a very smooth transition. He is making excellent progress thanks to the early intervention of First Steps. What a wonderful program.

My daughter and I were very satisfied with First Steps. If it was not for them, my daughter would not be where she is today.

First Steps is a great program. It was a great help for my daughter. Thank you.

We are extremely grateful for the services we were and are being provided. First Steps is a great program and we believe the services we've received have made a huge difference in our son's development. We are fortunate to have this program in our state!

Great program. Blunt has done damage that we will all eventually pay for when special needs children go to school and require more service than they would if they had received adequate early intervention.

For families who move to Missouri, there needs to be better communication about the overall program, all potential resources, and how to best access those resources. The websites are somewhat helpful but there could be better links. Often we felt like we had to ask the questions to obtain any information, which is very difficult when you are not familiar with programs, guidelines, restrictions, etc. It's imperative to have service coordinators who are very familiar with the many resources and how to access them. Since the restructuring of service coordinator last July, our response time with our service coordinator has decreased due to nearly doubling her caseload. Our child received all the therapies he needed through the First Steps program. However, once our child turned three years old, his current IFSP doesn't include early intervention, namely ABA, therapy, because the Ft. Zumwalt School District refuses to name any specific teaching strategies or methodologies in the IFSP. Many therapists and teachers are not familiar with ABA therapy and how to implement it. There are specific individuals in our school district who try to use a cookie cutter approach and just look at the bottom line (i.e., how much money is saved to the school district) instead of advocating what is appropriate and needed.

The area intake coordinator is overwhelmed with the number of kids to question about services. We had several delays from the initial phone call to actually starting services. Make up times of services was included in our action plan. We received language services and it has been very helpful for our child and the whole family.

We are so pleased with the ease and excellent level of support we received with First Steps. The early intervention really helped our child. She has been out of the program for some time now and is actually thriving in a large part thanks to First Steps. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

First Steps greatly benefited my child. She was watched closely which helped her advance as much as possible.

Therapy scheduling has been difficult due to doctor's visits, tests, lab, hospital visits, etc. and seizure activity. I hope that things smooth out soon.

Because of the early intervention our child received, she is thriving as a healthy two year old!

Everyone seemed to go the extra mile for my family and made everything much more comforting, and gave me a bunch of knowledge about my child. Everyone was great! Very satisfied. Thank you.

Our service coordinator did VERY little. She charged two minute phone calls as "meetings". Our service provider (speech therapist) was wonderful.

Please make sure to support this wonderful program. My insurance would not have paid for the services my child needed and were recommended by Children's Hospital.

Our service coordinator was excellent, very pleasant to meet with. I loved all of our child's therapists. The physical therapist usually ran late. Sometimes she didn't show up. But, when she was here, I couldn't ask to have anyone that loved our child more than she did. Our special instruction person was so informative and excellent for my child and me both! I really miss all of them and our child still remembers them! Thanks so much

The First Steps program benefited our son as well as our entire family. Having trained therapists working with us really gave our son the help he needed. The First Steps program is so valuable and the benefits are great.

We've not heard about setting up classes for this fall. Based on these questions, I'm guessing that she is no longer eligible for services.

I am an educator and learned about First Steps from a colleague. I had expressed concerns about my child to my Parents As Teachers educator more than once but had not been told about the program. I feel that the program should have been more visible as an early intervention possibility.

The speech therapist did wonders for our son for the six months that she worked with him. He went from saying no words to saying 50-75 words, plus two or three words together. We were very thankful for this help. Not convinced that the occupational therapy helped a lot. The occupational therapist was actually an assistant occupational therapist. She was nice and pleasant, but our son didn't progress very much in the six months she worked with him. We loved our Parents As Teachers person. She's been with us since birth and has been a great source of information and a good sounding board. We are so thankful for her!

My child was not going to be eligible for SSD so I didn't go through the transition process.

It was so very helpful and understanding. She is doing very well and is very helpful and understands what we say. Thanks. We are in Parents As Teachers and Story Bus.

I became aware of First Steps through a friend employed by Special School District. Also, it was mentioned through the Parents As Teachers program I was involved in with my daughter. My concern is that if I had not had those connections, I'm not sure my daughter would have received those valuable services. In other words, I think First Steps needs to be more visible so that new mom's are aware of their options. Do you have outreach programs through area hospitals?

Missouri First Steps really helped my relationship with my daughter. After she worked on improving her speech we were able to get to know and understand each other so much better! Thank you so much for this!

I think the program is very effective and everyone I dealt with were easy to work with.

Because we were not familiar with First Steps, the initial process was confusing. I did not know what First Steps was, how it was paid for and what it did. I was very suspicious of the motives because I had never heard of them and did not continue the process until I spoke with my family doctor and she explained who and what First Steps was about. Maybe I was just in denial about my son's disabilities. Once I understood, I have been very happy with his treatment and therapy.

Our daughter is involved in this program as relates to her speech only and will resume speech therapy during the coming school session.

I truly believe that First Steps was exactly what our son needed. When he first started he had absolutely no vocabulary and communication was extremely hard for him and for us. We noticed great improvements within the first week! He was only in First Steps for six months before he turned 3, and within that time he really blossomed. I know it was because of the wonderful therapists he had. They gave us some great/helpful ideas on how to work with our son. I can't describe how incredible it is to have our son be able to talk and communicate with us now. I can't thank First Steps enough for giving time, knowledge and patience. My family is truly blessed because of it. Thank you!

My son has come such a long way from being in the program and I greatly appreciate everything.

Our child doesn't get enough speech therapy, which was brought to everyone's attention. However, it's not available to him. Also, we need assistance with his hearing aids.

First Steps is a very valuable program to children with disabilities as well as the parents. My son would not be who he is today without the services and the expertise and care we received from the providers. Where would we be without it? I owe so much to the program and everyone involved in my son's life.

I did not know about First Steps until my child was two and half years old so he only received about two months of services. He just needed to be in it longer. He is doing better and is in preschool now. We need to increase his speech. I feel they don't do enough therapy and that is the main reason he goes there.

First Steps was a god send for our son. He went from extremely disabled (non-verbal) to age appropriate in eleven months. I do not believe intervention would have been as successful if it hadn't been as early as his was. His speech/language pathologist was truly amazing. Our son recently started preschool with no diagnosis and you'd never know he's a First Steps graduate. We are so grateful!

This program has been very informative, helpful and encouraging to our family for my son's needs and helping him to live a better life. I hope this program stays around a long time to help others in the future.

Great program!

First Steps was the best program. My son could not talk prior to his involvement. Within months, he was caught up in vocabulary and now is continuing to work on certain sounds. We also benefited from occupational therapy due to some sensory integration problems. We love First Steps.

I believe early intervention is so important. I (we) can see such an improvement in our child's speech-social skills. Although there are improvements yet to made, we are seeing the gains and we are very pleased!

First Steps is absolutely necessary for families and their children that have developmental needs. If this program is eliminated, many children will suffer the consequences. Please help to ensure that this program remains for those many children that need it. I feel extremely lucky that my children were able to reap the great benefits of the First Steps program.

The therapist that came to our house was excellent. However, the process of keeping in contact with our "service coordinator" was a bit of a hassle and seemed unnecessary. Furthermore, I did not need to receive monthly statements identifying how much everyone was being paid. Was this just a reminder that, although the services were free to me, they had a cost? It was an unnecessary mail and paperwork expense.

First Steps intervention helped my son not need services beyond three years old.

Our service coordinator was very helpful in setting up services for our twins. However, he was an independent contractor for First Steps. When my boys were two and half years old, we were forced to use a First Steps coordinator. I'm not sure what her name was. She never met us and was not helpful at all with our services or our transition. Our first coordinator took care of everything prior to us getting reassigned. The First Steps services were wonderful and I hope they are not terminated for others that truly "need" services.

Great program.

I am very, very thankful for First Steps and the help my son received. Without the early intervention, I am not sure where he would be. I do wish that the school system would allow the family to be more a part of his development than it does. The communication breaks down and it is difficult to know what to work on in order to reinforce what he is learning during therapy. Sometimes I feel like there is an agenda other than what is simply best for our son.

Our son received speech therapy through First Steps and it gave him the confidence he needed to start talking. Without First Steps, I believe our child would have been developmentally behind and it would have created many more problems if we would have had to wait until he was three years old to get help. We would not be able to afford speech therapy on our own, and our health insurance would not cover it. Keep First Steps! It is vital, not optional.

I had a great experience with First Steps and it's nice to know that these resources are available to me in Missouri.

Our experience with the First Steps program has been pleasant, informative, constructive and, of course, has made an incredible improvement in our son's communication and social development. I am a little shady on the process that will follow after his transition time. But I'm sure I will, through the therapist and others, be informed (or reminded) as to what comes next. Thank you for this opportunity and we look forward to what comes next and for all that has already been provided for us.

We did access Parents As Teachers simultaneously with the First Steps program. The First Steps and Parents As Teachers are fabulous programs and offer the children a better chance in life! Please Governor Blunt, I voted for you and had your sign on my front lawn during the election. Please provide for children and get tough with Jessica's Law for Missouri to protect our children from predators!

Our son met all his goals and did not need any other services after First Steps. The best part of our program was our speech therapist. Her work and care for our son were extraordinary.

Wonderful program! My adopted girl from Kazakhstan really needed these services. Very professional help.

My son is like a different person! He has really "grown up" and made some nice progress. He is doing things we didn't know he would ever do and totally enjoying his school. Thanks First Steps.

I was very disappointed with the way things were handled and the teachers programs. It was very difficult to get my son signed up and then to get appointments made. The very few appointments that were made, several were no shows and the other few were cancelled. The teachers that did come out were very rude and hateful. I had gotten so fed up that I cancelled my son out of this service and would never recommend it to anyone. I thought this service was the biggest joke next to Parents As Teachers. Somebody needs to start a more professional program for children in need!

I filled out for our recent graduate of First Steps. I had one previous (Age 4 3/4 now) and one current (age six months). We are moving to St. Louis County as of September 4 to get better service for our special needs children (more therapists, choices, etc.) and better access to a School for the Blind.

The First Steps program is essential to any family with a child with special needs. I had no idea that this program existed or that my child needed speech therapy until my Parents As Teachers informed me. I believe this will help my child learn correctly on his spelling and speech and is a great benefit to him. I was devastated when I heard that our newly elected Governor Matt Blunt was going to cut this program and contacted my representative and senator accordingly.

My daughter is no longer in First Steps. She is in Head start. While she was in First Steps, it really helped us both. She is partially deaf in one ear and her right hip has trouble. She had physical therapy for one year. Thank you for your concern.

The transition from First Steps into the ECSE was very difficult. While in the First Steps program family is encouraged and expected to participate in hands on with child's therapy. ECSE discourages and prohibits family to be an active participant in the class. It is extremely difficult to completely turn your child over to the school. There should be some sort of transition period. Also, I attended meetings in order to have my child in extended school and continued therapy during the summer. We arrived at the school to find that the teacher appointed for extended school was not a special needs teacher and did not know sign language and no therapist showed up in order that my child would have therapy for the summer - which was very discouraging.

We had a super experience with the program. The only problem was keeping providers (therapists). They come and they go. Same thing with ECSE. Thanks for all you do!

I cannot say enough wonderful things about our speech therapist who worked with our son. In a word, "priceless!" She was caring, focused, motivated, sincere and very genuine. We miss her! Our son is in special services with the school district now. It's okay, but we miss her.

Our son was ten weeks premature and we met with our First Steps coordinator when he came home from the NICU, but he never needed any additional therapy or services. We appreciated that the option was available to us though.

Although our child has no disability (physically, emotionally or mentally), I was greatly appreciative of the services provided due to a premature delivery. I pray this service is never taken away.

I appreciate all the support we received through this program. Our speech therapist was wonderful to work with. I will continue to support this program. Each time our new Governor Matt Blunt wants to make cuts to this program, I'll voice my opinion! I also wish I had known of this program earlier in my son's life. We were told by our doctor that he was speech delayed, but we didn't know of this program until a neighbor referred me to it.

I really hope that cuts will not be made to this program. I have seen such an improvement in our son's language. Before First Steps, our son said maybe six words. Now he talks nonstop and we love it. The therapists that came into our home were so professional and caring to his needs and helped us as a family to help our son. Every step we had to take they showed us and gave us the tools we needed as a family. Words or actions could not show the program how our family is so grateful for everyone's help with our son. Without the help we don't know where we would be now. Thank you.

I think First Steps is a great program. Both of my children qualified for speech. They both received the help they needed to catch up with other children their age. Thanks for all of your help.

The only negative aspect of the First Steps program were our service coordinators. They were hard to reach at times and didn't supply us with all the information we needed. Also, in acquiring my son's last set of braces before his third birthday, I had to do a lot of leg work when the process was being held up due to a computer problem. There was a lot of "passing the buck" with the service coordinator, etc. BUT everything else has been awesome.

The First Steps program was absolutely vital to our needs. When our daughter was diagnosed with Angelman Syndrome, we did not know how to meet her needs completely. With the help of this program we are now much more confident.

If Blunt attacks the program again, I'll diligently work to replace him in 2008. I'm a life-long Republican! My daughter's neurologist believed she would never make it as far as she had. I think a large portion of this is due to First Steps which will translate into savings for the state in the future.

I don't know the date exactly but when I first went through the process we fell through the cracks and were forgotten about. This was when my son was two years old. It would have been nice to get the services for three months before he turned three. I'm sure he would have had a lot more progress. But we did have good progress for the three months we received services and I thought that the therapist was great.

The only problems we had were in regards to service coordinators. We had four different coordinators in the year and a half we were in the program. We also had three different speech therapists. Although they were all great, I understood that changes are unavoidable. But, without a consistent coordinator, I felt I was on my own to find therapists and answer my questions when they came up.

First Steps was a great help for our child! We are no longer receiving services.

I think the First Steps program was excellent. The therapist, the service coordinator and everyone else were very kind and understanding of our concerns and questions. I would recommend the program to a parent with a special needs child based on the great experience we've received from them. If it weren't for them, my son would have probably never started walking. Thanks so much!

Speech was the only thing my child had a problem with. Since First Steps, he is now testing at the right age group. Thank you for that!

Only after leaving First Steps did I truly realize how much we learned from our therapists. We were new parents so we would not have known how to help our child meet milestones in creative ways. My child would not be doing so well without this program. We are involved parents.

My only concern was that it was difficult to get my son into the program because he was borderline through many areas including speech and social interaction. We finally had to get a diagnosis from the neurologist to be accepted. However, our service coordinator was wonderful in walking us through the steps for acceptance. As a result of First Steps, my son has improved dramatically and we are very grateful to the state of Missouri for providing such services.

Great team. Great resources. Love the communication.

The First Steps program has made a world of difference in my daughter. Without it we would be two years behind instead of one year. They brought the services to me which was very important to me as daughter did not like clinical settings. My service coordinator was always available when I had a question. The people of Missouri are lucky to have this program. It would be a tragedy if they were to lose it.

First Steps was a critical part of our child's development. We are truly grateful for this program and wouldn't be where we are today if it weren't for early intervention. I know I am only one voice but we will advocate for keeping First Steps in the state's budget. We received occupational, physical and speech therapy, adaptive equipment (stroller and stander) and many other items - (bath chair, ball & switches) which have given our son more confidence and independence in every day activities as well as made it easier for mobility for us. First Steps must be kept important for it affects Missouri's future! These kids deserve every opportunity to make a difference in everyone's lives!

First Steps was a wonderful experience for all of us. I would highly recommend it to anyone. There is not one aspect of the program that I was disappointed with. Thanks.

First Steps was a wonderful program for our child who did beautifully with her therapies and improved by leaps and bounds. We are most thankful for the services you provide and hope Governor Blunt is unsuccessful in trying to end the program. That would be most grievous if there was no First Steps program.

Please continue First Steps. It greatly helped our child with his speech needs and he is now doing so well with his speech/language skills. Early intervention was key to his success.

If it was not for the First Steps program, we would not have been able to afford all the services that my child received and private insurance does not cover even DAFO's and hardly any physical or occupational therapy time but yet we make too much to qualify for anything else. My child is doing wonderful and I thank the First Steps program for helping keep up the great job. Our coordinator was excellent and always willing to answer questions or help any way she could. Thank you.

First Steps is a wonderful program! This is my second child to receive services. We could not have done it without First Steps. Thank you.

We are currently paying everything out of pocket because the ECSE in our district would not work with us. We filed a state complaint and the school was found in compliance. We are currently in the process of moving to Nixa, MO in order to give our son the education he needs to teach him with Autism. First Steps was invaluable to us and our child's progress. Insurance doesn't cover anything related to Autism and we were able to make tremendous progress with our son in a little over a year. We are currently private paying our First Steps providers because of their wonderful ability with our son. First Steps was absolutely invaluable and should not be cut!

First Steps is a wonderful program and has provided our son with exceptional services to assist in improving his speech and language. We couldn't be more pleased with the services he has received.

Without First Steps our son would not be where he is today. We owe everything to First Steps. Governor Blunt, please continue funding First Steps.

We had a wonderful First Steps experience and I can't imagine where my child would be developmentally now without the help we received. I hope this program is ALWAYS in existence for families that have special needs.

The first step program is wonderful and has helped us work and learn about our child with disabilities. Since leaving First Steps, we have been extremely disappointed. The special education program through the school has been a let down for us. When we had concerns we were not listened to and the therapists we have are not qualified for a child with multiple disabilities. They didn't even have equipment in the classroom for our child. Nothing to position him in or any cause and effect toys (since he is blind). We voiced our concerns to one of the coordinators but she didn't listen or help in any way. This is so frustrating because we had a wonderful experience with First Steps. First Steps was the best thing that happened to our family. We learned a lot of skills to help our child and help us voice our opinion concerning his rights.

Our child received physical therapy and it was well coordinated, well executed and very beneficial.

Thank you. My son is eating normally and behaves in all environments better than other children and I tell their parents about how you helped my son.

My son received speech services for six months. He was essentially non-verbal and within six months he was at or above average. I am a speech therapist and was not able to achieve much progress with my son as he thought of me as "mom" not "teacher". Although it took two evaluations to get services - It was the best thing that could have happened to him. The therapists and coordinators were exceptionally caring and professional. I would hate to think of what his communication skills would be like without this intervention. This is a very important service. Our entire family has benefited.

Without First Steps we would not have been able to afford all the therapy that our son needed. We were pleased with all our therapists and our service coordinator.

This is such a great program. I know there is talk of discontinuing funding for this program and that would be truly tragic! They helped us so much and although we no longer need their help, I personally know many who do. I know I would have been hard pressed to pay two private specialists to give the help we received. Thank you to all who contributed!

I am fortunate our family received services from First Steps. They helped me to get the ball rolling and guided me as to where and how to get my a diagnosis of Autism. The program got us involved with many other agencies. The county services played a very important role in helping my son and our family. We have a community of support that is invaluable to us and to many other families, as such I have also begun a letter writing campaign to Governor Blunt and other representatives so they will continue funding for this invaluable program and all other related agencies. Without the programs and funding for them to continue, my family and thousands of others will be devastated because of the lack of services. Thank you!

Way too much paperwork processed!

First Steps was a blessing for our child as he lagged in development due to a visual impairment. The only issue we initially had was a slow response from an intake coordinator. The loss of the First Steps program would be tragic. Improvement and enhancement would be great for families like ours. Anything else would send a political message that our state legislators and government do not understand the savings and results that early intervention adds up too.

This was an extremely positive experience for our family and our child. Our daughter benefited from speech therapy and loved our teacher.

Our family has changed along with our beautiful son. For all your help and sincerity, we have a young child who is extremely smart and such a happy child. Without First Steps, I don't know where I would be. Thank you.

I feel the program helped my child progress greatly but because she "slipped through the cracks" in the beginning, I think she was delayed even further and I feel she would have benefited even more had she been allowed to continue at the school. I feel she had no less of a delay than other children attending. Thank you.

Other than having a slow start, we had five weeks of compensatory services when our son turned three and everything else went smoothly. We were not part of the First Steps program for long, but continue with much support and guidance from the regional center.

Our child did qualify for special education services. He was tested in the spring and continued speech therapy all summer. He tested out of his one IEP goal after two weeks. Thanks First Steps!

Q5: Physical therapy is not being received at this time. It is in the IEP. However, that is okay with parents.

I believe early intervention of First Steps helped tremendously. Our daughter will turn four next month. Even with Down's Syndrome, we have experienced very few delays and her speech is improving daily. Thank you to First Steps and the therapists.

I liked my service coordinator. She is so good with kids. She has patience with them. So I hope she stays on forever.

We really like our service coordinator. She was so good with the kids and they liked her so well. I would have her again if I was having another child but I am not. So I will tell someone else to ask for her.

I would like to say that I don't know where I would be right now if First Steps was not around. They are the ones that have helped me and my family. My son is so much better off today because of First Steps.

It was very difficult to get started with the First Steps program. There were many phone calls and it was difficult to get a response. Once we finally got in the program, it has been wonderful. The results have been dramatic and well worth the initial aggravation.

Because of the First Steps program, I am hoping with all the hard work we have gone through that this will mature our son. I am hoping he will not be labeled as ADD or ADHD. If I did not have First Steps and other programs, I truly feel I would still be struggling with him. This program was a wonderful gift that has helped our child in so many ways.

I don't know what I would have done without First Steps. I hope that there will continue to be funding for such a wonderful program.

My daughter no longer has special needs. She is a three-year-old who is healthy and fit.

Our service coordinator was a great help. Lots was accomplished. She even worked with us while she was away on family vacation.

I truly do not know what I would have done without First Steps. My son has progressed so well. In a lot of ways I feel like First Steps gave me my son by helping him be the person he is. I want to thank First Steps and the people we worked with. A very thankful parent.

The only problem I had with First Steps program was the speech therapist. The speech therapist didn't really help my son. Since he has been going to pre-school, he has improved in his talking. He is saying at least two words at a time. The occupational therapy teacher that he had was excellent. She knew his weaknesses and strengths. She helped him with his weaknesses.

It took quite some time for me to get services started for my foster son after he was placed here, but once they finally started everything was great and he got regular services. The only real problem I had was getting physical therapy for my child and even after inquiring a couple of times we never received services even though there was a plan for services.

The First Steps program was very effective in helping our son communicate. There was great improvement in the five months we were able to use First Steps.

The service coordinator needs to be easily assessed. My child's coordinator could not be reached early. I sometimes called her and left messages at her office and cellular phone and she seldom called back or waited for a long time to respond. Once I had to call the Jefferson City office to ask if she was still our coordinator because she did not respond to my calls at all. She said in February 04 that she would arrange the transition meeting in March but since March I could not reach her and our meeting ended up in May. Other than that, all the therapists were good and I would like to say thank you to them.

I have felt confident in using the advice given by my therapists. I had no previous experience with special needs children and through our therapist and our doctors, have gained a lot of knowledge and confidence in my ability to make our lives as normal as possible to the point that I don't feel that my special needs child is any different in her abilities than the others.

The First Steps program has been a god send for us. They've done an outstanding job helping our child and our family. It is an invaluable program and worth every dollar the state of Missouri spends on it. I voted for Matt Blunt for Governor, but if he gets rid of this program, I will do everything I can to ensure that he will never again be re-elected. Unless you have a "special needs" child, you could never understand just how invaluable this program is. Go First Steps!

My daughter could talk but no one could understand her. I could barely understand her. First Steps started working with her and now we understand just about everything she says now. Thank you First Steps.

This program is excellent for children. It has helped my children very much. It was a great opportunity to meet people that could help both of my children. The only thing I would change is the age of qualifying children. I would make it until they were four or five due to the children getting used to working with the therapists and some places don't do extended in-home care when children need it. Thanks and you did a great job.

I question the experience of our speech therapist because I think more could have been done. Also, my son still needs speech therapy and cannot get it because none of the options worked for our family. We tried the head start program and that was just a horrible experience. Now my son gets nothing. I feel he has been "left behind". I also feel that we were treated unfairly because we were not a minority.

Completely changed my daughter. In one month my daughter changed into a mature little girl in speech and social abilities. If it wasn't for First Steps we wouldn't have known how to help our child. We thought she was a normal two year old. We were first time dumb parents. We had no idea how much help she needed and we only had one month for all the paperwork and evaluations to be completed. I had a wonderful experience with First Steps. I will always be in debt to the help we received.

Great program! We were very fortunate to have it when we needed it. It made a huge difference in our family. The therapist that worked with our son was very good.

This is a great program. All the educators gave us timely and appropriate information and guidance. They also showed genuine care and concern for my child. We feel very lucky to have been introduced and to be a part of this very important and needed program. Thank you.

He's going to start head start and Pre-K pretty soon. Thank you.

Our child had First Steps and we thought he would have to also receive ECSE services at the beginning. By the time First Steps was completed our child did not qualify for ECSE services because he was on target for his age. We had a very positive experience with First Steps. By the way, our child is a foster child.

The program is crucial to the kids of this state. I had never heard of the program until our son was fourteen months old. In the year and a half he was in the program, he received occupational, physical, speech, and sensory integration. He made great progress in all areas and eventually tested out of occupational therapy and SI. Our therapists were very knowledgeable and my son responded well to each one of them. I hate to think where he would have been without this program. He would never have walked or talked.

First Steps came into our life and helped us immensely when we found out our daughter had a hearing impairment. We were devastated, but the resources and services offered alleviated many worries. The people, service coordinator, etc. were great!

My child currently receives speech, occupational therapy and special education to enhance his motor planning problems. By all indications he is on target to enter a regular kindergarten at age five or six. He would not be doing this well in early childhood had he not had First Steps. Please save the program. It is vital to helping our young children learn and develop.

Q4: We would have never known if not for the local early childhood center.

Q9: Sometimes.

Question 4 (After leaving): I am told she needs occupational therapy and the school district says that they won't pay.

Once started, First Steps was great. Getting services started, however, took literally months.

We will be forever grateful for the services we received from First Steps. It was beneficial not only to our special needs child and our other three children but to us as parents.

First Steps program really helped out our daughter and family. We are so thankful for the program and the teachers.

Well, I'm just pretty glad that I have made the right decision as far as choosing you as her care giver. Thanks.

Our Parents as Teachers person advised we have our son evaluated. When he was at about 18 months he spoke no words, played without making any sounds or babble and showed fear of many things touching him. Thanks to speech therapy and occupational therapy we can now communicate and hold our son. Within a year I got a hug and was able to hold him without screaming. He continues to improve through the ECSE program at the district. I now have a loving little boy. Thank you.

The First Steps program was the greatest gift to our family. We had been struggling so much, yet did not realize the magnitude of our son's delays and disabilities and how these were impeding his development. My only complaint with First Steps was that it took four months for us to get through the intake process to begin receiving services. I do not want the Governor to take away or change this program at the expense of these children who so desperately need help. I will gladly accept a tax increase if it means giving these children the support they need. First Steps has been a life saver!

Our service coordinator was worried more about the money being spent on our child than the needs of our child. It was only after my four therapists protested, that we received ABA. She let us find an ABA therapist two months before his third birthday. In that two months our son reached more goals and accomplished more than the previous eight months. My husband and I even offered to pay out of pocket. We wonder now how much more we could have accomplished if we had help from our son's coordinator instead of her telling us just wait until he gets into school to get ABA. We feel that was an entire year lost.

First Steps was the best thing that ever happened to my family. I watched my son go from barely functioning to above average. I wish so badly I would of known about this program for my first son. First Steps can be the life changing/improving difference. My kids really miss the therapists and the therapy.

It was such a blessing!

We loved the program and miss our speech teacher and developmental therapist.

First Steps is a wonderful program. They helped so much. I wish I could get involved to help just like they helped me.

First Steps is a wonderful program. I believe it helps many children reach developmental goals that without First Steps they may not have been able to achieve. I was slightly displeased with our service coordinator. My daughter's speech therapist coordinated most of the transition process to our local school district, not the service coordinator.

At six months of age his doctor recommended therapy. As I recall, we were originally referred to a special services program for First Steps Services. It was a delay and they did nothing for five to six months. Then finally on one of my calls to them I was told they weren't going to be providing services at all. We were referred to a center for First Steps services. We then got the help that our little one so badly needed. Prior to First Steps, he drug himself everywhere. He could not sit without assistance. He could not crawl or walk. He learned to sit and crawl at approximately eighteen months and walked at two years. It looks like our child will always have some disabilities. First Steps has made a big difference in his life.

Comment for Question 4: Once we learned of First Steps and were able to make contact with the program, obtaining the services we needed was easy. However, the initial contact with the program was very frustrating! Prior to our first meeting, many calls were made that were NOT returned.

I have been obviously very happy with First Steps. It has helped my son so very much.

Our speech therapist did a wonderful job helping our son with speech development. Her observations led our son to occupational therapy for sensory integration therapy. This program really turned our son into a more "normal" child. He participates in programs at the area early childhood center and was able to be toilet trained at age three. Our family has greatly benefited from First Steps.

We loved the program and it is a very special/helpful program.

Our son was born premature and was in intensive care for four weeks. They had no connection with First Steps and were not able to give any help with finding out about the program. Every hospital should be knowledgeable about the program and letting parents with special needs children aware of such programs. The program has been a tremendous benefit for my child and he received excellent services.

First Steps was a gift from God for our son. It made a difference in his life and future.

It was very difficult to get started in this program and the therapists told us of all available therapy they felt was needed. I wish I could've found out about this earlier. Some of the therapists I feel take advantage of their billing hours. There was only one we felt truly billed for time on premises, not paperwork, etc. She is what truly honest people do to help out, do her job, for honest pay. Thank you.

We felt lost before utilizing the First Steps program. My son has improved greatly over the past year and a half. Everyone was so helpful and we loved our speech therapist. Thank you for all your help.

I feel that the therapies my child received while in First Steps helped her and made her more prepared for services through the school which are provided in our home due to compromised immune system. The First Steps coordinator did not do a good job with helping us or the transition period. I was the one that kept after the school district to get the services started again, which I understand she should not have gone without if everything was handled correctly. I have heard on television that they may do away with First Steps in our area because of budget cuts. We did not get Medicaid and could not afford these therapies without First Steps. I can't imagine how far behind she would be at age three if she didn't receive these services. Also, the therapists at the school are too busy with so many kids that they don't have the time to see the children more than once a week and there's no way to reschedule if school is out or the therapist or child is sick.

Our service coordinator was wonderful. This First Steps program has been a god send and our son has made significant improvement thanks to First Steps.

Our child barely qualified for any help after First Steps.

I think that our therapy could have been more effective. My son is now enrolled in the school district's speech therapy program and I have learned more in two sessions with his current therapist than I did in a year with our First Steps therapists. I think therapy should focus on the child and the family! More emphasis could be placed on training the parents to help their child. Thus, more progress would be made in the long run. Thank you!

First Steps helped our child with significant delayed development of gross motor skills. Their assistance was invaluable in getting our daughter caught up. First Steps personnel were extremely professional and knowledgeable while they helped us get through a difficult time. Thank you First Steps!

After transitioning to other therapists out of First Steps, we were informed/realized our daughter's First Steps therapists were not very informed regarding equipment for her. Not only did we have the wrong size walker (too big) but it was set up wrong. This concerns me because a physical therapist brought us the walker from another family, thinking it would be correct for our child and almost a year later, a separate physical therapist set it up for her incorrectly, and also didn't realize it was way too big. Four professionals saw this and none knew it wasn't right for her or how to fix it. This was a years worth of time and I can't help but wonder how much progress she could have made with the correct equipment, because she really took off once she got the correct size walker. Though all that worked with her were very nice and very professional in manner, I think the therapists should be somewhat familiar with equipment for children with special needs, especially since they were specializing in birth to three years of age. First Steps was great for our family. However, the physical therapists just were not on top of Cerebral Palsy care. Since then, we have learned so much from other providers and our own research that could have been done differently and possibly could have increased the positive outcomes we had. I think the care was good and the people were easy to work with but our daughter could have progressed further with the appropriate equipment and techniques.

I was very impressed to be able to pick our speech pathologist. She was wonderful and I could not say enough good things. The original service coordinator, I never heard from her after the first meeting. I know there was a reorganization of the program after which I met regularly with the new service coordinator. I was very happy that my son received services he so much needed. He is thriving now with continued services. I find it very sad to know now that with the reorganization my son would not have qualified since he was not "50% delayed in all areas", not just "overall" as he was. We have health insurance but, we could not get services because they called it "developmental". My husband and I both work full time but would not be able to afford \$120 per hour for special therapy.

My school does not have 3 year old preschool program. First Steps is a wonderful and needed program. It has helped our family and child tremendously. Thank you. We are putting our child in a private school to receive preschool and speech services.

Floor time was a waste of time. But the other ladies that worked with my son were amazing. Thank you for everything.

We had some wonderful therapists while in the First Steps program. Unfortunately, we also ran across some sub optional therapists. However, our service coordinator helped to remediate that problem and get new therapists. Some of the key therapists have been invaluable to our family. Our son does not receive school district services as the services they were offering would not meet his needs. My husband and I opted to save our time, energy and money for our son rather than trying to push the SD to provide proper services. So, we are now private paying for his therapy with some of our First Steps providers.

We loved the physical therapist coming to our house! It was the only way we could manage getting therapy.

Our child was able to enter into a preschool program for three year olds without requiring further assistance because of the help she received through First Steps. They were able to bring her up to age appropriate levels before she started her preschool program.

Thank you.

Service coordinator appeared for meetings and returned calls if I called her, otherwise, I didn't hear from her. We have training issues (staff not adequately trained to provide services in IEP). I think First Steps is a wonderful program. I believe my child didn't receive the full benefit of the program because he was two years and 3 months old when we were told about the program. First Steps did, however, provide us with some compensatory time. I believe had I known about First Steps and Parents as Teachers sooner, my child's progress would have been even further along. The therapist and therapy my child received through First Steps helped him and our family with his disability. Most of the advocating, planning, etc., that was done for our child was done by myself, the day care and the therapist-NOT the service coordinator. She did, however, show up for scheduled meetings. First Steps is the first and only resource for families with kids that have disabilities. I can't believe that funding and cuts were ever a consideration.

Missouri First Steps has helped my child a lot. She is talking more now than she ever has.

We felt services were exactly what we needed and made a big difference.

The First Steps program helped us tremendously. Our service coordinator was invaluable for her advocacy, referral services and because she did all the leg work so I had more time with my son. All areas were beneficial and has made a dramatic impact for my child and on my family. My child had more assistance, better services, stronger advocacy and thorough services with First Steps and IFSP than he is getting with ECSE and his IEP. Thanks for this program!

My grandson was extremely premature, therefore, very slow in progress. With the help of your dedicated teachers, he is now almost where he belongs and in some or most areas, ahead of schedule. My daughter was a drug user and was never around for his services, so First Steps didn't let him fall through the cracks, but worked with me to insure his proper attention. I can't thank everyone enough for their help through all of this. Without all of you, I don't know where we would be.

Good program. Should be continued for all that can use it in the future.

The early one-on-one intervention helped my child meet age appropriate skills and gain confidence in the areas that were worked on. Working in the home environment helped make my child feel at ease and work on needed skills. I credit this program for allowing my child to learn how to eat and talk with confidence.

Wonderful program which helped our son from having further more severe physical problems by early intervention.

First Steps saved our lives with services that were provided to our child and us. Through these services we were able to understand our son and he gained skills to communicate with us. Early intervention is so important and we are very grateful for the help our son received. Special School now teaches him on a full time basis. First Steps made their job a lot easier.

I believe the First Steps program made a world of difference for my child. He no longer has a language delay as a result of the early intervention. Thank you First Steps.

We had such a successful experience with the therapist that we had through First Steps. I plan to take the Praxis and add special education to my teaching certification. What wonderful therapists. They taught all of us so much. Thank you for this wonderful program and the opportunity for early intervention for our child and others like him.

Our child progressed rapidly with his speech difficulties. Today he attends a regular pre-school and is doing well. First Steps and the Special Learning Center were so great in their help with our son!

We had many problems when the change of service coordinators occurred. Our IFSP was missing with First Steps. It was difficult to find a therapist to work with us and then many left servicing the First Steps program. We finally found a fabulous speech therapist. Our occupational therapist was difficult to find. Overall, our son made huge gains in all areas.

The program and help we received was outstanding. I don't believe that we could or would have received the same sort of coordinated effort to assist our child through private insurance or other means. We needed a service coordinator to get things arranged and moving in the proper direction. Thanks for everything.

More education on Congenital Glaucoma.

First Steps was a wonderful experience for my family and I. We learned so much about our son's difficulties and how to deal with them. I feel like my son has a better chance at life now because of our speech therapist, who was not only a teacher, but a great person who tried to help all of us with all of our problems. When I heard First Steps might close, I was heartbroken. I don't think the Governor understands how valuable it was to my child and so many others. Thanks

Without intervention from First Steps, I cannot even imagine where my son would be. There was no way we could have privately paid for the services he needed. It has truly been a miracle for our family.

Thank you!

My daughter showed a hearing loss at birth. No one at St. Lukes, where she was born, St. Anthony's, where she had additional screening, or Children's Hospital even MENTIONED First Steps. I'm kind of persistent and eventually spoke with CID and they suggested I contact you. Our coordinator was wonderful and helpful and truly cared about our daughter. Any family working with her is very lucky.

My service coordinator was incredible. She also has a hearing impaired child which made it easier for her to be more understanding. If it wasn't for First Steps, I have no idea where we would be. You are incredible! What you did for my son and this family will never be forgotten. Because of my IFSP, my IEP went smoother. Thank you.

My son did not stay in First Steps as long as I wanted. But they did a good job. The only thing that he needs now is a good speech school because he still does not talk.

We've checked into many other options so our daughter can have a comparable program to other kids her age. Our school doesn't have a program for the three or four year old age group.

First Steps was a great help to our family. Great work! Keep it up and hopefully this program stays a part of the Missouri programs.

First Steps was a waste of our time. The program is useless.

I was not impressed with your services. My child learned nothing and has learned more in school than she ever did with First Steps. I could not keep the same therapist coming to my house in the year that I used your program. We had three different ones for behavior, four for speech and five for occupational therapy. Only one was requested by me not to come anymore because she was rude and would not talk to me about my child. I would not recommend your program to anyone who I know and I would discourage anyone from using your services.

I believe the First Steps program is an invaluable tool for our children. I think funding and other resources should be given priority.

We had overall good experiences with First Steps with the exception of our service coordinator. Not that we had much need for contact, but we had zero all year long. We were kept informed by our therapists and our Parents As Teachers advisor. Neither service coordinator did anything for us.

We were thrilled to receive the services for our son. We could not have afforded the services otherwise! Thanks.

I filled this form out in regard my youngest son. My older son also went through First Steps. I feel the program has been wonderful for both boys. Thank you.

We learned a lot from our therapists that worked with our daughter. We would have been lost without them. We had the "dream team" of therapists!

We had a wonderful experience with our coordinator and therapist. Both were eager to help in any way. I spoke with them out and around our area and am always asked how our child is. Even though we are no longer part of the First Steps program, I feel that we could easily obtain help or reference at any time. Our daughter gained much and is thriving as she approaches her third birthday. Thank you for all your assistance.

The First Steps program helped my son in a way that I could not. He is talking constantly. There are times when we still have problems but we, as a family, now have the tools to help him. Thank you.

Accessing the First Steps program was very easy for me because of my background as an Early Childhood Special Ed Teacher. Since I was aware of my rights and the legal guidelines, specifically, those concerning timelines within which certain meetings should be held and assessments made during intake, things happened fairly quickly. However, if I didn't have the ECSE experience that I do, I would not have known the timelines and the intake process would have taken a very long time. I had to push every step and "threaten" due process in order to get timelines met. Once intake was complete, my experiences with my service providers have been wonderful.

It was a great program to be a part of and really increased our awareness of our child's needs.

First Steps was wonderful for our son. He excelled in speech and development in the program and we are thankful that the service is available. Thank you.

We have turned to independent therapists to work with our child at home because we do not feel he is receiving all the therapy he needs through the school district. While First Steps went out of their way to provide anything at all to help our child's progress and to help him qualify for services, the school district seems bent on making sure he qualifies for as little as possible. The school district is way to stingy when it comes to giving our children the help they need. It was very hard to leave First Steps behind because First Steps truly put our child's needs first and the school district seems more concerned with their own "corporate" needs. However, since this survey is about First Steps, I will say again that First Steps is a wonderful program and literally saved my child from a life of being speechless, immobile and unable to feed himself. Thanks to First Steps he is in preschool without an aid and doing quite well.

The staff at the Special Learning Center are wonderful. I couldn't say enough good things about them.

I believe the services my child received from First Steps has provided an opportunity for my son to "catch up" to his appropriate age level. Without First Steps, he would still be behind. They not only helped him, but they helped our whole family with support as well as ideas to help him and ourselves. I will always be grateful to First Steps and our providers.

The change in my child is significant. She is attending Meadows and she loves it and we love to watch the results of their great teaching methods.

This program is a must for our children, however there needs to be improvements in the program. For instance, we recently moved and it took five months to get services started in our new area mostly due to a breakdown with our previous service provider.

The First Steps Program has been a huge benefit to our family. Your resources have given our child confidence and strength. It has provided us with access to appropriate channels to accomplish those results. In addition, it has provided us with the knowledge to continue to use some of the skills learned to continue in the development of our child. Thank you.

My therapist was great. With her help I was able to obtain what was needed to help my child be the best he can be. Without her, I would have been lost. They do need more training with Cochlear Implants.

I'm going through another custody battle with my daughter knowing that our permitted court papers were modified thanks to DFS services and was not able to respond to service (Improper service) papers that were served to me November 22, 2005. As of now child is with father in Waco and I'm fighting to get her back. In my residential custody it's a long and screwed up situation thanks to my social worker and DFS.

Thanks

Overall happy. There were problems with getting things done in a timely manner.

Our transition meeting is planned for two weeks from now, so this last section does not yet apply. The services my daughter received have impacted her so greatly. Her ability to communicate has grown immeasurably and helped her and our family for life.

My son's progress was absolutely impacted by the services provided by First Steps. His speech pathologist clicked with him immediately and we saw results within a short period of time. Our service coordinator was very diligent in scheduling the meetings and called me several times to ensure my satisfaction with the program. My son came out of his shell and is a much more outgoing three year old. I feel the services provided to my family were invaluable! Thanks so much.

Thanks to First Steps my son now is speaking very clearly. We were at a road block with son's speech but, when First Steps came in, they were able to show us other ways that helped break through the wall. Wonderful!

We found out through our child's care provider that our speech therapist was arriving during lunch time and doing our son's therapy while he ate lunch. She was rewarding him for doing certain things with the food from his lunch. We thought this was very inappropriate. We did not find this out until he had only two sessions left. But, I thought you should know. We appreciate all the help First Steps gave our family and we hope that future governors will see the importance also.

This is the best program my family has been a part of and my son would not be making the progress he is if it were not for the program and everyone involved. Thank you!

Special therapist provided was excellent!

The only way I knew about the services was because I am an educator. My child would not be where he is today without this program. Early intervention is CRITICAL!

Our First Steps coordinator was top notch. I've learned so much through her it's made a huge difference in our son's quality of life. She was great during the transition process to NKCS D.

I feel that the First Steps program is a waste of taxpayers money. I'm still waiting for the results from the tests that were performed on my child back in February or March. The coordinator failed to or the speech therapist refused to give me any information that I could help my child with at home. I was authorized for three times a week for the three months in the program. They saw my daughter a total, including the first meeting, of four times and probably charged the state \$150.00 per session. It was supposed to be 60 minute sessions and, in actuality, was only 40 minutes. I feel that the four months put my child four months behind rather than helped at all. She is in private therapy and is doing great. She is only about three months behind now NO THANKS to First Steps. I feel sorry for all of your participants in at least Greene County. I'm glad I had enough common sense to pull her out when I did. P.S. I voted for zero funding of government programs related to early childhood development.

My child is still way under age level on her speech. The physical therapist and occupational therapist through First Steps was great, but the speech therapist has never been reliable on showing up and has contributed to my child having slower speech progress. Overall, First Steps was great.

This was a great program for our 16 week premature daughter. The therapists were wonderful and gave me confidence working with her.

Very pleased with the services received. Would recommend these services to other families. Much needed program for our children!

The speech therapy my daughter received through First Steps was extremely valuable. It greatly impacted her overall development.

It was very difficult to qualify for the program. I think it is a wonderful service and it really helped my son to advance. Perhaps it would have been helpful to have been in the program sooner.

I think First Steps is a wonderful program that helped our child catch up. I believe this program helps so many families and I will forever be thankful. I think that the program has been abused on the managerial side. My original coordinator just went away without a phone call, a note, anything! Even the therapists could not reach her and didn't know what happened! My second coordinator, while friendly, had NO IDEA what was going on with my child. She would call and have the wrong file in front of her. She would call over and over about a subject that we had already discussed. She seemed to be pushing speech therapy before the doctors even felt there was a concern. I called a couple of times to voice my concerns; but there seems to be a lack of supervision for coordinators. I think that should be corrected. I noticed that the owner of the company that provided both a physical therapist and an occupational therapist was also partly trying to ensure her income from my son's services. She, at one point, didn't have a therapist available (I forget if it was physical or occupational) but her concern seemed to be more about me using her to gain a therapist than the general need for my son to receive help. Apparently, at one point, her and the coordinator pushed for a speech therapist saying I needed to get one before we were no longer in the program. The speech therapist was here for almost an hour and I noticed she billed First Steps for an hour and a half. I have much to say and tried to share my feelings, but my concerns fell on deaf ears! This abuse has cost the children of this program. It's very sad that greed supersedes need!

First Steps was very helpful in helping our son with his speech. We adopted him from China when he was 14 months old and he knew no English. Everyone was very knowledgeable and more than helpful. Our son is now three and a half and his speech is wonderful. We can't thank all of his workers and First Steps enough. This is an excellent program.

We had a wonderful experience and our child still talks about her therapists. Everyone there left her with a positive outlook.

I think all services need to be discussed after leaving First Steps. Not just the ones First Steps, Head Start and ECSE can offer. We needed help finding other preschools, therapies, and services that are available if we could pay out of pocket. Some things were not feasible but some things were. You should help families find things in their communities and ask them if they would be willing to pay for services if they can. I felt like we were only offered things that were free, which, I can understand, but all options need to be addressed. You can never have enough information about all services available. Thanks for all your help and support. We couldn't have gotten this far in our child's development without you all. Thanks Again!

My son's speech provider was resolved through First Steps and no further assistance is needed. His language and vocabulary skills are right on target.

During the time we started the process for qualifying, it was really up to the parents to keep the ball rolling. Otherwise, the services we received were great. Our son no longer needs services. The speech therapist gave us tools to use with our son which also carried over to our other child.

First Steps has really helped our child develop and learn. We really appreciate the work they do.

First Steps was the only service we were able to use since our insurance did not cover our child. I do not know how we would have survived without the services we received. Thank you.

My foster child no longer delays as a result of her help from First Steps.

I think the First Steps program is a very valuable program. There are just a few glitches that need attention. It takes what seems like forever to get a child into the program! I think the service coordinator was supposed to work with me, but she never contacted me once to ask if all was well or if I needed anything. All I ever saw were the bills for her time, but she never spent any time on our case! That seems very wrong! Our speech therapist was great. I would recommend her to anyone.

My son was in speech therapy. The speech therapist is very good and the services were very convenient since they were in our home. My daughter took speech when we lived in South Carolina and it was sometimes difficult to get her across town to her sessions twice a week (especially after I had my son).

With our service coordinator and the therapists help, our son is now a social butterfly and is speaking very well. His motor skills are so good that he is becoming a little artist. Thank you First Steps.

We have a wonderful coordinator! She has been a friend to us and has been a great help!

First Steps was wonderful and helpful.

Through the First Steps program we received services. In-home therapy would not work. Our child has benefited through therapy and their preschool and still continues there through our school district. We are very thankful for our services and this early intervention is making our child a productive child and will save thousands of dollars of future services both educationally and medically. Thank you.

The early intervention has been critical to our son's success with speech development. My family is grateful for the First Steps program and the school district's early childhood program.

First Steps was a god send for my son. I am a divorced mother of two with very little support, until First Steps. My older son was diagnosed ADHD/Bipolar at the age of two and I had never heard of First Steps. It was not until my now three-year-old started having difficulties similar to his older brother that I became involved with the program. I cannot express the gratitude I feel toward the caseworkers and therapists that worked with my littlest son. I am sure without the early intervention and support that was given to me and my boys through First Steps, my little guys would not be doing as wonderfully as they are today.

This is a wonderful program. We have seen incredible strides with our daughter. It is not only important for our state to maintain this program, but imperative! Thank you First Steps!

We were very thankful for the speech therapy our son received. By the time he was two, he had nearly caught up to where he should be. Thanks.

At the time our child was to go through transition, our service coordinator was changed, due to changes at First Steps. It took two months to find out who our new service coordinator would be, and we didn't receive much help with transition. Our first service coordinator was excellent. She was very helpful and prompt with responding to us and knowledgeable of our child's needs.

I hope budget cuts don't affect First Steps and the very important services it provides. Early intervention is so much more effective! I was very satisfied with the program and the vast improvements in my daughter's development in the six months with the program.

Thank you so much! Your program is worthy! I hope funding increases. Governor Blunt needs a child with special needs.

Great program! Governor should not cut the program.

I cannot express how much the First Steps program helped our family care for our son. We feel very fortunate that we had those professionals in our lives when we needed them the most. They helped build our confidence in caring for him in all areas. I honestly don't know where we would be today if First Steps hadn't been in our life. Thank you.

I felt like the service coordinator was severely overpaid considering we only heard from her at IEP time but yet were billed around \$60.00 a month. Also, caregivers (therapists) did not always visit as care planned. My child went six months without seeing a physical therapist that was supposed to visit monthly.

We had an outstanding experience with First Steps. I think too many people were involved in the administrative portion of it. I think it could be streamlined a bit, but as far as the actual support and therapy we received, it was definitely valued, needed and critical to our child's development. Not all states have a similar program and we felt very lucky and blessed to be in a state which supported it's youngest children so well.

We had two of our sons in the First Steps program, both for delay in speech. The help they received helped them overcome any problems but also decreased their frustration/anger with their difficulty communicating with us.

This is such a great program. I know there is talk of discontinuing funding for this program and that would be truly tragic. They helped us so much and, although we no longer need their help, I personally know many who do. I know I would have been hard pressed to pay a private specialist to give the help we received. Thank you to all who contributed!

Some of the therapists were more familiar with our child's disability than others. The service coordinator seemed to carry a full load and did only what was absolutely necessary for our child. Sometimes our statements would show payments for service coordination or correspondence which we did not have. Overall, First Steps was a positive experience. However, I actively participated in all aspects of rearing our child and will continue to be her first educator. Most of our child's services were cut in half when she left First Steps and entered ECSE. The therapists are good, but they don't have enough time in their schedules for our daughter to receive the same amount of therapy time she had in First Steps. I do not believe throwing more money into the system is the answer. Trimming the fat and better organization may help the ECSE program. Even though we benefited from First Steps, I supported Governor Blunt's cut because I feel the program needed a "wake up call" to eliminate waste.

Our child now qualifies for Title I preschool in the fall. The wonderful therapists not only helped our child in all areas he needed, but also gave us the tools to work with him on a daily basis to give him the maximum progress. The program is a god send! He can go in school and never know that he had any delays. Everyone we worked with were wonderful! Keep up the GREAT work helping our kids with delays or disabilities.

Our family greatly appreciates all the help and services which we have received. The therapists are very professional, supportive and knowledgeable. We learned a lot from each and every one of them. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

First Steps was very helpful to our family and our child. The therapists are very professional and knowledgeable and also very supportive. We greatly appreciate everything First Steps did for our family.

This child is in foster care and has a history of neglect as well as physical and possibly sexual abuse. She has had numerous ear infections and has Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. She did not begin receiving help through First Steps until well after her second birthday. I then had ear tubes inserted, an abscessed tooth removed, and other outside evaluations concerning speech, language, motor skills, cognitive ability in connection with FAS. I am sure First Steps had a role in her improved behavior, speech, and motor skills. However, she's had such huge "life changes" during the last several months, I find it difficult to rate the impact of services received.

It was initially hard to find the right contacts for First Steps. Once started, everything was wonderful. Our service coordinator was very helpful with the needs of our family and both speech therapists were great in helping my child.

My son was cared about from the time he started to the time he finished. We still talk to the teachers who helped my son and we're good friends. Now, thanks to your help, I can still lean on them for help. P.S. I don't understand why we have a man in the office who's not helping our kids today.

I went to the IEP meeting alone and was denied an IEP or any services for my child. The school district concluded that our son did not meet the standards of IDEA to be considered a child with a developmental delay.

I first contacted First Steps in November 2004, as recommended by our pediatrician for care of what, at the time, was thought to be an isolated language delay. I spoke with a First Steps representative who, after a telephone assessment, said we were not eligible because deficits were not severe enough. We subsequently obtained a private speech/language therapist who felt signs of Autism were present. Our doctor then gave our son a provisional of PDD. First Steps was reenacted and our son was evaluated and found eligible in late January 2005, only 2 months before his third birthday. Our son was then diagnosed with Autism by a specialist in March 2005. IFSP and transition meetings were done in the same first meeting in early February 2005. We were able to get speech/language and occupational therapy, four evaluations with two weeks of therapy prior to the loss of First Steps benefits. My compliments to our service coordinator for expediting our care. She was thorough, thoughtful and very attentive to our concerns. Since leaving First Steps, we had an IEP drawn up. We initially received services because our son attended daycare in the city. We then declined all service because, after further research, we felt the services offered by the school district were inadequate (with ABA) so we have pursued 20 hours of ABA, 2 hours speech/language and 1 hour of occupational therapy weekly.

I assume that you are talking about my second son which is seven months old. My first son that was in First Steps was four months old.

Question 4: I feel that this is not common knowledge. I learned about First Steps from my doctor. Prior to the diagnosis, I had never heard of it. Section 3, Question 3: The Rockwood district left parts out and then, assuming they had been answered, billed themselves. These were later corrected. This includes a visit and a hearing test. They asked as to his ability to dress himself, feed himself, etc. Section 3, Question 4: This depends. The ABA is insufficient and at present they are gearing up to take away further services even though we aren't seeing sufficient progress. Section 3, Question 5: Again, we can't see. They say there is but our son's non-verbal. The things they say he does, he doesn't do for us. Section 3, Question 7: Our experience with Parents As Teachers was awful. The woman actually gave us so much bad information that she discouraged me from questioning there being something wrong with my son who would be diagnosed as Autistic. Comments: The physical therapist was excellent as was the developmental therapist. All therapists helped us adjust to our son's diagnosis of Autism as well as helped him with the basic skills he lacked. We also were able to attend Judevine through First Steps which proved tremendously valuable to us.

We didn't come up with any definitive cause for the speech delay, but everything about the First Steps process has been easy and the best possible help we could have asked for. Thanks.

Our child and family, as a whole, has benefited greatly since receiving services through First Steps. Without those services our child's development would be extremely delayed and would not be where she is today. She is a happy little girl whose speech can be understood.

First Steps, recommended and set up by our geneticist, was wonderful for our family. My son received occupational, physical and speech services early on which has helped him tremendously. He has Down's Syndrome and he signs 75 to 100 words, runs, jumps, follows 2-3 step orders and his transition was good. But, if DESE needs to work on anything, it would be ECSE with the school systems. Put in place a plan where therapy is a programmed plan. Did you know they can have therapy on a stage or in a hall? It does not have to be a structured room. This is not helpful to learning. Where are we helping these kids? We need to do better here.

While our child currently does not need further interventional services, if he did, I would not know who to contact. I've not spoken to anyone affiliated with First Steps in many months. All of the contact I've had has been with Parents As Teachers. I am extremely grateful for the services that were provided, but I am also somewhat disappointed at the lack of communication. Our son only needed physical therapy. He has since met or exceeded all the goals set. I cannot express our heart-felt thanks and appreciation enough for the First Steps program. Our son is a happy, healthy, thriving toddler with your help. Great job!

The First Steps program helped me as a mom to learn how to show my son that I love him. I wasn't sure he was getting it at first. Now he says, "I love you momma". First Steps bridged the hole in our family to our son. Thank you!

First Steps is one of the most important programs available to children and families. It's importance and funding should never be questioned or cut!

Thank you! Words cannot express our gratitude to the First Steps program. Our son made remarkable strides in development during our time in your program. It made transitioning into the Special School District very easy. All of our therapists were outstanding. It was a pleasure to get to know them and to see how wonderful each one was in working with our son. Our hope is that your wonderful program is able to continue. It made a world of difference in our family! Thank you.

We have two service coordinators. The first one was pretty much non-existent and never called when she said she would. There was no follow-up, etc. The therapist had many personal issues which led to many cancellations. When our child only received 30 minutes/weekly, cancelling two weeks in a row was significant. She was not good about leaving us session notes. We had no clue if she had even been there, and if she had, what had been worked on? I am very disappointed in the service we received and had I known it would be like this, I would've rather paid and received therapy instead of wasting precious time.

I was not pleased with the service provided through the Regional Center when my son was first born. As a result, I went through my health insurance for the first two years of early intervention therapy. My initial contact person was very discouraging. I believe she has now retired.

The speech therapist who came to our home to work with our child was extremely skilled. I was very pleased with what she was able to accomplish in the few months she worked with him.

Finding out about First Steps and working with the intake coordinator was very difficult, but our service coordinator and providers were wonderful. It made a HUGE impact on my daughter.

First Steps program needs to be more flexible for ABA therapists (Time Sheets/Authorization) so that they can work on different teams/different hours each week. Therapist's timesheets should be signed by parents so they are held accountable. (This includes Speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, ABA and consultants). There needs to be more coordinators so that response can be faster. There needs to be funding for RDI and nutrition therapy. All parents with newborns should be introduced to First Steps through the hospital, Parents As Teachers and other early intervention programs.

We have had a fantastic experience through First Steps and would highly recommend it to those in need of services.

The process of time for paperwork to get the first evaluation was too long. I started the process when he was turning two and we did not get in and start therapy until he was two and a half! I feel it was too much paperwork or not enough personnel to make it a timely process.

I was very unhappy about the way the First Steps process started out. The contact person was never in her office, nor would she return my calls in a timely manner. It took three to four months from the time I tried to get my daughter into the program till I got a service coordinator assigned to me. After I got the service coordinator, things went a lot smoother and she kept in touch to make sure everything was going fine. But I felt that my daughter was deprived of services that she really needed during those beginning months when I was under the impression it was to have only taken six weeks.

Our child was in Parents As Teachers until he turned three.

Everyone we came in contact with through First Steps were all amazing people. The therapists were incredible. Our daughter and family benefited so much from this program. It would be a disservice and a slap in the face to take it away! During our three years with First Steps we paid nothing, we are not wealthy (nor poor) but not having to worry was a load off our backs. We worried so much about our kids, that not having to be concerned about paying was very beneficial!

I greatly appreciate the workers of the First Steps program. I'm glad my son was able to be a part of it because he greatly benefited from the program.

The school set up the transitioning and IEP meetings. The First Steps program is a wonderful program. We are foster parents so when we were given two children, they were in First Steps. The transition from the biological parent to the foster home was very easy. Transition from First Steps to preschool ECSE was done by the school. The children are now out of First Steps. Thanks for your help.

Please keep this program alive for our little precious children. They need us to help them in the best way we can. Support education.

Our son went from saying nothing at two years to having no problems and no interventions in preschool. I felt that First Steps services was a big factor in this.

The First Steps program has been a huge blessing. It has given my daughter the tools she needs to have a successful educational experience and to communicate with those around her. Her life would not be so happy without First Steps. First Steps is a vital program that needs to be protected from ignorant politicians such as Matt Blunt. Thank you so much! FYI: It was my Parents as Teachers educator that hooked us up with First Steps. The two programs should work together more instead of competing.

Our daughter, who has a brain tumor, would not have made such a positive improvement without First Steps. The First Steps program gave our family burden relief and gave us hope. Thank you so much for your services and dedication to our little ones.

The First Steps program failed our child miserably. It took five to six months for a coordinator to contact us and once that meeting took place our son was almost three. He should have received occupational services but a therapist could not be coordinated to provide services. There was NO transitioning support provided and even though our service coordinator was cordial, she was inexperienced and misrepresented the First Steps process and our rights. We filed for compensatory services and were granted some time. But, our family and our son were treated with disrespect and with a serious lack of professionalism and caring. Even though our time with First Steps was brief, we have nothing positive to say about it!

The new service coordinator we were assigned after reconstructing was rude and made it seem like we didn't really need services. My daughter had made great strides in the year she was in First Steps, but I feel she tried to bring the program to an end abruptly. We felt very rushed at the end.

Our daughter was born with cleft lip and palate. When she was born, no one told us about this program at the hospital. We found out three months later when I enrolled in Parents as Teachers. It would help a lot of people if the hospital gave parents the information about First Steps so they know there are people who can help. Thank you.

Our physical therapist was great. We could not have made the big steps we made without her. Our occupational therapist was the second person to deal with us. She changed jobs when we were almost done and we miss her a lot. Without our service coordinator, I don't think I would have made it. Our speech therapist taught me a lot about helping our son on learning speech. Our occupational therapist was our favorite red head. Our son LOVED THIS WOMAN. She helped him walk and do things when he fought everyone else. We were one of the families that went to Jefferson City when M.B. tried to take it away.

First Steps is a wonderful organization. They helped three of my grandchildren and did a fantastic job. They all got over their problems and are doing everything right for their age or better.

We truly believe that the First Steps program has been the key to our son developing into a child with normal abilities. Our service provider was a superb resource for us because she showed us what to do and talked with us about how to work with our son on a daily basis so he could continue to develop at a steady pace. The doctor's printed a very serious gloom and doom picture of our son's mental and physical development. Thanks to the help of First Steps, we beat the statistics!

Our service coordinator was awesome for the evaluation for services. She returned phone calls in a timely manner and explained the evaluation process. Our other service coordinator helped our family with the transitioning process and was knowledgeable. Our therapist touched our lives in many ways! Her expertise as a speech-language pathologist was remarkable. Her skills and ability to teach us about our son's condition and how we could help him with his speech and homework made us much more knowledgeable! She is a blessing and a true asset to your staff.

First Steps helped tremendously. It was a wonderful program that helped form a bridge for our child. It was great to have a center point so everyone was on the same page in evaluations. I don't think it would have been as beneficial had we done it by ourselves. Thank you.

Criteria for qualifying for services was very ambiguous. Results of more than one speech therapy test plus opinions of pediatricians and Parents As Teachers representatives should have been taken into account. My child was denied speech help on the first evaluation but on the second go around, he qualified because more factors were considered. Something was not right about that and hopefully things improved for other families. All professionals involved were very nice and caring people however.

We appreciate the help of the First Steps program. Our physical therapist was able to help our daughter as well as teach us how to help her advance in her area of weakness. Thank you for this valuable program.

Without First Steps guidance, I would not know where to turn for help. You all had done a remarkable job in helping a family like mine to be as normal as possible. From my heart, I can't thank you enough. Best regards.

The program is excellent for kids that have learning issues. My kids had speech issues and are now speaking so well that I am so thrilled. Thanks and this certainly would not have been possible without First Steps.

Our son's speech therapist did a great job. The transition out of First Steps to school was very BAD. My son qualified for one and a half hours of help each week from First Steps. Right off the bat, the school just wanted to give him one half hour each week. In fact, I have a lot more to say on this subject and would be happy to talk to anyone about what should be done or changed.

This program is quick to say a child has a need that is not true. First of all, children are not going to do their best for someone they don't know. Some will not talk or play for people they don't know. This program locks children in because they don't respond to them. This program looks for development by age. To me, this is not good. Children come around at different ages. So, to me, this program looks to make a child look undeveloped.

We would be lost without the First Steps program. The staff at the school district's program have been invaluable!

First Steps has been wonderful for both of my children.

My daughter has severe speech problems called Apraxia.

In the beginning we had a hard time getting our son enrolled with First Steps. Our first service coordinator was NOT very knowledgeable regarding what would and would not be covered. We then requested an independent service coordinator who helped us. I feel like you should have service coordinators experienced with each individual's special needs.

In the beginning we discussed occupational therapy as applicable to our son. We initiated with an occupational therapist who was gone for a wedding (her own) and honestly, after that nothing happened. Our son was progressing fine so I did not pursue it. But, I'm not sure our service coordinator did either. Our service coordinator was nice and attended our first meeting but we had no interaction after that other than one call she made to check in. If I needed more, I would have pursued her but I think I expected more initiation and content of value from a service coordinator. Thanks so much for offering this service. My son is now fully up to speed in terms of his development. Our physical therapist was very helpful and took personal interest in our son and this family.

If it was not for the First Steps program, my child would not be capable of functioning daily. Nor would we, as his parents, be capable to care for him. We are now faced with another child who requires services, and I truly look forward to dealing with First Steps again. It is comforting to know my children have a chance of a normal life because of First Steps.

The program is good if you know how to access all available resources. They are not always voluntarily offered. The parent, it seems most times, is the only advocate for the child. Currently, I am trying to disenroll my child because so much of the program is being cut that it is no longer of benefit to my child and his development.

I work in a pediatrics' office and I knew when my child was two years old and still did not talk that there was something wrong. First Steps helped my son learn how to express himself. He never stops talking. He counts and colors and they taught me ways to get him to cooperate. I loved all of my therapists and the First Steps program. Without you, I don't know where we'd be now.

The First Steps program was vital to my son's development. He is doing great in his ECSE classroom and continues to make great progress. Thank you for your help.

Our foster child was overweight. She had already been in the program when we got her. All her physical therapy happened before we got her. They would come out monthly to weight her. I don't know anything about the IEP. I'm afraid I don't have enough information or contact to properly answer this survey. Thank you.

Please keep the program.

I wasn't sure my child would walk. But, with the confidence of the physical therapist, she assured me she would walk like a normal child. We had a lot of catching up to do since my child was in casts for eighteen months due to club feet and several surgeries. She also loved aqua therapy. She didn't realize she was getting "a workout"; she was just having fun. First Steps had great ideas to help us improve her walking. When at physical aqua therapy, she would say it was her playtime. The therapist came to play every week at our house. I still keep in touch with the therapist. Thank you so much. My child has beautiful feet and runs faster than lightning. She's making up for lost time.

It's the best program out there! Thanks for everything.

Could you help me find help for my son? He still needs speech therapy. I wish I could get someone to help him. He speaks better in some words, but others you have to guess what he is saying. Plus, he started stuttering really bad. This program helped me a lot. Thank you.

Our experience was hindered due to changing coordinators often. Up until it was time to transition out of First Steps, most experiences were positive. Sometimes we weren't sure who we were dealing with or if there even was someone. The one thing that has made most of my answers negative was not being transitioned into an ECSE program. I have had to use several other services to help us with much tension and red tape so to speak. My son should have begun preschool in August or September but by late October, we are still awaiting evaluations. I have had to use Head Start and their advocates, an advocate from Jefferson City, local Parents As Teachers and a psychologist, all with many hours of phone calls and information requests. I hope our case is an isolated one as I do believe the program is a benefit when done right.

Thank you!

I appreciated having a service coordinator who was very familiar with our child's disability. She was able to make helpful suggestions/recommendations.

Thank you very much!

For my son First Steps has been an excellent program. For my daughter however, she fell through the cracks of the system, but is now receiving services through the School District.

It was not until the end of our time with First Steps that we were told exactly what our situation with our daughter was. Despite the recommendations of our pediatrician, ophthalmologists, Children's Center for the Visually Impaired, I feel that First Steps and our school district failed us and turned us away. This after telling me they had a visual specialist. This person never spoke to me or saw my daughter. However, First Steps could do nothing to help me because she had already turned three. I feel like the system failed my daughter.

The therapists we had in the First Steps program were wonderful. Our child seemed to have lost a lot of his momentum after he turned three and was no longer in that program. I feel that the program should be extended to age four. The children that it helps are behind so therefore need a longer period of this specialized help. It was a big blow when the Jefferson Co. Developmental Services school closed because of funding cuts. But the daycare at Jefferson College qualified for your program and they were great. But after he turned three they dropped him. I wanted him to stay there but they didn't even ask and then they were full.

I only wish you went to kindergarten age. The transition to preschool was rough.

#3 on page 3: This was attempted, but the school district did not comply.

First Steps is a wonderful program. My son is not age appropriate, yet is not but two standard deviations away from the norm (1.75). It is sad when we have worked so hard to make the strides we have and now the school system needs a number rather than the goal of helping him become age appropriate. So now we sit and wait for regression and we will try to get help when he is four.

We really appreciated having our therapist come and work with our son. He still asks about her sometimes. Thanks for everything.

We received speech therapy. Our child is not, however, disabled.

I want to say thank you to our service provider. She helped us out a lot.

First Steps has helped my daughter enjoy life to her fullest potential. Without this service, I do not know where we would be! Thank you to all involved.

I found my First Steps service coordinator to be very friendly. She scheduled appointments and attended to our needs. However, I don't think First Steps benefited my particular child. She experienced seizures at birth but fortunately hasn't had any episodes since. Also, I am a school counselor with a graduate degree. I've trained to help students with needs such as my daughter. Additionally, I have three Parents As Teachers in my family and an ECSE teacher in my family. So, my daughter is one of the lucky children who is surrounded by people who can help her in a variety of ways. Thanks for your help!

Keep it going!

Thanks to First Steps. We would have missed a lot without it!
Thanks again!

I have a child with Autism and the speech/language pathologists and occupational therapists were not making any progress until we started ABA. All speech/language pathologists and occupational therapists should be trained in ABA in order to help children with Autism. It is ridiculous how long it takes for a provider to be paid through First Steps. I've seen it take as long as eight months to be reimbursed for services provided.

I believe we would have benefited if we had been referred earlier to the program.

Excellent job!

First Steps was very beneficial for our son. The services and support we received was outstanding.

Had him tested at age two years and he didn't qualify at that time. At two and a half years he almost didn't qualify for speech and we had to really push. Then he only had one hour of speech a week with a BAD speech therapist. If he had had a better program earlier, he might be speaking better now. And now I feel he should have a more aggressive speech program. He has made progress but he'll be four years old in March. He needs a more one-on-one approach to help him with his speech.

I just want to say that our service coordinator and a friend has been a great help. She really shows wonderful compassion and goes to extremes to make sure our daughter is getting the care she needs. I really appreciate her so much.

It's a wonderful program that really helped my son catch up on his development.

Question 6: Some were good and some were bad. I had several service coordinators. They kept switching me to new people due to people quitting, etc.

Question 10: Some were horrible! I waited a long time to get new services needed!

Question 13: Some good; some clueless.

The services provided by the First Steps program were quite effective for our daughter. My only concern involves my daughter's initial evaluation for First Steps at nine months of age. She was denied. At the time she was at least 25% delayed. She was evaluated again at 18 months and found to be 25% delayed in some areas and close to 50% delayed in other areas. She was accepted at this juncture but was only able to take advantage of the program for six months. Considering how useful the program would be, I was very disappointed that our child was not able to take advantage of 27 months worth of services. The quality of the services provided and the people my wife and I worked with who were able to assist our daughter in closing the gap in her development delays were outstanding. They were truly wonderful people to work with. The state of Missouri failed our family, specifically my daughter, in turning her down for services when she was originally evaluated in November 2001.

One problem we faced with First Steps was during the transition period. There was a huge misunderstanding between us and our service coordinator about sending our son to a catholic school and still being able to receive services. We both misunderstood each other. A friend of mine, a speech therapist in another district, explained the options to me. At that time my son was already three years old and First Steps services had stopped. I did contact our service coordinator and explained the problem. She apologized and was wonderful in getting us quickly transitioned into the special school district. We are thrilled with the services we are receiving now. The only other issue we had was with our speech therapist. She was nice and worked well with our son but it seemed she was always calling and canceling. I realize these services were free, but I felt we missed a lot of valuable therapy time.

The worker responsible for seeing my son came only once. When I tried to end the First Steps program, I continued to receive the "bills" as if he were still enrolled. I asked numerous times for them to take my son out of the program. They're claiming that my son was still in the program for funding purposes was both shady and wrong.

We didn't get to work with First Steps very long before our son turned three, but the few months we did, I felt very grateful. They were a great team of girls and they worked on getting us involved with speech and occupational therapists and all the evaluations, which helped get our son into the community school for the help he needs. Thanks so much.

He also has occupational therapy. He is not receiving physical therapy anymore, but I hope that he can get it in the future. Thank you

It is my opinion, that the strict April 1st deadline, or magical date, needs to be revisited and decided on an individual basis depending on many issues. These issues being how well the child is progressing with the First Steps therapist; how much he/she will be seen by a therapist in the school district and; input from the child's parents. My son, with a moderate speech delay, was making great gains with the First Steps therapist. However, just when therapy was going well, we had to switch to the school district's therapist because his birthday was March 27th and not April 2nd. No matter how much extra help he received at home, his progress stalled and even regressed. As a kindergarten teacher, I consider myself well-educated and "in the loop" with little ones. However, I am not a speech pathologist and we missed ours when we had to stop. Please think about hearing appeals from parents on an individual basis when it is close to the April 1st date!

The First Steps program was the greatest gift to our family. We had been struggling so much, yet did not realize the magnitude of our son's delays and disabilities and how these were impeding his development. My only complaint with First Steps was that it took four months for us to get through the intake process to begin receiving services. I do not want the Governor to take away or change this program at the expense of these children who so desperately need help. I will gladly accept a tax increase if it means giving these children the support they need. First Steps has been a life saver!

I am currently a special education teacher and that is the way we found out about First Steps. I am the one who had to call and initiate the transition to the school district at age three.

Our First Steps speech therapist did nothing to improve her speech.

I loved our coordinator and all the therapists.

The First Steps program was wonderful and now that we are involved in the ECSE, I realize how much more "user friendly" First Steps was. I loved that the services from First Steps was in our home. Our speech therapist was excellent! The process of transitioning to ECSE, specifically the testing, was difficult and did not seem to be focused on making it comfortable for my child. Those doing it were obviously overworked and stressed. Our experience with First Steps was much more positive than our current situation with ECSE.

I think First Steps is a fabulous program. I see many children in my son's preschool that have greatly benefited from First Steps. My only complaint was that our speech and occupational therapists were frequently late and canceled often and the time was not made up. I know that the program was not charged for their time but I felt that my son qualified for a certain number of hours a week and he was not always getting the time. I know that we could have changed therapists but our window with First Steps was very small so I did not want to lose any additional time. I hope that someone will be able to monitor the therapists a little more closely because I don't think the state or the children are getting their monies worth when it comes to certain therapists. However, I signed the SAVE FIRST STEPS petition and hope the program continues.

We got in really late knowing nothing about the program. I found out about it by accident. Before then, I had never heard of it. My child was only in it two or three months before his third birthday and we had a lot of problems; the main one being the specialist never showed up.

First Steps was great for my daughter. ECSE was a big joke and that's why we pulled her out! Nobody there cared about helping my daughter. I wish I could go back to the in-home therapy First Steps provides. That worked wonders on her! One of my daughter's areas of delay is social...being away from Mom is her biggest fear. ECSE just expected her to "be normal and get over it", when they know "normal" is what she is lacking. It was just a huge slap in the face. So, now my daughter is stuck with these delays and no one to help her! It's really sad and not fair to her!

Question 7: Ended at Age 3 (Parents As Teachers)

Governor Blunt did not know what he was doing. I hope future changes are not made so hastily. Children should be entitled to all the help they can get whether their parents can afford it or not. They are the future we will be depending on and we need to help them be strong. First Steps helped me step back, take a breath, and think, "WOW! We can really get through this and everything will be alright".

I really hope First Steps will continue to help families that have children with disabilities. First Steps has helped my oldest who is eight years old now and my youngest who is three years old. Her speech wouldn't have improved without First Steps and our local school district.

I brought my son's problem to my pediatrician and to Parents As Teachers. Parents As Teachers gave me a number to contact the people from First Steps. It took almost three months to respond to my repeated calls. They had trouble finding an available therapist to do the evaluation. After the evaluation, they had thirty days to find a therapist to start services. They couldn't find a speech therapist to come to my area, instead my son got referred to a developmental therapist. By the time we got the ball rolling with First Steps, it was time for a transition meeting with ECSE. However, if it hadn't been for the three months of therapy my son received, I wouldn't have felt comfortable sending him to ECSE preschool. My son is now making wonderful progress and meeting IEP goals.

Question 4: This was not the coordinator's fault. The process is just very long and tedious. That being said, it was well worth the effort as our son's speech has improved significantly.

Question 3: Addressing transition, our son was only part of First Steps for a short period of time so the six months doesn't apply. Our service coordinator at First Steps did a wonderful job for our family. She was thorough and extremely easy to work with. We were blessed to have her working with us. Our son's speech pathologist is a wonderfully gifted, kind-hearted lady who truly bonded with our son. With her help he has made incredible progress and is able to express himself more effectively. Thanks for the work you do!

We were greatly saddened to hear that the First Steps program is in jeopardy of being shut down. I can't express enough how the program has helped our son to achieve "normalcy" in his life. We will definitely be outspoken advocates to keep this program up and running.

We are very appreciative and thankful for the financial support we received through First Steps as our daughter participated in physical therapy.

Please continue the First Steps program! Our son's teachers were knowledgeable, caring, supportive and an awesome beginning to our little boy's development. We highly recommend the program. We would have felt very lost without all the help. It makes us very concerned and upset that the program could be taken away from children and the families.

First Steps provided speech therapy for my son. My insurance would not have covered this and I would not have been able to afford it. Our son went from two words at 18 months to being advanced now for his age in his sounds and words. In fact, he has a huge vocabulary that amazes us everyday. Myself and others are now able to understand him. I cannot imagine where he would be developmentally without First Steps. I hope and pray that Governor Blunt does not eliminate funding for First Steps. I would be happy to share my son's success with him if he needs a better understanding of the program.

All of the providers were just wonderful. We (including our child) were very sad to have the services terminate when she turned three.

First Steps and the professionals I met through the program made an INCREDIBLE improvement to our family's life! Great program.

First Steps is a wonderful program that lets the parents work with providers and be a large part of the decisions that are made to best suit the needs of their children. Special Education is awful. The parents thoughts and wishes for their child are heard but not acted upon. The IEP team treats you whichever way they want and do not take the child's best interest in hand. They provide only what they have to provide; not what they should provide. I have only liked my first year in Special Education because of the Senate Bill that allowed my child to stay with a Part C provider. I fear next year that my child will show regression from being placed into an unfamiliar environment when he should stay where he is at. But, the decision will not be mine as his mother and that's really unfair to him.

If it wasn't for First Steps, I am not sure if I would have known how to help my daughter and get her in the school program. It is absolutely wonderful.

Parents As Teachers was worthless in assisting my children and family. In fact, I found out about First Steps through my son's orthopedic surgeon. I had been involved in Parents As Teachers for a year by then and all they could say is, "Yes, he's somewhat delayed".

The only set back we encountered was finding a physical therapist in our area. There just don't seem to be enough to go around. But overall, the program was wonderful. We did finally get one and my son is doing great. All of the therapists he had were so good with him and I know that since we started him so young he now has a better chance at a normal life. The therapists were great about showing me how to do specific things with my child to increase his development. I believe it is important that all people involved in a special needs child's life should be on the same page. It is important for parents to help do their part and for the therapist to encourage and show the parents things to do to help their child. I believe First Steps is a vital part of development for special needs children. Parents are not educated on how to raise and care for these special children. Through First Steps, parents can be educated by the therapist to provide the best chance for their child. I hope First Steps stays around for other children. I feel I was very lucky to have had the experience with First Steps. The therapists taught me a lot and together we would come up with a plan to increase my child's developmental skills. My son has Down's Syndrome and is very high functioning and I thank God that he was given First Steps to help him. Without First Steps and other early intervention programs, children will not have the chance they need to reach their potential. I just want to say again, thank you First Steps for all you have done for my child and my family.

My daughter was discharged from First Steps after one year of therapy for physical and occupational delays as a result of prematurity. Program was great. Therapists were great. The coordinators were the problem. We went through three because of their lack of participation.

I hope the things on line seven all get cut! It ALL is a waste of my tax money!

We found the program to be very helpful and beneficial to our child. My service coordinator was always available for questions and made the process very easy. We felt guilty at first because the program was free, but we were very glad it was available. As a first time parent, it was a great resource to turn too. Thank you for providing this service.

It took eight months to get my sons in-service for First Steps. I had to call the caseworker weekly just to find out what our next steps were. After four months of trying to reach my caseworker, I finally called her supervisor. Within a few days of talking with her supervisor I finally spoke with the caseworker, scheduled an interview, and had my son evaluated. It then took three months to begin services. The First Steps caseworkers are overburdened. There must be a more efficient way to evaluate children. It should not take eight months of persistence on the mother's part.

Very happy. I wish there were more resources for families that make more money but not enough to self pay. No real resources for average to low income levels.

The initial intake coordinator and the service providers were exceptional and caring. The service coordinator was really not needed by our family. Other than the initial meeting to establish the plan and sign numerous files, her only involvement was quarterly phone calls to see if we were okay.

We are starting with the school district in January. Too early to rank the program. However, I don't know what we would have done without First Steps. My child has come a long way with therapies provided by First Steps. Thanks aren't enough.

At the time of the transition meeting, I thought my child would no longer need services after age three. At age three, when it became apparent she would need those services, I was not able to get them. I was told to call and leave messages with various people and now my child no longer receives therapy even though she needs it.

Very wasteful. Too many watchdogs.

The only difficulty we experienced was with the billing of services through Boone Hospital and First Steps. There seemed to be a communication problem between the two. It took a while to sort it out. Otherwise, I am an extreme advocate of this service and would be willing to defend it's necessity and survival to anyone. Our regional coordinator was always available and exceptionally knowledgeable and supportive.

Our daughter has made, and continues to make, incredible progress. Without the early intervention and help from First Steps, our daughter wouldn't be where she is today. We cannot say enough about the wonderful experience we have had with the First Steps program.

Our child was a foster child and no longer lives with us but the speech therapy he received from First Steps has helped him tremendously.

My son needed much more speech with his speech therapist. Due to his small number of minutes in his IFSP, the ECSE group who developed his IEP gave us few speech minutes within the classroom. There is a direct correlation between what they were given and what will be done in the future, even if it was inadequate in amount. That is frustrating. I also believe that our "SPOE" was so swamped with paperwork that our desires or needs went unanswered for quite some time. The first priority of a service coordinator should be the families they serve, not the piles of paperwork that are, for the most part, unnecessary. Case in point - there is so much paperwork being sent out that our own family doctor who has been signing all the documents is truly tired of signing multiple documents that are trivial. If the Governor is looking at saving money in the First Steps program, I suggest he cut out the need for three quarters of the paperwork, therefore making the service coordinator's time better spent and cutting hours of meaningless paper pushing.

Just now assessing Question #7 under Experiences after leaving First Steps.

Question #1: I didn't know about it until our Parent As Teacher Educator told us about the program.

It is an excellent program. I do think it is difficult to expect the parents to be able to choose the appropriate therapist (speech therapist), when we know little about these things. It was kind of like throwing a dart at a dartboard. Other than that, it was an excellent program for us.

Regarding Page 2, Question 12: Not the fault of First Steps, but rather one of the service providers who was seldom available and did not return phone calls. The other service providers (from the same company) were ALWAYS available.

At first I was not pleased with First Steps because it seemed that as soon as I got to know the service coordinator they would quit or change responsibilities. I was very pleased after we got connected with another service coordinator. She was always available and easy to contact.

The program should be expanded to include ages through kindergarten. First Steps is a much better program than what is available through the school district. Without First Steps, my child would not have developed to the point he is now. We were very pleased and grateful for all the help received from First Steps. THANK YOU!

Our daughter was born at 26 weeks and needed occupational and developmental therapy. I believe without First Steps she would not be as attentive and thriving in pre-school.

We have not received any services through First Steps since our daughter's first year. We filled out one of these surveys after we were discharged. This survey is not applicable for us this year.

I would like it if he were able to be tested. He is doing really well right now. I want to thank everyone who had helped me and my son with all of his needs.

My child was seen at Children's Mercy at birth, (craniofacial clinic and developmental pediatrician) however, never once did anyone there communicate the First Steps program to me. I eventually learned of the program when my child was six months old and I was still seeking help for my child's issues and I contacted KU Medical Center/Autism Center. They directed me to First Steps and I will be forever grateful.

Everyone was great! Thank you for everything.

The bureaucratic paperwork seems unnecessary, time and resource consuming. The service coordinator position is a middle-man position and is not necessary to the process of getting these kids their services, as is the parent/program liaison who only called to verify a meeting time when the re-evaluation time came around. I just think your money is better spent on maintaining services and quality teachers than on sending people around to summarize what the parents and teachers and therapists have agreed upon. For example, the monthly "statements" the therapists "billed time" on) which is comparable to an EOB. What a waste of valuable dollars.

I just want to say how grateful I am for our service coordinator and speech therapist. We were extremely pleased. My child made wonderful progress. We are also thankful to First Steps for being available to us. We learned so much as a family. Thank you!

The speech therapist was extremely loved by my son at the end of their year together. He really "took" to her, making learning better!

First Steps provided the necessary eyeglasses our child required which greatly assisted our family financially. The speech pathologist that worked with our child is certainly an asset to your program. He was very caring, organized and knowledgeable. My son bonded immediately with him.

I just know they were great and don't know what things would be like if he didn't get any help.

I am an educator myself and have found this program to be an excellent early intervention program. I was at a loss as to what to do for my child. First Steps guided me and carefully explained the issues and possible solutions. The only suggestion I would make is letting more parents know about this program. I know the benefit of early childhood education but there are many families who do not know about it and the benefits.

Most questions would be answered differently for our first service coordinator.

While my child was in First Steps, our first case manager did not want our child to get services that he needed stating it was too early. That was resolved when the case manager was changed. Now that my child is in the school system at my initial IEP, I, as a parent, was made to feel that I was asking too much. It is very hard to hear from other parents that if I was in a different area I would not have a problem obtaining the services that my child needs. All school systems should be the same. My child is in the school system, and at six months in, I am calling for another IEP to try and obtain the services my child needs. We have already been through one teacher who apparently did not care about teaching special needs children. His consistency in therapists has not happened which calls my attention to the question of the consistency in what is being worked on. It should not be so hard to obtain services for a special needs child. I would be willing to talk openly.

I believe Parents as Teachers was crucial in noticing delays in the beginning before my son turned two. Early intervention (from age 2-3) with First Steps was so extraordinary in my son's development. Although he qualified for special services for his first year of preschool, he probably won't qualify for his fourth birthday. I owe that progress primarily to his speech/occupational therapists during First Steps.

I would like to have seen the school do more assessments on my child when transitioning. For example, I believe my child is in need of occupational therapy but the school will not do an assessment. I was very pleased with the services my child received through First Steps.

By watching the therapists work with our child, I am more able to work with and understand our child. The therapy sessions were very educational to me. I learned how to play with our child and make it a positive learning experience.

Our speech therapist was absolutely wonderful. She made a world of difference in my son and how we spoke with him. Thank you!

First Steps is a great program, but you need to get the word out. Had I known about it earlier, my child would have benefited more. My Parents As Teachers person should have told me about it sooner. I learned of First Steps from my neighbor who has a child with Down's Syndrome. I thank her for telling me about the program. The communication with First Steps was good. That communication DECLINED when my child started the ECSE system.

The early intervention through First Steps brought my son's speech capabilities up to speed. Through First Steps we were able to address his speech delay before it began to adversely affect many other areas of his development. Our therapist was wonderful and all of the First Steps contacts were very professional, clear and efficient. I am a large supporter of First Steps and strongly encourage the relevant politicians and administrators to keep the program up, running and as expansive as possible. I firmly believe that money expended for services at this young age certainly saves greater amounts of money in the future.

The First Steps program has helped us a lot. Thank you!

Our service coordinator was fabulous!

Our child excelled in his speech development since starting First Steps. We were very happy with the speech therapist. It is a wonderful service.

We moved from Dent County to St. Louis to help our son with more learning resources. First Steps did NOT transfer me. I had to call and call and reapply which was a big hassle. When services FINALLY started in August, they only lasted to mid-December, even though his birthday is January, 2001. Therapists were always calling off appointments. Eventually, I was told in December they weren't coming since his birthday was close and that they needed to work on replacing him with another child. The reason I disagree with many of the questions is because I don't feel as if they even wanted to help my son. I only met and talked to his coordinator once; then never again. His therapists came late and left early to go to other appointments. After the first week in December they randomly picked and chose days they would do therapy. I can count the number of times on ONE hand they came in January although his birthday isn't until the 31st. The biggest reason I wouldn't recommend this program is because I transferred him into school ALONE. I was told they would help me get him into school but I finally picked up the phone and did it myself months AFTER his birthday. He is in school (two weeks now) and doing better in these two weeks than those few months. His teachers are great and therapy lasts an ENTIRE session not just 20-30 minutes. I'm over it now. But I still wouldn't recommend it. Thank you for your time.

Only wish pediatricians were more aware of First Step's wonderful services as another parent informed us.

Getting started was tricky. I believe we were trying to begin when there was a big change in the program in the way coordination was handled. Once we started, things went well.

We are grateful for the services provided through First Steps and feel they were beneficial. The paperwork seemed excessive at times, particularly all the things that were sent by mail. I know a lot of it was disclosures required by law, but it seemed like too much. Everyone we dealt with was professional and very helpful.

Overall, we were very happy and appreciative with our experience with First Steps. Our son has developed in leaps and bounds!

The only complaint I have about the First Steps program is that we had a hard time finding someone to come out to our house and work with our child. We live in a rural area and went through three people before someone would accept responsibility to come on a continuous basis. Once we had found someone, she was great! I was worried at first after the coordinator came to our house that we would not be able to find a teacher. I had some teachers that made appointments and canceled at the last minute. After finding a teacher, I had a great experience with the program.

Getting into First Steps took a while due to case overload and not enough coordinators. We had multiple problems with physical therapy due to unreliability and therapists quitting the company. I got fed up and searched for another therapist in another company. The service coordinator was not thorough in his explanation of services beyond First Steps after my son turned three and did not mention other available resources, i.e. respite care, which I learned about from a social worker that I happened to meet. I felt that some of the therapists treated their sessions with my son like, "Hurry up and let's get this done so I can move on to the next kid", rather than taking the time to really work with him. I think, overall, the experience was beneficial as I learned from the therapists and incorporated much of their functions into my daily routines to help my son develop better. I think the program was more of a teaching tool for me than a learning tool for him.

I had a wonderful experience with First Steps. We just suffered a little disappointment once we reached our school district's services. I wish they were as good! Thank you

Switching service coordinators as often as we did really confused us. We received good service but the timely manner was slowed due to the switching.

I want to thank all of the therapists that helped our child.

Our coordinator was severely out of touch with my son's progress. At our initial meeting with the Early Childhood Development staff at our local school district, she had no clue about what he and his speech therapist had been working on. She didn't know that we had decided to work on another area that he needed more help with. The speech therapist was excellent. The speech coordinator was horribly uninvolved. I was very happy with the speech therapist, but very unhappy with our coordinator.

We were familiar with First Steps with our first child. We really appreciate all the help and information available through this program. I don't know where we would be in assisting our son to develop appropriately without First Steps. We are a little apprehensive about the transition, but since he's not even two yet, we will get to it when it comes. Thanks!

First Steps is a great program. We are so thankful First Steps was available to us.

We would like to thank the First Steps program for all the help they gave to our child and family. We had never heard of the program, but once a need was recognized by our Parents As Teachers person and we were referred to First Steps, things really changed. We are so blessed for the early intervention this program provided for our child. Our caseworkers were GREAT! They helped our son and our family so much. With their help we closed all the gaps in areas of delayed development and other issues that were prevalent in our child. We now have a child that qualifies for NO services and no one would ever suspect any previous delays. I cannot imagine where we would be without the help we have received. Thank you!

Great program for both children. But the school district was too slow in transition and didn't get enough services for her or our son.

Participating in the Missouri First Steps program was a good experience for us as well as our child. I believe she really progressed with the help of her therapists and Parents as Teachers.

We loved our First Steps providers. They were knowledgeable and so helpful and related great with our family.

Parents As Teachers referred me to First Steps. My coordinator was great! Our therapists were awesome! The transition to ECSE was smooth. Our Special Ed teachers and therapists are superb! First Steps is a great program!

My biggest complaint had to do with the lack of urgency I experienced with First Steps after I sent in our paperwork. We received the name of our first contact person and were told she would contact us within two weeks. We never heard from her and I left multiple messages! I started the paperwork in February yet we did not get services until late June. Our son missed out on four months of services because of her incompetence. Once we had our first meeting, things finally moved. Our therapists and service coordinator were great. It was the first person we had to work with who was not helpful. She kept complaining about being understaffed and it took her a month or more to return our initial call. I work at a university with physical therapy and occupational therapy professors. Thankfully, they helped me work the system.

My only complaint is that my child could not receive all of her services in the home because of lack of therapists who would be willing to travel to give my child therapy. My understanding is that therapists are no longer paid mileage yet, under First Steps, a parent can get mileage reimbursement for taking child to a therapist. It is frustrating and would have made my life a lot easier, as well as my child's, had she just been able to receive ALL therapies in the home and therapists that had to travel more than thirty miles to see her should get reimbursed! I just don't understand why it is set up this way.

Because we had a very good case manager who was very familiar with our child's condition, we had great support. We had great difficulty finding providers who would come to our home even before the more recent budget problems. For a child with a suppressed immune system and on a vent, this was crucial. My complaint about the school program has to do with their guidelines for services. For a child who neither walks nor talks (but is making progress toward both) they were not wanting to give much in the way of therapy (one hour per week speech and 30 minutes a week of physical therapy). Without that, he would not have made it to where he is now.

My service coordinator and therapists were excellent. First Steps is a wonderful program and my daughter is proof. Thank you!

First Steps has helped my family a lot. I wish there was a program to help the child from three to five to get the things they need.

I think First Steps was the best thing to happen to our family when we found out that our son had Apraxia. I loved the home environment. I don't know what we would have done without it. Also, I think I had the best service coordinator and speech therapist. They helped me with everything I needed. So thank you to everyone in First Steps. You have been a blessing to our family. Thank you

Those who work with First Steps are extraordinary assets to the program. They were knowledgeable, affable and sincerely interested in our son's success. They were also creative and encouraging. Our son would not be communicating at the outstanding level he is without your help. The coordinating efforts and consideration were outstanding. They was always available and sincere in their concerns. Thank you.

Steps staff seemed lazy doing their part!

There was little direction, few phone calls returned, etc. If it weren't for my parent educator, I suspect we would not have ever received help. However, the therapists were wonderful! After looking back, the hold-up seems to be the actual First Steps employees! Too bad for families like mine...we almost gave up!

We have twin boys. Our one son used the services of First Steps twice. The first time was for his gross motor skills. He had a developmental delay. After receiving services for eight months, he was caught up to his peer level. He re-entered the program at age two and a half for his speech/communication delays along with his brother. We started the process when they turned two in January, but did not receive any services until late August. The delay was very unnecessary. The intake person just did not return calls or seem to place any urgency on the matter. In fact, she only returned calls when I threatened to contact her supervisor. So, due to her inability to process our sons in a timely fashion our sons only received the speech/communication therapy for four and a half months before having to transition to SSD.

This was for only one child. We had two sons go through the program.

First Steps really helped my child. When we first started, she was so frustrated because she had speech delays and could not communicate well. Once she started with a speech therapist she made great improvements and was so much happier. Now she is in ECSE and loves going to school. She has become so much happier. I am glad we had this program to help us get the help for her. I think it has made a great improvement in her life and has helped her prepare for the future (i.e. school, social settings) by getting her the help she needed early.

#13: One of the people who worked with my child was fantastic. The other was not very helpful because she was always ready to leave before she got started.

Pg. 3, #1: I didn't even realize we were not going to need services anymore until we were told by the speech therapist.

Comments: Thank you very much for all of the speech services. The speech therapist is fabulous and we would not have been as successful without her. We miss her.

First Steps was great. Our Parents As Teachers and First Steps coordinators were wonderful and my son got a good start on what was needed for him in the ECSE program. We saw results, not so much in my child's speech right away, but in the way he communicated with others and his confidence. I feel so grateful to the people who helped my son. I now see weekly results. Thank you!

I especially liked the freedom of choosing my own therapists. I did have to change therapists once. More flexibility in remaining in First Steps after the third birthday would be nice. My daughter turned three on March 17 and so had to go on to ECSE for the last two months and then minimal time in "summer school". Perhaps the kindergarten cut off could be used to send them to ECSE? I feel that she would have made more progress during the last six months had she been able to stay in First Steps. She has actually regressed in gross motor skills.

This is an awesome program! My child would not have made the progress she has without it. I have referred other families to the program. The service coordinator was very helpful.

If it had not been up to my husband, my four year old son would not be going to school. The school did not listen to our concerns and came in with an IEP (first one) written. They did not want to address our concerns as I have seen in another district where I taught for 11 years. They have their plan and seem to make all children "fit" into it rather than what works for the child. My other child's transition meeting is soon and she gets the "same" plan, but her levels are completely different so no individualization except, "Insert name here".

Question #1: We were fortunate to know someone who knew about First Steps and could direct us to the right numbers we needed to call. Therefore, we were able to get our services right away. If you don't know the right people, it doesn't seem as if anyone has ever heard of First Steps.

Question #4: Only found out by Children's Mercy.

Question #7: Preschool

Overwhelmed with so many people coming in my home. Services seemed to overlap. Could have been accomplished with less people in the home. Some therapists were excellent while others were poor.

We need more speech therapy, which the school district is unwilling to provide. The IEP was pretty much set before the meeting was held.

Our child is not in a special needs group, so most of these questions do not apply. Parents As Teachers referred our child because he did not hold or use scissors properly. Since we did not think of letting a two year old use scissors, it was our fault. Our child was in the program six months and our service provider missed or canceled about 50% of the appointments. She did a good job when she was here.

The First Steps program helped my son greatly! I have nothing but good things to say of this program. When my son first started, he couldn't talk. All he could do was grunt and point to what he wanted. By the end of the program he was speaking! I've recommended this program to anyone who says their child needs help and everyone else I know with kids who have delays in development. You guys are the best at what you do! Please keep up the good work!

I don't know if we are currently receiving all of the services listed in the IEP because we just started on August 25, 2004.

First Steps not only financially helped us but helped us to receive all the services our child needed and we are very thankful.

We had difficulty locating a phone number (could a listing be added to phone book) at the start. Our service providers and service coordinator were terrific! The change in our child's abilities was profound and lasting as a result of all members of his team (occupational, physical, nutrition and service coordinator). Every interaction with these individuals was caring and professional. The purpose of paperwork mailed to our house was unclear. The monthly statements of services and billing appeared a poor use of resources given that we were not paying for these services. Also, the "measles-tested" paperwork and request for tax forms also seemed excessive given that we do not pay.

It took numerous phone calls to get things started. I finally left a message saying it would be the last time I called. I finally got a call back. I had been warned it would be hard to get through. The speech therapist was wonderful with my son. She helped him a lot in the short time she worked with him. My only regret is I wish I had known about this program sooner so he could have received the one-on-one sessions more than three and a half months.

I just wanted to say that I know my son didn't receive First Steps until it was almost too late and our service coordinator was suppose to check in by phone once a month. I didn't hear anything from her until the Transition meeting three weeks before my son was to start ECSE.

Our service coordinator was our first contact in this process. She was wonderful! She was always very encouraging to me personally as a mom and so kind/compassionate toward my child. She is a wonderful asset to this organization.

Our three-year-old evaluation with First Steps resulted in our child not needing services. However, when he was tested at the school, they felt he needed Title I services. That was March or April of 2004. The plan was to start him in Title I at the beginning of this school year. He has currently been in Title I since August 23. He attends two days a week, 8:25-11:25. He is doing well at this time. We have not had an IEP yet.

As a provider and a parent with the First Steps program, I am extremely disappointed in the intake and eligibility process. My child was initially denied services by an intake coordinator without a speech evaluation being conducted. The intake coordinator said that since the doctor and Parents As Teachers had not documented a fifty percent delay that he was not eligible for services. Had I not been a provider and understood the eligibility process I probably would have thought my child was fine. When, in actuality, after being evaluated, he did have not only a fifty percent delay but also a hearing loss. How many kids have we missed due to situations like mine?

I found the First Steps program to be very helpful. If it wasn't for First Steps, my son would not have received good therapy.

Once we finally got a speech therapist that had an open schedule, my child was almost two years old. So, my child only got about seven months of services. There are not enough workers for the children. They don't have open schedules.

#3: Because he was almost three when he started but there was a meeting and it did go very well.

#7: Head Start for other child without special needs.

First Steps was an incredible program that helped two of our children. Without First Steps we wouldn't have been able to afford the hearing aids that both our children needed. We are very grateful for First Steps and the wonderful support! Because of early intervention, my second son who also received services wasn't given an IEP. The school district has denied all further help to us because he was doing so well. This was a very nice surprise but also very upsetting considering he has a genetic progressive hearing loss and will wear hearing aids for the rest of his life. Early intervention really worked here but now it is to the detriment of my son. I somehow feel that we almost would have been better in some ways to not intervene and then he would get the help that he will need in the future. I was told by the school district that we would have to wait for my son to fail in order to receive any further services. Something about that just doesn't seem right especially after all the hard work that my son, the teachers, and our family have done!

I think they took my son out of the special education program and I think my son might still need some of these services. One thing that I can say, he wants to learn. He still stutters when he talks. Can you please send me a list of head starts in my area for my three-year-old daughter? She's potty trained and she knows her ABC's already. Thanks

My child does not receive as good a quality of therapies with the school system as she received through First Steps. The help she received through First Steps and Children's TLC was much more thorough with more hours of therapy.

Our child is continuing to attend a private school for hearing impaired children. I do feel our district will be very helpful when the time comes.

Our coordinator was very knowledgeable and proactive. She did a great job and really helped our family! We are grateful for First Step's help. We went through early intervention in Texas with our deaf son and it was not nearly as positive an experience.

Outstanding service!

#4 & #5: Our school district does not offer speech therapy at her daycare, therefore, I am unable to use the districts speech services!

I am just thrilled to see my daughter's progress with her speech. The First Steps program is certainly a blessing for speech delayed kids.

Our speech therapist was wonderful! My child made great improvements working with her and she worked our schedule so well. Thank you so much!

It is an excellent program that will help better the chance of young children to become productive adults in the state of Missouri.

We had four service providers throughout our time in the First Steps program. Three were excellent, but one, unfortunately the first one, was rigid in her teaching techniques. Our son did not respond to her techniques and she did not attempt to adapt despite his resistance and our suggestions. If not for this one provider, the answers to Questions 6 and 13 would be "Strongly Agree". First Steps is a remarkable program, saving children and families, but our child was two before we even heard of it, although he probably would have qualified much earlier. Missouri pediatricians need to be bombarded with information about First Steps since they are the first people families talk to about developmental delays and concerns.

First Steps was the conduit we needed to get to where we are now. Had it not been for the therapy my son received last summer we would not be as advanced as we are today. Our speech therapist "unlocked the vault" that my son was living in and helped him learn how to think about appropriate speech, talking and motor-neuron connections.

Our therapist was very helpful with me and my son even though we didn't have very much time with her. I wished that there would have been better information out to the public about the First Steps program! I would have had my son in A LOT sooner than I did!

Without the help of First Steps, we don't know where our child would be. This program gave him the intervention he needed. Our speech provider and service coordinator were not always easy to reach or were not always helpful, but our developmental and occupational therapists were wonderful. Overall, this program was extremely beneficial to my son. Our child has an Autism disorder. He now talks and participates in social activities. First Steps is an invaluable program to our family.

The service coordinator provided little or no help. She rarely attended the meetings and provided no information or help with my son's transition out of First Steps. She was very difficult to contact and usually a myriad of personal crisis' prevented her from helping our child or family. Our physical therapist and occupational therapist are outstanding professional caregivers who truly helped our child and our family. A number of early intervention providers helped us in so many ways and we are most grateful.

I did not know about First Steps until my Parents As Teachers told me about it.

First Steps has done a great job with helping my daughter. She has developed in areas that I thought would take her a long time to get her where she needed to be. I really do appreciate all the help and needs the First Steps program has helped us with. All the staff has done a great job with working with us. I really do appreciate it.

First Steps is a very good program that needs to stay in progress. For a program that we initially were not aware of, it has helped me and my family. I give high praise to the First Steps program. Keep the program going.

I believe that the area that our family had the most trouble with was getting hold of our service coordinator. I do thank God though for First Steps and the services that they provided for my daughter that otherwise we could not afford!

I am very grateful for the First Steps program. Our child has a speech and fine motor delay. Without this program I am unsure of how he would have progressed. Our child had speech therapy and fine motor skills therapy every week. We were able to communicate with our child a lot better through this therapy and his tantrums became controllable. I was finally able to communicate with my child. This has also helped our child to transition into other programs. He is currently enrolled and attending Head Start in Savannah where he continues seeing a speech therapist. First Steps gave me the tools I needed to be a better parent and I would hate to see that taken away from the children that really need it.

First Steps was crucial to our three-year-old learning to talk (he has Apraxia). At two and a half he could not talk at all and now at three and a half he is almost appropriate for his age. Our daughter (a year and a half old) has the same speech concerns. With the continued help of First Steps, we are confident she will have the same success as our son. Our hope is our son will no longer need speech by kindergarten. Our daughter, if First Steps is continued, may even be phased out by three or four. This program is so very important to our children's social and emotional well being. Not being able to communicate hinders any possibility of friendship or self-confidence.

The therapists felt like our son was up to his age level in development, so they quit before his third birthday. We feel his development has been quite normal lately and don't feel we need extra community services that are available.

I love the First Steps program. Before First Steps we were not able to communicate with our son. Toward the end of our First Steps program we had a therapist come to our home two nights a week. She was great with our son. After each session she gave us an update on his progression. She also gave us information on things to practice with him at home. My son did not use IFSP because of the county we live in and the school our son attends. My son is doing so well that he was screened last week and scored above his age range. It all started with First Steps. Thanks from a grateful mom.

It's a great help to know that First Steps and Parents As Teachers are there to help one way or another. Thanks for the help of my child.

I must share that the speech, developmental and occupational therapists changed our lives in First Steps. These three ladies helped my son immensely with his diagnosis of PDD. Without First Steps, I don't know where my son and our family would be today. Because of First Steps, my son and I were able to attend the three week Parent Training program and my husband and I came out feeling so powerful and full of knowledge. I now do sessions at home with my son every day. I thank God for the First Steps program everyday. Thank you for your time.

We hope that the Governor does not cancel First Steps, as do many other parents.

Overall, I was very pleased with our experience with First Steps. My child stopped First Steps in September (physical therapy). In August we had a speech evaluation. She was behind but did not qualify for services. Now at twenty six months she is testing at eighteen months and she still doesn't qualify. This is frustrating since other states require only a 25% delay. I feel a 50% delay for qualification is a injustice to a child.

First Steps is an excellent program. I don't know what we would have done without it. I hope our government officials (Matt Blunt) can show us how important our children are to them by keeping First Steps available to all. Everyone I met at First Steps was extremely well educated and helpful.

The special education service of First Steps has really been a big help to our family by showing other ways to communicate.

In the beginning we had trouble getting First Steps started - lots of miscommunication and a lot of unreturned phone calls. After services started and we began working with our therapists, things were better. We just don't feel that our child's condition improved with services from First Steps. He has improved tremendously since attending the school for therapy. If we were referred to First Steps again, we would probably not choose to use them. Thanks for your time.

I was not overly impressed with First Steps. The way things were explained did not occur the way they should and instead of rescheduling we were just informed when she arrived. Things started very slowly. I will say our therapist was good with our child, but cancelled a lot of our appointments or rescheduled. That was disappointing because we knew when our daughter's PCP ordered this that our time would be limited. I do firmly believe in the program, though I feel it should be offered until children are school age. Children are more comfortable in their own environments. Thank you for your time and for this service that got our daughter started back on the right track.

I have had a difficult time regarding someone about payment for past services. I keep receiving a bill.

I enjoyed having First Steps and the help we received. I do feel however that my child needs to continue the First Steps program but the services were cancelled. I would like for them to continue at least until my child turns three or four.

Our child is doing very good. The physical therapy was beneficial for our child and very comforting to us as parents. Thank you.

First Steps helped our family at a time when we needed it most. The program is valuable to parents with children with special needs and we are very grateful for all the help we received through this program. Thank you.

While it took three plus months from the time we filled out paperwork until a service coordinator contacted us, when we did start therapy it was wonderful. We were able to find a way to reach my child and teach her to speak by breaking down each word and giving her verbal cues on how to move her mouth/tongue. She still has a lot of difficulty with this, but without the training from our therapists, our daughter would be a much different child. Before she was only saying "dada" and now she has about 80 plus words in her vocabulary. She was diagnosed with PDD but the training we received was invaluable. I truly hope this program continues for families like ours who desperately needed help!

My husband and I are very pleased that such a wonderful program as First Steps exists. We've talked with others that agree. How could anyone not support such a dedicated program for children. Anyone with any LIFE EXPERIENCE knows how special children are and how important it is to do whatever is necessary to aide in their growth and development.

My foster son came into care at almost two years old with 50% developmental delays across the board. First Steps was a much needed and appreciated resource in helping to deal with his many special needs. Therapists were able to help give me strategies for managing his SI disorder and loan equipment so I could follow through with therapies on a daily basis. With the help of First Steps therapists he has made remarkable progress. There would be devastating consequences if it were cut from the state budget. SHAME ON OUR GOVERNOR!

If it wasn't for the Missouri First Steps program and receiving a jump start on our son's speech problem, we would still be unable to understand him. They catered to our son's needs and made a huge improvement with him. Since starting First Steps and then going through ECSE our son has went from only being able to say five words that we were able to understand to what he is able to speak today. Being able to carry on more conversations and even telling US stories is wonderful. This is just a big heartfelt thank you in the improvement in one child and family that you have helped. This program was and still is a life saver for several families. Once again, thank you for giving our little son a chance to be able to communicate. Thank you.

I think it is a great program. It helped our girls get the help they needed but couldn't afford.

The First Steps program helped us with our son and his speech problems. We were very impressed with how organized and knowledgeable the women were that we worked with. They were truly appreciated. I was, however, very disappointed after the transition out of First Steps into the care of the school district. Even though our son's speech was definitely helped and was no longer qualified for help through the school system, the schools communication with us was not there. Our caseworker and I had to make a lot of unnecessary phone calls to finally figure out that we were no longer qualified. Their communication with our speech therapist was not good either.

My son was not able to do anything a full term child could do and the people at CP Center helped us significantly. I appreciate everything you guys do. Thanks.

First Steps was a great move for us. Our daughter's only problem is her speech. She did have problems with new people in transition, but is much better with this. She does receive speech therapy in Kentucky through Head Start and is doing very well.

Our experience with First Steps was a good one with the therapists that we had. Our service coordinator was extremely incompetent. But, because of that, I am now a service coordinator for First Steps and feel that I do a very good job because I know how I would not want to be treated because of our experience.

I am really glad that my son was able to receive the help from First Steps. I know for a fact that if my son had not received this help he would not be as far as he is today. There was nothing I could have done on my own.

Early intervention programs like First Steps are vital in assisting children with special needs to reach their full potential. Without the help of First Steps, I don't believe our son would be thriving and reaching his development milestones. At the age of two our son was basically non-verbal. Now at the age of three years and six months, he is fully communicating and catching up with his peers in language and other areas of development.

This is a great program and is vital to my child's development! Thank you everyone.

Q7: We were in until she turned three years old.

First Steps is a great program. Without them my child wouldn't be where she is today. First Steps provided us with a speech therapist. We could not afford this. I will be forever grateful for First Steps. They led me step by step through each phase. They made sure I understood everything. If I didn't understand, they would explain everything to me again. Any problems that I had they fixed as soon as possible. Without this program my daughter wouldn't have been able to have help until she turned three. Early intervention is the best way to help children with special needs. Thank you so very much for letting my daughter and I be a part of this program.

A transition meeting is currently being scheduled. The initial process of getting evaluations and developing the IFSP was not completely clear. I was also unclear of the role of the service coordinator. I had minimal contact with the service coordinator and was unsure of the coordinator/parent role. Overall, I do not think my child would be where he is today without the services he received as part of the First Steps program.

Our service coordinator was very helpful and easy to get in touch with. My child received services quickly. The whole process went very smoothly. Please let me know if there is any way I can help support the future of this program.

I feel First Steps helped us to get our loving child back. My son does not have severe disabilities. He has sensory integration problems and fine motor delay. Our insurance would not have covered any treatment. My son's fine motor skills have caught up to age appropriate and we have all learned how to deal with and handle the sensory issues. We would have been lost without First Steps.

We are very appreciative of the services provided through First Steps. All individuals were knowledgeable and sensitive of our needs.

They have helped my child in talking more clearly and just talking all together.

Our son is apraxic and was diagnosed as such through our First Steps speech language pathologist. If not for First Steps, we wouldn't have been knowledgeable enough to help our son. We were directed to an Apraxia Children's Network that also gave us information and led to a support group. Thank you First Steps! He continues to make wonderful progress through the ECSE program, but we believe that success is building on the success of First Steps. Please save First Steps for other families!

My son's speech/language pathologist was instrumental in helping him to be able to speak with us (his parents) and others in a meaningful way. I firmly believe that without the interventions received through the First Steps program, my son would have been three years of age and still unable to express himself and interact with others verbally. The positive impact of the program on my son's life is ultimately immeasurable but also undeniable.

To put it mildly, I was appalled that Governor Blunt would consider putting First Steps on the chopping block. My first grader is now off of an IEP due to the extraordinary efforts of First Steps and her therapists. My son will be four in April and has made tremendous strides as a direct result of First Steps. Both children have Galactosemia, a disorder that causes language and speech delays, learning disabilities, fine motor and sensory problems. I believe both of them will grow up to be contributing, tax paying citizens and will more than repay any debt the state of Missouri might owe as a result of their disorder. This "first step" toward a better future not only helps my family, but all of Missouri. Thank you.

I love the fact that the therapists were able to come to our home to work with our child. It was very convenient especially because our child does not like to wait for appointments. Everyone we worked with was very professional and helpful. That took a lot of stress off of our family. Thank you

It's not the First Steps program that is the problem. They were great. It is the school system that we are having to deal with that is the major problem. Our service coordinator has been great in helping the family in all ways possible to deal with the horrible situations at the school.

Q13: They all made an effort to learn all they could about it on their own and with information I provided them.

We are so grateful for all the help we've gotten through First Steps. Because of my son's high muscle tone, tactile defensiveness, and all his delays, he did (and still does) require physical, occupational and speech therapy. Because of all his therapy and doctor appointments, I was forced to quit working. Without First Steps, we would not have been able to afford the therapy he needed. I can't think of anything I would change about the program. All his therapists not only worked well with him one-on-one, but gave us a lot of good advice and things for us to do with him from day to day to help him. He's shown significant improvement in all areas and we're very thankful!

Biggest problem is Point of Entry. Not enough people were doing this efficiently. Overall, we were very satisfied.

Shouldn't be shut down! Good resource for early intervention to prevent long term problems as in our case. Premie baby got help and today is a normal three-year-old.

I felt that my family greatly benefited from this program and I would recommend it highly.

By the time I learned about First Steps our child was almost at the age where they exit First Steps. We only saw our case manager two times and the two ladies who tested him.

Question 10: Once we were assigned a coordinator!! Question 15: I educated myself. Leaving Question 1: I don't know but I don't think he would qualify based on his progress. We entered First Steps when it was transitioning to SSD and we "slipped through the cracks". It took five to six months from my initial contact until my son was evaluated. He only had a speech/language delay and only needed services for six months and he made significant progress. He was functioning at age appropriate levels and I did not feel the need to obtain further services through ECSE. I hope Governor Blunt and our legislation continues to support these services for families. Early intervention is the key to success for the future of our state!

Q4: Our Parents As Teachers teacher told us about it.

Q6: It took a long time to receive services and we were not always getting called back.

After we had our child evaluated, the process took some time. The coordinator set up a meeting with us and the initial evaluation. I was never asked separately what I wanted for my child and when I was asked if I wanted this provider's services in front of that provider, I felt like I had to say yes. I think my child would have had better First Steps instruction at KECC or at another child development center. I am skeptical somewhat of the individual providers. My child's therapy in First Steps was adequate, although, compared to what he receives now, there is no comparison. The coordinators efforts were minimal. I had few returned phone calls and I felt lucky to have anyone call me back at all. When I was offered services at the "set up" meeting with both the therapist and coordinator, I was just grateful to have any services. I felt something was better than nothing. The "coordinator bills" I was sent copies of; I had no idea what they were for. I think First Steps needs to do a lot of work to get out the "red tape" and rid high fee administration costs. It is time consuming and I'm not sure they are even working hard at all. The parents ought to choose whomever they want as a therapist instead of choosing names off a website list. I hope my comments have been helpful. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings but I think some improvements could be made.

I'm grateful for the services provided to our family by First Steps. Thanks.

Our experience with First Steps was very positive for us and our child. Our son is now involved with ECSC. The experience with Springfield Public Schools has not been especially good. They could learn about interacting with parents from the First Steps program.

First Steps is a great program that served as an informational stepping stone for our family. After completing the qualifying process and reviewing a potential IEP for our child, we decided to go a different route by utilizing a one-on-one speech therapy treatment through a private organization. Socialization skills with peers is achieved through our local preschool. Thank you for all the time and we feel our child has excelled with our chosen path.

I hope, in the future, the service coordinators are monitored more carefully. We were in the program for nearly two years and my service coordinator did NOT contact me ONCE. I found out towards the end of our program time, that she was indeed, supposed to play a role in this process and she was being PAID for it. This angered me that she took advantage of my son and our family and it was a disappointment towards the program itself. I was very confused throughout the whole program and did not have any way to obtain information.

Q5: Explained in a way that teachers or others with experience in the area understood.

Q6: My service coordinator did NOT do her job AT ALL! As a result, I was shifted from one to another at the very end of the program.

Q7: I received information and very brief explanations.

Q9: She never returned calls.

Q10: She never returned calls.

Q11: Going through the program was a learning process. I was unlucky because I had a lousy service coordinator who was not there for us to help us through this.

Q16: Off the charts agree with this statement!

Midsection/Pg 3 Q1: This was an area I was VERY confused with. As I said before, our service coordinator really let us down. I hope this position will be monitored more closely in the future to prevent another event like I had.

When my daughter started her speech therapy with First Steps, she said, "Uh", for everything. We had a speech therapist work with her twice a week. When she exited, she was using the correct sounds for words and knew some basic sign language. This program made a huge difference for us. We never could have afforded to have a speech therapist in our home without it; plus the added advantage of having someone available when we were available.

The First Steps program is great. It would create a disservice and a disadvantage to many young children with disabilities if eliminated.

Without the early intervention provided to my son through the First Steps program, doctors, therapists, as well as ourselves, realize he would not have recovered so much brain function. With my son's type of brain injury (skull fracture and bleed resulting in oxygen deprivation) we have been told early intervention was the only way to recover most brain function. He is walking, talking and even reading a little because of this early intervention. SAVE FIRST STEPS PLEASE!

Awesome program. I don't know what we would have done without it.

The First Steps program was a wonderful program. Our son is doing so well, and we believe that we have to give most of the credit to the therapists that were given to us through the First Steps program. We wouldn't of been able to afford all the services, even with health insurance. Our health insurance we have is through the state and as of right now, I think they only allow you to have six or eight visits. That would have given our son two weeks worth of therapy and if that would be the case, he wouldn't be doing as well as he is. He now attends the Special Learning Center thanks to our school district.

Don't know what we would do or had done without First Steps. Wonderful program.

My child made good progress while in First Steps and I was allowed to help make choices for her. We have not been that successful with ECSE. I often wish this process was more like First Steps.

We moved to Missouri from Washington when our child was one and a half years old. It was hard to connect to First Steps. After we were connected we had excellent experiences inside the program. Our service coordinator was being promoted at the time of his transition, so the transition did not go well. I did not like my new service coordinator and did not call her for help. My child did not have a communication system in place by the time he turned three. I wonder if he fell through the cracks on that issue? Overall, I was very pleased with First Steps and was grateful that the services were available. We would not have been able to afford the services on our own or known which services to have sought out.

I listed six and seven for ECC. You people need to have a talk with the principal because I do not agree with her action when it comes to my child's care. You DON'T put your hands on my child and try to rip her out of her mother's hand when told to let go. She wouldn't so she MADE her. Don't know the lady's name but I don't appreciate the comments that were made plus being threatened by the police for looking out for my child. You WILL respect what I say there will be no spanking or jerking on my children because if it ever happened again, I will take legal actions against the school and that person. I will not have my girls treated bad or abused by anyone. Basically, what I am saying is there will be no corporal punishment accepted at all. That is very illegal and I will punish anyone that does anything to my girls like smacking them or jerking on their arms, paddling, etc. This will not be acceptable.

My child was first evaluated in October of 2003 at 25 months of age for speech and language delays. Her speech score was at a nine month level, but her comprehension was on target. Because of this, she was declined services. Six months later, the speech therapist called back to see if there had been any improvements. There had not. She turned in another evaluation and finally had it approved. By this time, my child was drastically behind peers her own age and for weekly services, it was too little too late. Since the transition, my child has been receiving services four days a week and has made remarkable progress in her speech and language development. She almost enjoys playing with peers her own age now too. I just think it's a shame that help had to be delayed at all.

The process of getting into the First Steps program was very lengthy and drawn out. We started before he was two (1 yr and 8 months) and didn't start to get services for another four to five months. So by then, we were even talking about transitioning at three when we had just started. The process to get on board needs to be faster so precious time isn't wasted. I loved our therapist and feel it was definitely worth it. This is a program worth fighting for! Keep First Steps!

Question 4: It was easy to learn about First Steps? NO. I found out about First Steps by a miracle of my God! My son was receiving speech therapy thirty-five minutes away for a thirty minute session (after everything was said and done, only 20 minutes) twice a week. I began looking for something closer, which led to four or five calls to places that said, "Well, try this number. They might know of therapy somewhere". What frustration. The rest of question four was so easy for us. I appreciated it. After being in First Steps only three weeks, we had his first breakthrough with speech. And, because our speech therapist had some knowledge in other areas, he was evaluated for physical therapy and now, one year later, our son's problems are more under control and he is very loving. Thank you for sending us this survey! What an awesome program.

They don't do a good job. Half the time my service coordinator or child's therapist didn't know how to handle her disabilities and she didn't respect confidentiality.

First Steps helped our family and our special child a great deal. We need more programs like this to help us with our ongoing needs. First Steps is great!

First Steps is vital to the success, growth and development of children birth to three years. Our family, especially my son, has made progress with help and early intervention. Without a program such as First Steps our youth would be deprived of so many developmental milestones.

We are currently getting speech and hearing services through the MOOG Center for Deaf Education. Physical and occupational services are being provided by the early childhood program in our local school district.

I was not aware of First Steps until a friend referred us. The program was great for my son. The transition into ECSE was wonderful for him. His issues (speech and language) has increased tremendously, which makes us happy. His frustration level has decreased to almost nothing. Without the in-home therapy our son would not be where he is today! Thank you!

Thanks to the First Steps program, my son was able to obtain early intervention to aid with his low muscle tone and was able to catch up to all appropriate developmental milestones within six months. He was then released from the program and has been doing great ever since. If it weren't for First Steps, I'm afraid he would have gotten too far behind at a young age. Now he is able to just be normal. We loved our therapist.

We had to remove my grandson shortly after he was introduced to it because the doctors wanted to get him stabilized after putting him on the ketogenic diet in October 2003, shortly after he began seeing therapists. When they first started coming for therapy he was experiencing a lot of seizures of all kinds so it was difficult to do anything but just hold him and comfort him through the seizure episodes which were very frequent, usually just minutes apart. In my opinion it is a very good program.

I think that anyone who works with First Steps should have children of their own. That way they will know just what people go through all the time. No one should ever say they know what people go through if they do not have kids. If you don't have kids, then how would they know.

It is an excellent program. I have had four of my children involved in it. Just a great program!

First Steps 0-3 program is INVALUABLE! We moved to St. Louis specifically to participate in Missouri's highly reputable First Steps program. We were assigned an incredibly knowledgeable service coordinator, who was and is always timely and professional as well as genuine and understanding. Though there seemed to be a great deal of paperwork, rules and regulations and other formalities, service commenced promptly. We were connected with outstanding service providers who remain friends, supporters and resources. Governor Matt Blunt is ludicrous to even suggest disposing of this program as doing so would be a significant detriment to the many, many children with disabilities (and their families) that will follow in the years to come.

Q5: Not enough therapists...cancelled special services co-op Windsor

It has been a while since we received First Steps services. I really have mixed feelings as it has really helped our son's speech problems. I tried the special co-op Windsor and they really made receiving services DIFFICULT! They only had one therapist available to us and she was very hard to schedule because she was "booked up". I had to cancel and use ONLY the HEAD START program which I think has helped my son TREMENDOUSLY! Thank you.

It was the absolute best thing ever that could have happened to our son.

Both of my children received services from First Steps and are doing well. They would both be considerably behind had they not received these services.

I do not feel that our service coordinator provided much help. She would rarely contact me. However, I was very happy with the intake coordinator and the therapists that my son saw. Overall, I was very pleased with my First Steps experience.

We had a TERRIBLE time with service coordination until the last few months. Only one service coordinator seemed willing to do anything to help. The others didn't call, visit or respond to calls that I made to them.

First Steps had such a wonderful impact on our family. I would hate to see an end to it. I think the people are overworked and understaffed.

To the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

I am a parent of a child with Down's Syndrome. In response to the recent consideration of cutting a very important program; the First Steps program started with my son at the early age of three months and continued until he was three years old. While coming out to our home, they taught us many things. Our son had four different types of therapy which included physical therapy, which taught him how to crawl, sit-up, and eventually walk; occupational therapy, which taught him to use hand and eye coordination such as building blocks, and snapping together objects; developmental therapy (which is not normally covered by insurance) which taught him to be more patient and to do many early childhood abilities and speech therapy, the most important to us. In addition, our son has many other issues. He has low muscle tone that creates a big problem when he eats his food or drinks from his bottle. The therapist taught us how to teach him to do all of these important things. We would not have known what to do if they hadn't taught us how to do this. Through the last three and half years I have grown as my son has grown! We have learned together, and I have been able to teach him what I have learned through therapy. I would not have known what to do if we didn't have the First Steps program as a guide through the most crucial years of my son's life. You never know what to expect whenever you have a child, but you know they are a gift. I want to thank God for my very special gift. I want to thank First Steps for helping my husband and I go through what we have been through with our child. He is now in preschool. He is doing very well and is keeping up with his peers for the time being. I know that if we hadn't had the First Steps program he would not be where he is today.

I don't speak English well. So I need to understand in Spanish.

Parents As Teachers needs to let parents know about First Steps as soon as they see a sign of delay. She did not let us know until almost three years of age.

I feel that without First Steps help and therapy, my son would still not be able to communicate with us and he would be very frustrated. I am very grateful for all the program has done for my family. Thank you.

I am so very thankful for the First Steps program. This was my third child to go through it. All three of my boys benefited greatly from First Steps and ECSE. The two oldest are in school now and no longer require services. It was great to have an involved service coordinator who helped us through each step. The therapists we used were all very knowledgeable, friendly and extremely helpful, especially in giving us suggestions of things we could do to help our children in between sessions. I think First Steps is a wonderful program. I don't know what we would have done without it.

If it was not for the First Steps program, I would have had to take out a loan to get my daughter's hearing aides. My insurance company would not pay anything for her hearing aids. They said it was an exclusion from our plan. My county doesn't have a special program to meet the needs of a hearing impaired child. My daughter goes to a deaf school. She is making great progress. She was also able to utilize the early intervention program.

I thought the First Steps program was wonderful. But there were a few areas needing improvement. My service coordinator never returned my calls and eventually dropped our case without letting me know. I found out through someone else. And the speech therapist cancelled more than she came. Nevertheless, my son showed great improvement.

My son no longer receives services from First Steps, but when he did, I was very happy with the services and the people we worked with. Thank you.

The service coordinator should be better trained to evaluate services needed. Perhaps service providers themselves should also perform service coordination tasks.

A good program concept, but there is room for improvement and changes that would benefit families and save the state money.

I was extremely happy with all of the services provided, most especially the therapists. If it weren't for this program, our daughter would not be at the level she is now. She is still developmentally delayed but the strides she made were fabulous. This program helped our family learn to work with and better understand a special needs child. Thank you so much.

First Steps helped our child with his disability and to transition to Special Education smoothly. I'm not sure that we would have found out how to get into Special Education without First Steps.

Our lives would have been much different without the help and direction of First Steps. This is a wonderful service for children who might not otherwise get the developmental needs they must have in order to thrive and eventually become independent. Thanks to our wonderful providers we were also able to identify other developmental delays too. The faster we can "close the gap" and transition our daughter to a typically developing classroom of kids the better. Once in First Steps, my concerns were finally validated and I was able to learn how to help my child effectively. Our therapists were outstanding. They are very professional and I will forever be thankful to them and the First Steps program. We must keep this program for the future of our children! The kids and families you help truly need the help more than anyone. Thank you.

First Steps was incredible. I don't know where my daughter's development would be now if it wasn't for First Steps. My coordinator was the best. She was very helpful, answered all my questions, and tried to help us in anyway that she could. With First Steps' help I am confident that my daughter will be on task for kindergarten. Please save First Steps for other children!

Although we have health insurance, if it were not for First Steps and the therapy through the school district, we would be financially stressed and I do not believe my son would have made the exceptional progress that he has.

The First Steps program, counselors, speech therapists, and service coordinators have all been a huge help for my family's well being and for my son's ability to overcome his speech delay. I'm very grateful for all of the time and help we received, especially my son's speech therapist. She understood his needs, addressed them and helped him learn how to communicate with friends and family.

Need to reimburse providers quicker.

This is an important program and we were very grateful for the help to our daughter and our family!

First Steps was a great program for our son. We saw progress and were quickly able to communicate better. The First Steps coordinator communicated with us all the time regarding testing, services available, and next steps to take in his development. It was important to us as parents to set attainable goals for our son and First Steps did that. It was encouraging to see all of the goals achieved.

Before First Steps we could not communicate with our son and after receiving the speech therapy he needed he has already made a huge improvement! We cannot be thankful enough for the availability of this program. Without it I do not know where our son would be in his developmental delay!

We had a great transition moving from Illinois to First Steps in Missouri. We are very grateful for the great assistance that was given. Thank you very much. It was money well spent.

Need to reimburse the providers quicker.

It is invaluable to families who have a child with a disability. Early intervention helped our whole family. Gov. Blunt needs to keep First Steps for all families to get an appropriate jump in life.

The First Steps program was a good program. My son enjoyed it.

The state should look into other ways to fund for education. EDUCATION is one of the important steps in a child's life. Without education, you have nothing! The state should not cut the funds or budget for First Steps. The state needs to look into other ways to fund the Parents As Teachers program after the age of three and up to the age of five. Signed, a concerned parent of a child in ECSE and in elementary education.

My son was diagnosed with Dysphagia (swallowing disorder) and Dyspraxia of speech. Before First Steps, he could not talk and communicate with us. We felt very fortunate to have the help and therapy we received.

It seemed to take a long time and much paperwork to get into First Steps. I felt like my daughter needed help immediately, by the time I found out about First Steps. Perhaps kids with certain defects/conditions (i.e., congenital heart disease) should be put in contact with a service coordinator before problems come up so that when problems do come up (feedings, etc.) parents will know where to turn. Physicians and other healthcare professionals should be better informed about the program so that they can refer patients.

I believe the First Steps program is essential in giving our young children the head start they need before they are eligible for services through the school districts. I believe the program helped my child be a more active participant in social settings and at home. I hope that First Steps continues to provide these necessary benefits to Missouri's children.

First Steps has made a HUGE difference in our son's life. He has a very unique diagnoses and First Steps was very helpful in addressing his needs and plan for his continued development.

Even though our daughter was born premature, she seemed to be perfectly normal except for sleep apnea problems.

I remember it took about 6-8 weeks to get my calls returned to look into qualifying for First Steps. Once we met with the service coordinator, she was very effective in getting the program started. This survey is better served through an interview or conversation. We had a wonderful physical therapist and coordinator until the fall of 2005. The service coordination to speech therapy was delayed several months due to lack of communication from the second service coordinator. Then we had two to three speech therapists who lacked the expertise and were very ineffective. One actually cancelled or didn't show up most of the time. Now we're involved with the school district and the difference is night and day!

I am eternally grateful for all that First Steps did for my son. He is doing remarkably well and I know this is a result of First Steps's and God's intervention. Thank you so very much.

This program has impacted my child for life! Her speech was so poor and inappropriate for her age when she began. It is shocking how well she speaks now. She went from saying no words at eighteen months to reaching age-appropriate speech at three years old. If she had not had such early intervention, I am afraid to think of the speech problems plus the associated emotional and social challenges she would be facing now. Our speech therapist and was a wonderful and effective professional!

This early intervention was pivotal for my daughter's development. I think this program is priceless and just needs to be more well-known. I happened to have a very proactive pediatrician who helped us get involved.

The First Steps program was instrumental in the development of our son. At age two and a half, our son was diagnosed with Fragile X Syndrome which is the most common inherited cause of mental impairment. There is no cure and the only treatment is early intervention. Fortunately for us, we were already enrolled in First Steps and have been told by various different professionals that his good progress to date was in large part due to the First Steps program. We are so grateful for this program as it is so important at this young age. The only negative experience we've had was when we transitioned to ECSE, the amount of therapy decreased and went from private therapy to group therapy. We feel our son could be getting more benefit from therapy and/or private therapy as we had with First Steps. Thank you.

First Steps was such a positive experience for my child and I. The service providers tried all they could to get him into the special preschool. He ended up not qualifying, which is good in a way; because he improved so much. Our therapist was so good with my son. He enjoyed her visits very much. First Steps did get him into outreach preschool which I also thought was very good for him. He is now in a private preschool and doing well socially. He still is a little slow in his speech but not to a point where he is embarrassed about it-which helps a mommy's heart. I was supported by the First Steps experience, they were very caring and really listened to my concerns.

I have been very pleased with the services my son has received through the First Steps program. I was amazed at how they let you know exactly what was going on with the case and how they really paid attention to your concerns.

Question #13: The people who worked with my child knew a lot about my child's disability and how to work with him/her. My child started with one therapist but had to end with another one due to the first one moving away. The first one was good with my child. The second one wrote her off as behavioral. NOT APPRECIATED! I feel like the last month or so with the new person was a waste because she didn't bother to understand my child's issue and or work with that!

First Steps benefited us as a starting point, but they were not honest, forthright nor helpful in understanding the severity of the issue with our child on giving him the services he needed based on his diagnosis. Our service coordinator was challenging. I also think they should have provided more help in selecting therapists. Fortunately, we had incredible therapists who were wonderful and extremely helpful to our son. They offered a ton of advice and guidance and helped us find incremental services for him-outside of First Steps. We are thankful for First Steps, but believe there is a lot of room for improvement and increased services - because of the importance of early intervention.

First Steps has helped my family deal with my special needs child and to accept his disability.

Our service coordinator was absolutely fantastic! Our son would not have received all the services he did, as quickly as he did, if it wasn't for her. Thank you!

Q#4: It was easy to learn about First Steps, to find out if my child was eligible for services, and to obtain the early intervention services that were needed for my child and family. They came out in November then forgot about us until March. Was not happy with First Steps. It's a waste of money.

Everyone in First Steps was wonderful. The therapist my son had had to be an angel! I was truly shocked every time they were here at the progress they made. I hope First Steps never leaves as there are many children that need the care they can supply.

One third of the coordinators were helpful and caring. Our providers were more effective although one of three service coordinators we had we used only routinely. This is a comment regarding the service coordinators. Our first one assigned was transitioned out during the changes that occurred in 2003-2004. Our second one was efficient but completely lacked the care and concern for our child and his development. She gave us the "run around" in finding additional medical/educational help. Our third service coordinator has a heart of gold. I believe his caring about our child helped tremendously. He helped us find a place to get the help needed.

Our family was extremely fortunate to participate in the First Steps program prior to all of the modifications that Governor Blunt enforced. Our son received excellent services from two very talented therapists who are no longer in the First Steps program. It's a shame the First Steps program has been modified to a point where their own employees quit because they cannot treat children as it was originally designed. For the future of Missouri children, the First Steps program needs to be as it was originally designed. These are the children who will be making our decisions in the years to come.

Excellent program that helped our child. Our son did NOT need to receive any services after his experience with First Steps.

Therapists were wonderful. Service coordinators needed more supervision. They were not timely in phone calls and scheduled visits. We went through three trying to find one that took part in the road toward helping our child. In our IEP meeting the coordinator came to the meeting in "saturday clothes". While this is not horrendous, it just represents a lack of motivation and importance of a child.

Question 1: Once I convinced them my child needed to be evaluated it was easy, but I had to fight to get there.

Question 16: If not for First Steps, I don't think my son would be in therapy now.

First Steps gave our son confidence and started him on the road to a normal childhood. Without it, I don't think we would have caught his problems and they would be even harder to overcome later. First Steps helped him begin to speak, jump and learn to play like other kids.

This organization is awesome. The therapists are great! I know our child and our family would not be at the level we are at now if we didn't go through First Steps. I thank God, the government and the community for providing us with such special hard working, knowledgeable, and caring people as our coordinator and therapists. My husband and I felt comfortable throughout the program and learned so much. We were very comfortable with the transition to the next level of services. Please don't do away with these services.

We are grateful for the First Steps program and the treatment, therapy and medical devices and technology it has helped to provide. We may have seen so many lost months, perhaps years, in getting our child the services he needed immediately. Every child with a disability should have this same opportunity. It is a NECESSITY OF LIFE! Thank you.

First Steps was literally a "life saver" for our little boy and our family. The issues, disorders, and diseases our son has (Autism and Epilepsy) are not gone, but thanks to the early and intense intervention of much needed therapies through First Steps (and Missouri straight Medicaid) our little boy is not gone either. We are so thankful that our child got the specialized early and intensive intervention he needs. My husband works at Children's Mercy and has a good job and insurance. My son's grandma is a CMH social worker. I am an informed and passionate advocate for my son. We have a loving network of church members, family and friends to help us and our children. Even with all of those blessings our boy would NEVER have made it to where he is without the programs Missouri has to care for, assist and educate disabled children. Missouri First Steps is a VITAL step in helping our children become all they were meant to be! P.S. We voted for Gov. Holden and are faithful that he and his policies will continue to protect, teach and provide for our special needs children in this great state. NO Child Left Behind-NOT ONE! Thank you and God bless.

I am a mother of two Autistic children in which only my youngest participated in First Steps. I didn't even know about First Steps until the nurse practitioner at our pediatrician's office (who I rarely saw) told me about it. Even though I have been a member of Parents as Teachers since my oldest child was around 18 months, she never told me about First Steps or the fact that she saw some red flags with my son. My experience with First Steps was wonderful. My son received speech and occupational therapy from a mother and daughter team. From the start she was very respectful and honest with me about my son's condition. She was not hard or cold about it and very supportive. My son made a lot of progress. Both women did their job well and worked with him from the heart. They wanted him to improve and came to care for him as much as he cared for them. I will always be thankful to them for what they have done with my son. I feel that the First Steps program is priceless to families and their special children. My only regret is that my oldest son was not in the program and I often wonder how much farther he would be today if he had been in the program. As you may know, with Autism early intervention is so important. So I pray that the First Steps program will not be taken away from families in Missouri. Also, every physician in Missouri should know about First Steps so more families in need can benefit from this program. From a blessed mother of two Autistic boys.

First Steps was vital in bringing our family together to discover we could raise a child with special needs. Without their help, I would have been lost and scared. Our child is a happy three-year-old due to the assistance of First Steps.

If it wasn't for the First Steps program, I would have not known that there was help out there for families with a disabled child. We stuck together because of First Steps. My family felt comfortable with these programs. They make you feel like we are all family and are there for one another. We all need these programs like First Steps. My child believes in First Steps and so does the family.

I had no problem with the First Steps program in general. I think this is a very useful and necessary program. I did not agree with how my child's speech/language skills were tested when he was two years old. I thought that my area coordinator (the coordinator that got the First Steps process started) was an excellent source of information. My service coordinator, however, never returned phone calls promptly and sounded immature while giving information.

The First Steps changed our lives and my son's life. He would not have gotten the comprehensive services had it not been for this program. Thank you so much.

The First Steps program was very beneficial to my family. The only complaint I have is that our county had a difficult time keeping speech therapists, so my son went nine months without speech therapy.

I hope First Steps continues in Missouri. I can't imagine going through the first few years of my child's life and the challenges we faced without the assistance of First Steps. Families need this program. Thank you so much for this program and all the good that it does.

I am pleased with the First Steps program. I was told from First Steps that the school district would continue my child's therapy but the school district did not. The school district said my child was too smart for ECSE. My child is needing therapy in his gross and motor skills and occupation. I think First Steps program needs to be kept.

The program was vital to our son's progress. He progressed to the point of not qualifying for school-age services.

I feel that Governor Blunt needs to stop messing with the First Steps program. It really helped my child and me. I'm a single mother of a son with developmental delays, and if it wasn't for the First Steps program, I'd be totally lost. It also helped my son to get used to school surroundings, before he started Pre K-Preschool. My son loves school and when school isn't in session for some reason, he gets really upset. But I use the techniques that First Steps showed me and we have fun like we're in school. I've recommended the First Steps program to a lot of parent's I've met.

Thanks to First Steps, my child is learning speech. If it wasn't for First Steps, my child would not be where he is today on his language skills. Thank you to Parents as Teachers for letting me know about First Steps.

I have two children with special needs and one attended the First Steps program. Both attended Early Childhood Special Education Services (one is attending it right now). If it wasn't for these services, I don't know where we would be right now. Both First Steps and ECSEs have bought out so much in both of my children that I am amazed with the progress they make everyday! If it wasn't for these services, I would be afraid for me and my children. God bless these service and the providers for their services!

We had an excellent coordinator who had a vast knowledge in our child's specific disability. I will always be thankful to the person who introduced me to the program and who worked so quickly to get me the help I needed. We had just moved to this state and it was a very stressful time for our family.

Our child received physical therapy and speech during her time with First Steps. Without the First Steps program our daughter would not have gotten as far as she has, nor would she be eligible for the special education program she is currently enrolled in. We can only hope that the First Steps program will be around to benefit other families the way that it has benefited ours.

Our service coordinator is outstanding! She worked hard to get our son's evaluations scheduled and completed quickly. Her genuine concern and desire to help our son and family was always apparent. Our IFSP meetings were always on time, thorough, and very informative. We always knew we could contact her with our questions or for further guidance. We miss her and our excellent and wonderful occupational and speech/language therapists. We can never express our gratitude enough for what First Steps has done for our son and our family. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

First Steps was a good experience for our family. I just wish it were easier to find out about. We dealt with over a year of major behavioral problems before someone finally suggested it.

Program was good. Professionals and coordinator very good. Insurance issues confusing. Was our insurance plan billed or not? If yes, why? Although our family did not have to pay a co-pay, we received bills for months after our child's services ended. The statements said we owed \$0 - but it seems very inefficient.

Regarding questions 9-10: Our first service coordinator was not helpful and did not seem at all concerned with my child's needs. My second service coordinator, however, was very helpful.

It was a very pleasurable experience for the whole family. Thank you for all of your help.

I am very curious to find out how many children in Missouri are not receiving any special services after age three due to not meeting eligibility requirements for ECSE. Is there some way to find out this information? What happens to those kids? Is there a program? If so, why is it so hard to find? If not, then why?

Overall, the services were great but there are lots of problems with continuity of care. My son had about five different physical therapists and about the same in occupational therapists. Often there were many weeks or months that he received no services at all. This all happened in less than two years. I think something needs to be done to assure these kids do not go for months without services!

Each team we had for our son worked well together. I do have to comment how differently St. Louis and Jackson counties work. All services were provided and all concerns were addressed, but in Jackson county there was a more immediate response as well as great enthusiasm. Our son has benefitted greatly from everything. First Steps has provided for our family. Truly, we wouldn't have all the interaction with our son that we currently have. Thank you!

I really liked First Steps but I am very disappointed in the physical therapy he receives now. Ever since he entered the school system, he doesn't receive the physical therapy as much as he needs to. He is starting to really stiffen up in his legs because all they care about is the educational part now, not the physical anymore. I am very disappointed with that. Kid's should get more physical therapy.

Our coordinator, Susan Waxman, was awesome. She stayed on top of everything and made sure my son got everything he needed. She answered all of our questions and even went with me for his evaluation at the school on her own time. We loved her!

Our First Steps coordinator was FANTASTIC. She really helped us get the best care and services for our daughter. I am confident that her assistance helped us achieve the goals we set for our daughter. If I am ever in need of First Steps services again, I will request her.

To Whom It May Concern:

I do have some additional comments regarding First Steps. The therapists used for therapy are wonderful as well as the service coordinators. They work very hard to provide the needs of the children and their families. However, a major problem lies with the therapists used for evaluations to qualify for First Steps. We had a very negative experience with the occupational evaluator as well as the Special Instruction evaluator. After only spending an hour with my son, they diagnosed him with Autism and suggested he go for further evaluation. He was speech delayed and shy. He had a few funny little quirks but in no way had Autism. They upset my family needlessly. In my opinion their actions were not only unethical and unprofessional but also irresponsible. I can only hope they haven't done the same to some other family. I have dealt with First Steps in the past. My older son has Down Syndrome. We had a very positive experience with your program. If I had been a new parent with First Steps, I would have run away screaming from your program. Those therapists represent your program poorly and I highly recommend terminating them from the program. Thank you for your time. I hope you take my experience into consideration for action.

We had trouble with our speech pathologist. Not coming or showing up late on scheduled days and she had to make up about six weeks for us. First Steps was informed. Thanks

First Steps was such an amazing experience for our family. Our coordinator and all of our therapists were instrumental in getting our son to where he is today. The staff was extremely helpful as well. My only problem is that I wish we could have stayed in First Steps until his fifth birthday. I do not feel the same support from the school district and often feel left in the dark.

#4: In regard to question #4. Once we got enrolled in First Steps, the services were great. I hadn't heard of First Steps until referred by a speech pathologist working for the university. I absolutely love the awesome services my son received from First Steps. His therapist was great and really made a difference. His case manager is just the best and we love him. He is enrolled in the ECSE and he loves it. He has made such progress and the teachers and therapists are great. First Steps, ECSE and all the great staff that has worked with my son has made such a wonderful impact on our lives. I'm so thankful for everything.

Our daughter passed away this past April. The people that worked with our daughter were amazing. Their help improved her quality of life. My family and I are grateful for all that First Steps did for our daughter and family.

The First Steps program is great and every service that our family needed was met and help was provided for other services by our service coordinator and the therapist involved without First Steps our son would not be where he is today. Thanks.

Question 4: I found out about First Steps from a friend who has been receiving services for her child. Question 18: My child does not have special needs. My service coordinator was always friendly and usually very prompt in returning phone calls. She is still a resource I have used since graduating out of First Steps. She is always helpful.

I do think the First Steps program is wonderful. I, unfortunately, didn't have superior results, but, it is a program that I see is very useful and helpful to families struggling with delayed children. Thank you for helping my child "catch up".

We loved our coordinator. She's fantastic!

We want to thank everyone who helped us through this difficult time. Our son now speaks very well and is catching up to where he should be. It's good for us to have become aware of all these services and we can now tell others about our experiences. Thank you for everything.

We enjoyed working with First Steps.

It was difficult to answer questions honestly about the service coordinator. We had a different coordinator almost every two months. I think there were three or four, so it was hard to remember or know who she was, because they couldn't keep someone in the position longer than two months. However, our speech therapist is a wonderful, patient and exceptional teacher. I wish we were still using her.

I was very impressed with the First Steps program. I feel it greatly helped my child. Our service coordinator, Keri Sweetall, was very good at her job and the therapists really helped me through some hard times. I am so thankful for this program.

My son was with First Steps until he turned three and then he started going to early childhood preschool. With their help my son is a normal active little boy who seems to learn things very well. My daughter is with First Steps and now her problems are different and not as bad as my son's, but because she was slow in certain areas, I asked them to see her to see if she would qualify for their services and they have just started working with her. First Steps is a program that is needed by a lot of children and without it the children I speak of would not do so good in school or life. They have worked wonders with my son and I feel like they will work wonders with my daughter as well.

I was very happy with how quickly our son was able to receive services through First Steps. We moved here in November 2006 from Washington, where he was receiving pre-k. We were able to get in touch with First Steps easily and quickly. Within one month, he was getting started in the program. He received speech and occupational therapy in January and February. He turned three in February and was transferred quickly. He started pre-k on his third birthday. We are very happy with all the services he has been getting.

I am afraid now that there is a copay, many kids are not getting served.

I was extremely disappointed with First Steps. They were supposed to start services in March, 2006. My son's speech pathologist was rude to his little sister, made rude comments about my son being so unintelligent. She failed to attempt to get my son to participate, never tried to talk to him but at him and didn't even try to use his interests as a hook to build off of. She cancelled several meetings too. I saw absolutely no progress while my son received services through First Steps where, as I saw great improvement when receiving ECSE services.

I feel that First Steps is an extremely important program. It would be more beneficial if children with less than a 50% delay could qualify. These are the children that early intervention would benefit the most. When a child is one or two years of age, a 50% delay is extremely significant. There are children who still have serious delays but receive no services due to not meeting that 50% delay requirement. They are left behind, and our tax dollars will pay for it. Early intervention is the key.

My son's speech therapist was wonderful. She was very good at her job and my son loved her. You are very lucky to have her working for you. I will never forget how much she helped my son. Thank you so much!

First Steps was a wonderful program. It helped my son so much. The therapists were amazing and extremely supportive. Although my son passed away unexpectedly before his third birthday, I feel First Steps helped improve his quality of life and function normally. Thank you for everything.

First Steps was the BEST call I ever made! Really...our service coordinator was extremely helpful and always on top of everything. She was a wonderful guide/teacher through the whole process, she explained everything and made our family feel secure. Our son only received services for a short time, but we saw changes in him right away and we learned a great deal from his therapists. I am so grateful to our PAT educator for referring First Steps to us. First Steps is such an awesome program, I was just telling a friend about it the other day and how wonderful everyone was to our family. Our son has since then transitioned to the Early Childhood Center and is continuing to excel. If we would have decided to not "swallow our pride", we wouldn't of every seen the real picture with our son. So, thank you First Steps. I would recommend the program to anyone in a heartbeat.

First Steps workers seemed overloaded with calls - did not follow through and did not send all paperwork and evaluations to us or the therapists. Did not return calls or follow through. The one therapist, speech, that did come was excellent and very effective.

I think First Steps is a very important program for our children with special needs and I hope that it doesn't overlook the children who are borderline under the new guidelines. My child wouldn't have qualified for First Steps. I hope the program will be there for all children who need services for many years to come.

You were great! Thank you.

Our physical therapist through First Steps was excellent.

The only thing that my husband and I wish was still available is a worker for speech and occupational therapy to come visit the home to do the therapy where our twins are more comfortable. They were diagnosed as being Autistic on August 27, 2007. Thank you.

My service coordinator disappointed me at the end of First Steps because she failed to follow through in getting all the hours my son was to be provided. My son was lacking roughly five hours of occupational therapy. Her response to my request to receive these services was unprofessional. She said it was "an awful lot of paperwork to get these required services extended past his third birthday." I feel that it was her responsibility to see that we, as tax payers, receive our promised services. Please contact me if questions arise. Thank you.

YOUR ACCOUNTING/BILLING DEPARTMENT DOUBLE BILLS, MISSES BILLS, OR DOES NOT KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

This survey was a little difficult to fill out. I left several questions unanswered. The reason I did this was because when we first got into the program (after the initial IFSP was complete) we had a very unworkable service coordinator. The whole team was on board except her. She denied me of my child's records, she wrote inaccurate Notice of Action and did not put important comments/notes from meetings in his file. I had requested a new service coordinator and I was told there was no one. The therapists who worked with my child were excellent! She kept my spirits up and got me through it all. Once our family got a new service coordinator, things were how it was supposed to be. When it was time for his IEP things went okay, until I found out for two months goals were not addressed and we had regression. When we met to discuss this, the ECSE coordinator was reluctant and unwilling to look "outside the box". I took advantage of the district's process coordinator to attend his IEP (that was requested by parent) and put everything in place. We, as a family, have had to stand our ground to do what is best for our child. We do not have a child that is "black and white" and his therapies come down to quality and knowing the right time of day versus the amount of minutes. We still struggle with getting that through to the ECSE coordinator.

The service we received while we lived in Missouri was exceptional. Since our move to Illinois, it has been a nightmare!

We moved to Quincy, IL in the summer of 2007 from Kirksville, MO to seek better care for our son with Down Snyder. We had a good experience with the Kirksville Regional Center but very disappointing access to occupational, physical and speech therapy in northeast Missouri. We even drove to Moberly for a while for occupational/physical therapy until it was no longer available. Our son now attends preschool half days and gets occupational, speech and physical therapy.

I'm grateful for First Steps. It came to us at just the right time. When I was going crazy taking care of my two little boys with disabilities. Our service coordinator always came through for us, but sometimes it took a long time. I'm glad that both my sons could go on to ECSE. Thanks.

It saddens me that the state cut funding for you, but found funding for the cardinals. You do much more for the community than the Cardinals every will.

I will NEVER recommend First Steps to anyone. We had so many issues.

My son is now doing great! Our speech therapist was amazing. She gave me great tips and fun games to work with my son and encourage his speech and social skills. She even had great ideas about getting my son to eat better. I looked forward to our weekly visit all week! Our intake/service coordinator was also very good. She called and asked about how my son was doing and if our needs were being met, which they always were. We have since moved to Florida, and the speech program here cannot compare!

This program is absolutely wonderful. My only regret was not finding out about it earlier for my son! The therapists improved my son's ability to function extremely! My service coordinator was helping me every step of the way! I am so thankful to her for all she has done for our family. I was very sad to lose my "team" on my son's third birthday.

First Steps was a good program. Very beneficial for my daughter. The aggressiveness of my daughter's pediatrician was critical to her receiving services through First Steps. Your organization's marketing efforts with pediatricians is therefore critical.

The First Steps program was a wonderful thing for my family. My son being the youngest of four boys had do many "helpers" in the house that it was hurting him by delaying him. When we started this program, I hadn't seen my ten month old, sit, crawl or rollover. I hadn't ever even heard him make a sound other than to cry. He has now just turned three and there is no shutting him down. He goes to a private preschool for a few hours a day and his teachers say he's in the top of his class. I can't thank this program enough for giving my son a voice, and the tools to jump and play like his older brothers. I only pray that everyone who needs this program gets to use it.

I was very pleased with your program. My daughter improved in all areas except speech. We are working on that now. I am thankful for the ones that helped my child. Thank you so much! If it weren't for your program, I don't know where my child would be right now with her development. Thank you!

I just want to thank the First Steps Program. It made a huge difference in my child and my family. Early intervention is the reason for it. Thank you.

The First Steps program was great. My child received all the services he needed. His therapists were all caring in helping him learn. He's three-and-a-half now and goes to the early childhood program in our school district. He loves school and is doing wonderful. Thank you so much. Without the help, I'm not sure where my little boy and this family would be today. Great job to all! God Bless!

I really believe that my child should have gotten the intervention earlier as far as speech therapy. I believe he should have had it done when he was two years old instead of two years and ten months. Thank you.

If you ever need someone to testify before the legislature about the benefits of this program, please call me.

First Steps was essential to our son's development. We are very disappointed to hear that many people (children) now entering First Steps are not getting the level of therapy and quantity that our son received. First Steps was much needed for our son and family. Thank you.

First Steps truly provided a sound foundation for my son. In one year, he has made SIGNIFICANT progress and is on track to start kindergarten on time and in a mainstream setting. I am so grateful for all of the help I received for my son. Please make sure that First Steps is adequately funded to help more children for many years to come.

- 1) First Steps allowed us to get our baby home from the hospital with necessary nursing care when we were desperate!
- 2) First Steps allowed our family to reinforce the things we were doing already with our child.
- 3) For the most part, we really liked our son's therapists. Most seemed knowledgeable about their field of service.
- 4) During the three years of participation, we were assigned three different service coordinators. Not a good thing; we just didn't count on them too much.

My child was dropped and we have no more assistance.

First Steps was an incredible blessing to our family. The progress my son made through physical, occupational and speech intervention is truly remarkable. I am forever grateful to First Steps!!

Your billing department continues to double bill and/or bill overlapping dates. A phone call to the billing department accomplished NOTHING. If they fail to bill correctly, we should not be responsible for your/their abilities.

First Steps was a wonderful experience for our family. My child was involved in speech therapy. He was taught simple sign language while he developed further skills. Our transition to public schools with a complete evaluation, was just finished this month. His language development surpasses his age expectation. Other problems were noted. However, I credit First Steps and our wonderful speech therapist/pathologist. Thank you!

I was told that we needed to get Adam in speech therapy and was told that they would call me with one in a couple of weeks. I never heard from her, and I tried calling her and was told that they hadn't found one yet. So, I still waited. Finally, LEEP was contacted through our school and I enrolled my child there. There, he received the services he needed. So I called First Steps and dropped my son's case.

Q#22: One meeting at six months, but the big one only two months. Q#3pg2: Uncertain Q#5pg2: Look at IEP. School doesn't want to renew dietitian. We have known about DSS for years.

First Steps was a great program for my child. Our service coordinator was absolutely wonderful and a godsend as well as our developmental therapist.
11/16/07

I felt like our therapist was very knowledgeable. However, I feel like we weren't seen on a regular basis like we were supposed to be. The billing process is behind! We still receive bills for \$0.10 dollar amount. We haven't dealt with First Steps for almost two years now.

First Steps was more trouble for me and my family because the therapy my son was to get he didn't receive. The service coordinator did not get a therapist to my home to help my son. When they did get a therapist, she never showed and never returned my calls. All the therapy my son got was provided by me and the therapist at the University Hospital. First Steps did provide me with someone to talk to to give me help with what to do with my son for his therapy and that was a great help. Other than that, First Steps was not much of a benefit for my son's advancement in his speech progress.

All of the people that worked with our family were wonderful. Our child was so happy as was I.

We have moved to Arkansas, July of 2007. Sorry for any problems that this may have caused.

Marcy Morrison was an exceptional coordinator, our services were seamless due to her.

Would like to know when will the First Start lady will come back out so my son can go to school?

Our service coordinator was very helpful and made the whole process palatable. Our occupational therapist was also awesome and outstanding. We were a bit disappointed with the speech therapists, especially compared to our new SSD speech therapist.

We absolutely loved the First Steps program and everyone that was involved with us and our son. He was terminally ill and passed away last May. But, the therapists were wonderful with him everytime they were here. Thank you for all of your help and God bless.

Physical therapist is wonderful - a huge asset to First Steps and lives of her patients.

I felt that our coordinator tried to be helpful. She was very nice: however, the therapies needed for our child were not obtained through First Steps (Speech and Occupational). A "Developmental Therapist" was sent and I felt she was a total waste of time and money as she did nothing with my child. We sought out speech therapist on our own but could only afford it for two months.

Our service coordinator left a few months after we started First Steps. It took over three and a half months for our new coordinator to even contact us. We barely heard from our new coordinator and only met her in person at the transition of our son.

We are forever grateful for First Steps and the influence in our daughter's life.

Our son was eligible to go to a ECSE school, but due to family issues, financial issues, and health issues for him and myself, he was unable to start after his third birthday. The area we live in only has one school that offers classes to children under four and most schools are kind of hesitant to take on a three-and-a-half-year-old with disabilities and seizures because they aren't properly trained to deal with an emergency, it it should occur. We need more teachers who are able to care for children like my son. The classes need to be offered at more schools. Most daycare, preschools and Head Starts won't take children under four with problems. This is not fair to the children or their families.

Missouri First Steps worked very good with my boys and made sure that they got the special care that was needed. Even though they were a challenge at times, the worker had good patience when working with them. Missouri First Steps also referred me to the Kansas City School District so my boys can continue getting the services that they needed to help them resolve their disability. Thank you very much.

We felt very comfortable with our team. My son has made great progress thanks to early intervention with First Steps. It is a program that should continue to grow-not be eliminated, as Governor Blunt suggested.

I wish I was told about the Parent Support groups and childcare services.

I feel so fortunate to have had a great Parents As Teachers who helped establish our initial contact with First Steps. I also feel the First Steps program was such a blessing for our son and family. Our son currently and (in the past) has only shown a delay in the area of speech, but we have so appreciated all the help we have received. Everyone from the Parents as Teachers, First Steps, have been such wonderful teachers as well as people. Thanks to everyone for allowing us to be part of such a wonderful program. This program is a much needed service, I hope it continues for a long, long time.

I credit our awesome service providers with my son's success. The therapists were completely dedicated to his progress and became "family members" over the two and a half years we worked with them. The First Steps program has been, to quote the Master Card commercial, priceless to our family. The progress my son has made would not have been achieved without the First Steps Program. He is very close to "normal" now. When people first see him, his disability isn't the first thing they notice. Thank you for continuing this program. If there is ever any question about the benefits it provides, do they outweigh the costs, etc., just come visit my son. He's a great First Steps success story.

Our oldest child was in First Steps and received services several times a week in the beginning and as the year went along we gradually cut the time down and when she turned three, she no longer needed services through the school district. However, with this child, I was lucky to get anything at all from First Steps and he needed services more than my first child. We barely got one hour a week, and of course, when he turned three, he was still very far behind. I know that if he would have gotten more help between age 2 and 3, he would be further along and maybe not with an IEP at all. Thank you Gov. Blunt.

My son was in the First Steps program for two years and nine months. We had five different service coordinators. I feel that this truly harmed the process of my son receiving all of the appropriate services that he needed. We did not have the same service coordinator at any of our IFSP meetings or at any six month interval meetings. The service coordinators did not have a chance to get to know my son or our family and made some pretty sweeping generalities about our family. The therapists that treated our son were fabulous. The monthly progress notes were helpful. The only problem we found was with the service coordinators. Our son, at the age of two and a half years was not walking yet. We requested more physical therapy time. It was declined stating that we "needed more activities to do with our child". This statement made me feel as if I was not doing enough for my child. That is the LAST thing ANY parent wants to hear if they have a child with special needs or even a typically developing child. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for sending out this survey.

Our service coordinator was dedicated, knowledgeable and sensitive in helping our child and family. We had a very positive experience with First Steps and our son is progressing nicely.

I believe that the First Steps program helped our son in many ways. They helped us find ways that we could work with him and have fun at the same time. I don't believe that without the First Steps program our son would have achieved as much as he has. We are so grateful that the First Steps program was there for our son and our family to help us and, most of all, help our son. Thank you for everything.

After transitioning from First Steps, he lost some of his skills. He does not make as much progress as with First Steps and now it's hard for me to supplement the therapy he needs and received in First Steps with my private insurance. The school district seems to not know how to handle my son (or what to do for him). The First Steps therapists did.

First Steps is an excellent program and a valuable resource to families who have kids with special needs. It has made a difference in the life of my son.

First Steps hasn't done anything for my son. I must fight for services he needs and fight for help in obtaining those services. In addition, we live in a rural area and there are very few service providers in our area.

Our transition meeting was at the appropriate time. We did not have a smooth transition because our family and our speech therapist know my child still has deficits and is not age-appropriate, but he tested too well to qualify for services through the school district. We have done private pay speech therapy since he left First Steps on his third birthday. We are VERY thankful for the services we received through First Steps. It has made a HUGE difference in our son's speech abilities!

The only real complaint I have is no one was willing to drive from St. Joseph Missouri to Mound City for my son to receive services, because they weren't reimbursed for gas! The lady they had to come up and work with us really didn't know just how to work with my son, so they really just played for one hour a week. When she was here, she wasn't from the St. Joseph office so she didn't really meet them in person until we had a meeting in my home. I believe that the speech pathologist should have come to my home to help my child and not a helper. She did the best she could but she didn't have the knowledge to really help him. That's all I have to say. He's talking now and, in the end, that's all that counts.

When my kid's father and I first separated, I didn't know the kind of help I could receive or even just how much compassion this organization could have for a family going through bad times. My son's coordinator, if at all possible, cared for my son, it seems, almost like one of her own. She always had new suggestions, paperwork, or even phone numbers for me to call for certain things and I know she really cared. My son was diagnosed with Angelman's Syndrome. Although the coordinator didn't know much about Angelman's, she caught on quick (but, not without a few bite marks, of course). So, from the bottom of our hearts, thank you. (A grateful mother and a true believer of your program).

One of our workers was wonderful. She really helped us learn how to help our child. She is a great person and was such a blessing to know.

In one and a half years, we had three coordinators. IEP's were never done in a timely manner and the transition out of First Steps did not exist. If it wasn't for the Special Learning Center, we would have been lost.

Our time in First Steps was awful and a waste of time. We fired three occupational therapists, two speech therapists and four service coordinators. We never received appropriate services. Our service coordinator told us how she wrote our son's IFSP was "none of our business." The providers were not consistent in attention or in treatment. We had to go out and secure private therapy for our son's progression. Our son has Autism and none of the providers understood his disorder, even though two claimed they had extensive experience. Agency to Avoid: PS Kids, Occupational Therapist Jaime Allee put her hands on our son. She forced him to sit in a chair on her first visit, despite our telling her to let him go. Our son experienced regression in all areas due to inconsistencies of providers.

Q#13: Nobody told me he might be Autistic or have PDD!

I've never even met our first service coordinator. She was terrible. She never returned phone calls and wasn't helpful at all. Then, when I started to change coordinators, there was a lot of pushback until I had a diagnosis of Autism. Our next coordinator was fabulous. She was always organized and "kept on top of things." She even sent us information that was helpful in the mail. Our therapists, overall, I felt could have been better. Our occupational therapist seemed great at the time, but our speech therapist was not good. I feel like to get real progress with any type of child you need an ABA therapist. I don't feel like our therapists knew enough or pushed us enough to really figure out our problem - early treatment and diagnosis...in turn the best therapy, ABA! Not OT and ST

Question 9: No help was ever offered, not even one time. First Steps was a waste of time. Question 12: Not a one! Question 16: Waste of time! Question 17: Set my son back because he did not get help sooner. Transitioning Question 1: Was told, "He's three so we can't meet with you now. Bye. Question 2 was never discussed. Question 3: A month before and it was announced at the last minute. After leaving Question 5: No thanks to First Steps. Question 6: Trying anyway. My son required, in writing from his doctor, speech, occupational and behavioral therapy as well as home therapy equipment, (i.e. weighted vest, OT equipment). Not once was one single service provided. Nothing was done but a lousy IEP meeting one month before he was three. Your service is a waste of time and funds. Burn in hell First Steps. Our "caseworker" would not answer/return my calls and when told of my son's RX for therapy and equipment said, "There's nothing I can do in your area". Did not call and check or even act interested. Her answer as soon as I told her was that she couldn't get us anything. How about looking first! I have gotten more help as to getting my son's needs met through the Social Services office and at least they referred me places! You people didn't even bother with that.

Diana Patton is the most! She is the best service coordinator ever! She took in everything and listened to my family's needs. She should get an award. I really miss her. We have moved on to Special Education class at Shady Dell. We have also moved.

As employee's of the Department of Social Services we were aware of the services available. The assistance we received for our son's speech was helpful but, frankly, not anything we could not achieve ourselves through our insurance. It was frustrating that no services were available in Osage County at either our home or daycare. My husband and I were both forced by our employee to file FMLA paperwork and had to use time weekly. I often wonder if we did not have the leave available, how we would have gotten the service? I suspect that because we were able and willing to do whatever it took, that little effort was made to secure something more local. In fact, toward the end I located a new place opening up in our area and discovered through talking with them that they would have been willing and able to provide the service to my son in our home and daycare had they been contacted.

First Steps was an incredible, well-organized program! We loved both our physical therapist and service coordinator. I pray that Missouri continues to find funding to keep the program maintained at it's current level.

I learned about First Steps through Parents As Teachers. What does question 18 have to do with First Steps? Question #20: Our service coordinator never showed up. Question #22: I did not answer this question because the school and I did it. The coordinator never did anything and wanted to know why she came. As far as community resources, I did it myself. The coordinator did not help at all. Well you really should not have asked for my opinion. We had the worst experience with First Steps. I think we had two or three coordinators and they did not do a thing for my son. I finally had to call the head person to take care of making sure that he got his physical therapy and occupational therapy reviews. I am not going to go into the entire thing with you. The final straw was when we started his transition into regular school. We were having the meeting at the school and I had Headstart there, his daycare people, PAT, and many school officials. I also had the First Steps lady that introduced herself as "I am such and such, and I am only here because I have to be here." Well, as a parent and a special services person in the school district, I can't believe that she said that and I should have asked her to leave. The thing that really amazed me was that the speech teacher that they had just stopped coming after about a month and I never heard from her again. The really amazing part was when I started getting paperwork that she was trying to call me and she had documented all of this and I never once had a message on my machine, on my cell phone etc. They also billed for days that they didn't even service my son. So, do I think that is program is good? I am sure that in the cities where there are people that are competent to do the job, yes. In the rural counties, NO. As far as the school, it is going great and my son is doing well.

First Steps made a huge impact on how my child is functioning. They taught me the skills to bring out the most in my child and he is doing very well. Thank you to everyone in First Steps.

Overall, our experience was a good one. The only thing I had trouble with was that I felt that some of the therapists feel like they can diagnose more issues for my child even though non of those issues proved to be a problem in the evaluation visits that others had done. This was not the regular therapists that seen my son weekly, but one of the supervising therapists that came less often to guide our regular therapist. She seemed to have found something new every time she came and although I checked it out (and found there was no problem), she found more things to be addressed. I got the feeling she just wanted more hours with my son.

First Steps provided a significant amount of help to two of our three children who experienced developmental delays. One of whom has been diagnosed on the Autism spectrum. I can't begin to think where we'd be had our children not received Early Intervention services through First Steps. I hope and pray the services provided through the program will continue. Should program funding ever be an issue, I would hope the state would establish a foundation to solicit donations to help fund the program. I asked about donating money to the program a few times and was told there were no avenues to do that.

The First Steps program has been a life saver for our family as we have two children with hearing loss - the same hearing loss, but our other daughter's hearing loss wasn't recognized until she was in kindergarten. So, we know firsthand the benefit of early intervention. We appreciated the opportunity to work with several excellent audiologists at St. Josephs Institute for Deaf and Children's Mercy who regularly tested our daughter's hearing and got hearing aids that worked best for her. My only disappointment is the cuts the program is experiencing. The cost of hearing aids, molds, batteries, audiologist appointments, travel back and forth - it all adds up. All assistance we received was and is very much appreciated. It gave her a chance to be on a level playing field with other children her age. She always looked forward to the speech therapists coming to the house. She is well adjusted to her hearing aids and tests at her level and sometimes above average. Thank you for all the First Steps program has done for our little girl our family.

It is a very good program. Two of my children went through it. Those who worked with my first child were really great. He has come a long way. Thanks to all.

Our child needed more hours of service provided by First Steps.

I was not happy with the services of my service coordinator. She compared my son to her kids in a bad way. I felt like she did not work as hard as she could have. Her services did not help. There was no transitional meeting set up. She even got paid for days she did not come out to the house - the very last visit.

Our first coordinator of services was rude but she was transferred. We were unaware that my son could have received developmental therapy for this Autism. We did get speech and occupational therapy. We were very happy with our therapists. I am very glad that this program is available.

The only problem that we ever had with First Steps was that our service coordinator was not very involved with the program. The only time I ever really talked to her was at the IFSP. I understand that she had many other cases. My suggestion would be that there be more service coordinators so the cases could be distributed more evenly. Other than that, this is an awesome program and it has helped our family make it through some really tough times. Thank you for everything.

Therapists were wonderful. They gave us so much information, help and support. The service coordinator never called and was well known among therapists to be MIA at her job. First Steps is a beautiful and necessary program that changed my son's life. Thank you!

The First Steps program is wonderful. However, just as our son's needs became more apparent, Matt Blunt made it virtually impossible to add any necessary services. This hurt our son's progress significantly. What we received was very helpful, but we were not informed of several services we could have had with respite care and ABA (the only way we found about behavioral therapy was through our speech therapist). Overall, First Steps was a very positive force in our son's life. Matt Blunt is, however, a disgrace to Missouri and has made thousands of families whose lives are already impossible trying to deal with their child's disability even more difficult.

By working with First Steps and coordinator I was able to receive high quality services for our son. She empowered me to ask the questions I needed to ensure my child would be treated with respect. Unfortunately, we were assigned to a new coordinator right at transition time and I think the new coordinator was not aware of other services or how to access other services that would have benefited my child and family best only because she had not been with us as long as our first one had. I would like to see First Steps offer more service coordinators so that they can stay with the family from the beginning through transition.

When First Steps changed Administration in Greene County, I was not as happy with the administrator and service coordinator. Services from the speech therapist and developmental therapist were excellent.

Because of multiple reasons, we ended up going to the local hospital for physical and speech therapy.

The First Steps program was great for my son. I am so thankful for the start he was given, and I recommend First Steps to any parent who has a special needs child.

First Steps took forever to evaluate my child. We lost approximately two months due to the delay. He only received services for four months and he was only given one hour per week for his therapy. Immediately upon entering the Early Childhood Program he received twelve hours per week and has made amazing progress in just six months. He made virtually no progress in the four months he was in First Steps. To add insult to injury, we were charged \$33.00 per month for this substandard program. ECSE costs us nothing.

Question 10: Our service coordinator helped my family, in a timely manner, get the services we needed once she was involved. Question 4: Leaving First Steps - The special education services our child currently receives is not enough. Question 5: Leaving First Steps - We are receiving all of the services listed in the IEP except did not get the number of hours/weeks recommended by First Steps for physical therapy. I had a very hard time convincing the First Steps employee on the phone that my son required an evaluation. She insisted that since he was adopted he would catch up on his own and I was supposed to wait. I am a physical therapist and I knew he was behind in gross and fine motor skills as well as speech/language and oral motor control. My son was unable to eat any food unless it melted in his mouth. He had a severe cross bite due to oral motor weakness. The first time I called First Steps, I was told he could not have an evaluation because he probably would not qualify and that I should wait so he can catch up on his own. I was outraged. Shortly after that call, my son's doctor recommended First Steps for speech therapy. I had not told him anything about my First Steps experience. I called First Steps again and said that my son's doctor wrote a script for speech. Again, I was told over the phone that my son would not qualify. I was more insistent at that time. She finally agreed to an intake because of the doctor's orders. During the intake the coordinator (after watching my son) admitted that he would probably qualify for multi-discipline therapies. My son finally was tested and qualified for speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, developmental therapy and a behavior modification specialist.

I am a foster parent and knew about most of the resources already.

First Steps is a great program. It has helped our family.

I don't know what we would have done without the First Steps program. Your staff found and identified problems that his doctor failed to address in a timely manner. Your program was the only way I was able to get the services for my son we needed.

Our First Steps coordination completely dropped the ball on Transition. Our daughter thrived well before she was evaluated by the school system. The lack of training and work overload directly, negatively impacted continuing services through the school district. He talked a "good talk", but never followed through with his actions.

First Steps was a great thing for my son and family. But, I missed out on several months of services on waiting for someone to come out and evaluate him. Somehow there was a mixup. I kept waiting and finally called and they did not know no one had not been out of the house, so it was like I had never called. The special education meets our son's needs as far as socialization and learning, but there is no one that is trained to work with Autism. This summer they are offering one and one half all week of school.

The best thing about First Steps was the speech therapist (group) that we were set up with. Our speech therapist was unbelievable. She returned my calls, answered questions, etc., much better than any representative at First Steps.

The theory that drives First Steps cannot be undervalued. It is a model that empowers parents and lets them care for their child even through disabilities. We are so thankful for the therapists teaching us to teach our son. Thanks to First Steps lighting the way we will continue in this model of "therapist teach parent/parent teach child" throughout our son's years of education. While I see the value of "in-home therapy", I do believe that First Steps would also be enhanced by encouraging therapy in more public settings and that the children would benefit from this exposure to others. Thank you for the aid that was given to our son and to us both as his parents and, now, as his educators too!

Thank you.

To Whom It May Concern:

First Steps is a program that should be put on the top of Governor Blunt's list of accreditations. When my daughter (HLHS) was seven months old, she could not even turn over, because of her button. Her providers not only has her walking, talking, jumping and eating, but she is right on target with other ones her age, if not more ahead. Kudos to those women!

I was disappointed in the high turnover rate of service coordinators during my First Steps experience. In the short six month period we were involved, we had at least three different service coordinators, the last of which seemed more and more overworked, unsatisfied, undertrained and less able to provide the personal service required of such an important position. Our last coordinator went so far as to ask our therapists to set up and coordinate IFSP meeting dates and times! This is unacceptable and unprofessional in my opinion. Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts.

Without First Steps my daughter would not be developing as she is. The First Steps crew has been extremely optimistic and has held high expectations for my daughter. Thank you for this program. My whole family thanks you! Please see that this program is available for all kids birth to three with disabilities.

Our speech therapist has been a blessing to our family!

We had a wonderful experience with the First Steps program. Our service coordinator, Janet Watts, was extremely helpful and really looked out for the best interests of our child. I was impressed at how quickly changes to our IFSP was implemented (especially for a government agency). Our son is definitely much better for having received services through First Steps. Thank you.

After our first contact with First Steps, it was at least two months before our son could begin his services with First Steps.

We loved our experience with First Steps! We were so lucky to be a part of the program! My triplets had a wonderful "team" of specialists from First Steps. We especially loved our lead therapist who always went above and beyond to help my kids! She would even come on her days off to work with them and was always coming up with new activities for them. She is an excellent teacher and therapist. I can't praise her work enough! Because of her, my triplets are now in preschool (at the local school district) and doing very well! Thank you again for your services! I have seen an incredible change in my children!

I think that if my Parents as Teacher representative was not great this would have got lost in a loop. Thanks and give a raise to Jill Primm, Teresa Bayer, Emily Hieger, Fran Weber. I know some I have forgotten. Thanks for helping my little boy.

Our service coordinator was fantastic! First Steps saved our family! Thank you.

If it hadn't been for Parents As Teachers, I never would have heard about First Steps. I am so glad we were able to get early intervention for my Autistic son. He just turned four and said his first four word sentence. So exciting! I would not hesitate to recommend First Steps to anyone with a child that needs early intervention. First Steps was on of the best things to happen to my boy.

I would like to comment on how great Kristie Garnt was while we had the pleasure of working with her. She was always flexible and excellent with my son. I highly recommend her to anyone who wants a compassionate, caring, fun and intelligent therapist.

The speech therapist has been an instrumental part of my daughter's improvement in speech prior to early childhood at Northwest. Her teacher and her assistants have worked really hard with my daughter's delays and my family is seeing significant improvements in just the short six months. She still has a lot to accomplish but she is definitely on her way.

Our PAT educator first recommended us to First Steps when he was eighteen months old for his speech delay. I spoke to someone at First Steps and didn't think he qualified (not enough of a delay). After receiving an evaluation at Children's Mercy they referred us to First Steps and the once-a-week in-home speech therapy helped out tremendously. I'm glad we had PAT and First Steps available. Thank you so much.

All of our therapists were incredible. Overall, our First Steps experience was extremely helpful and valuable for our child and family. To increase effectiveness for others I hope you address the following: Improved Interpretations of service coordinators and what families need. Families know their children and therapists are with them more than service coordinators. So, service coordinators should listen to the team as a whole and not make decisions on what the service coordinator thinks. We had five different service coordinators because of First Steps changes, so we had good and bad. This was a main reason. Consider and implement "natural environment" to include outside-the-home social situations in children over eighteen months to two years until three years. Socialization and language opportunities with peers is critical at this age. Many good programs are being excluded because they don't meet "natural environment" definitions when they really do for some children, if not all at these ages.

Excellent program.

We're very grateful for the First Steps program. Our child didn't need special education when she turned three because of the intervention she received in First Steps.

It is wonderful to have such great specialists (speech therapy). She never missed an appointment and was always on the top of her game. She is fantastic and has made an everlasting change in our child's future.

The First Steps program has made a world of difference for my three year old. His language and behavior have changed so much, it's incredible. I don't know what we would be doing with him right now if we hadn't had this early intervention. Thank you so much for this life changing program.

Our child was saying only six or seven words when we started with First Steps. By the time he turned three our speech therapist said his speech development was in the 50th percentile. He has not received any additional speech therapy since ending First Steps. Family and strangers understand most of what he says now. He speaks in full sentences and has a very broad vocabulary now. I recently spoke with his speech therapist and decided to have her evaluate his speech again in the fall just to make sure his speech is continuing to progress normally. We are very grateful to First Steps. He received the help he needed and his pseech improved greatly in a short amount of time. Thank you.

First Steps needs to move back to group settings once child reaches two years old. They are NOT ready for school district at age three, at least my child was not. School system is lacking in Para's so children can be in with normal children. Not enough speech and occupational therapy services. I drive to Kansas City, Missouri to receive additional occupational therapy services. St. Joe school's are not prepared very well for children who continually fall between the cracks. Always wanting to put them below their potential!

The First Steps program and coordinator were great. The process to pick specialists to work with our daughter was not. I wanted/needed more direction with choosing a developmental specialist, but based on the computer profiles supplied, we choose someone who wasn't very good and had to switch mid-way through services. Our coordinator was very supportive and helpful with the switch but said she wouldn't specifically recommend someone.

Thank you very much for the services provided to my child. I wouldn't have been able to provide all the therapys needed for my child without this program. Thanks again!

Our daughter was born eleven weeks premature. Our developmental therapist was wonderful about giving us ideas on working with our daughter to help her catch up. We stopped participating in First Steps around the time our daughter turned one and she was almost entirely caught up. Our daughter is at, and in some areas ahead of other children her age who were not premature. Our daughter didn't require any special services. We only met with our developmental tehrapist twice a month and then at six months we started once a month. I believe our developmental therapist's guidance along with our Parent Educator from Parents as Teachers (the late Dana Lape) helped us tremndously in getting our daughter on track to catch up.

Our daughter's transition was not a smooth transition from First Steps simply because we moved out here six months before she turned three and previously we had a coordinator at our previous address, but never received services because we were just getting enrolled and getting ready to move to Kansas City, MO. I also never knew I could apply for her to receive social security until recently.

I feel that we need to educate the doctors better about First Steps. I think they need to ask better questions about child development. Maybe the doctors don't know much about First Steps. Please help them!

Additional Comments: Donna Ward, our St. Louis Area Coordinator, was fantastic. She helped guide us through the process of understanding and implementing the therapies needed to help our daughter. First Steps has changed our lives. Early Intervention was the key in helping our daughter realize her potential. She has made remarkable progress over the last one and one half years. As a result, she is on her way to learning in a general education classroom with little or no assistance. Thanks to First Steps and SSD, our daughter is living a "normal" life...Thank you! P.S. We originally found out about First Steps through Parents as Teachers.

We had a wonderful experience with First Steps and hope to use them in the future with other foster children we are blessed with. Our Service Coordinator was extremely helpful in explaining all the aspects of the program and coordinating our meetings and therapists. Our therapists were invaluable! Both were very supportive and informative. I truly wish First Steps continued past the age of three since I have seen first hand what a benefit my daughter has gained overall from your program.

My son's service coordinator was wonderful to us and we miss her greatly.

The First Steps program was a lifesaver in so many ways for our daughter and family. The obstacles we faced in the beginning were of no fault to our service coordinator or the program. Living in rural Missouri, the amount of service providers qualified to help are very limited as is gaining those services in the child's "natural" environment". Getting past all the "can't do's" and finding the "can do's" is the success of teamwork and determination. Our family is very fortunate to have received the services we did in the First Steps program. I am forever grateful for the experience and knowledge gained. There are always pro's and con's and things to improve on-but, I and my daughter is forever blessed by the services received in First Steps. My one suggestion for program improvement would be at the initial visit and within the first 30 days of a new family enrolling there is more follow-up and "ALL service that are available" are clearly defined and explained. God bless you for all you do!

She had school therapists coming in our home four days a week until Stephanie started having seizures all the time. Dr. Kanani stapped all for now. Services are on standby for now until Kr. Kanani okay's it.

Our service coordinator had no clue that our child could receive services through Pediatric Education Dietician Service (PEDS) in Ellisville, MO. He had a severe problem with chewing and we found out about this service through our Parents As Teachers Educator. When asked to look into this possibility for us, our service coordinator couldn't find the answer. Finally, PEDS called our coordinator and we eventually got in the program, but a couple weeks were lost because she was not at all aware of this service. Otherwise, we were happy with our coordinator and all the services we received.

The First Steps program was excellent and allowed our son to receive therapies that had a major impact on his development. Without First Steps, we would not have been able to afford these services and our son would not be at the place he is today.

Child was enrolled before she moved into my home. After contacting First Steps, they came to my home and made sure to explain everything. She was almost three when she moved in with us.

This is the best program! Our family feels very lucky to have received First Steps services.

Our first coordinator was great (I don't remember her name). The second coordinator was learning but extremely disorganized. We also have an exceptional speech pathologist who is a wealth of knowledge - a key person in our child's language development and knowledge for us.

As far as being made aware of community services, this was our fourth child in First Steps and they had already shared quite a bit of information with us.

First Steps is a good program. We definitely benefitted and are grateful to have been a part of it.

Our family opted not to receive services through our school district. We felt they couldn't meet our son's special needs. We go to a private institute. We have tried to go through our insurance for payment with no success. First Steps was the only service we felt were satisfactory and helpful for our son. There should be some sort of program for children of preschool age to help for more specific needs of the children if the resources available are not able to meet specific needs.

I would no longer wish to receive survey's for my son.

I strongly encourage families in First Steps to also get involved in PAT. First Steps therapists should be required to have lesson plans and be supplied with appropriate toys to enhance the sessions. First Steps should encourage group involvement with typical developing kids and guide parents to comfortable places YMCA, COCA, for supportive activities. Parents should be given information on how to select a therapist.

My family was already receiving SSI, LOC, Food Stamps and Medicaid before First Steps entered our lives. I had nothing but good experiences with First Steps and my therapists and service coordinators (2). I thank God for this program and all of the things that my awesome therapists accomplished with my son and for the friendships that I have made. There were some very tough times that I may not emotionally have made it through if it were not for the support of the therapists. I know economically that times are hard and that government is always looking for ways to cut back, but it would be a travesty if they cut back on this program. I helps so many children and families. Thank you for everything.

We are very fortunate. Our son no longer needs any services and I know that it is, in part, due to First Steps. Thank you.

We were told by a friend to ask our doctor about it.

Currently, our daughter is in Kansas City, KS. This is partially due to the fact that there is an organization called, Infant Development Center (IDC). This facility has made a tremendous difference in her development. We were unable to find a comparable program in the region or even in the greater St. Louis area. If such a place does exist, please let me know.

First Steps really helped my son tremendously. Before getting the services, all he would do was grunt when he wanted something. When the services ended, he was putting two words together. And now, he says sentences and more. I wish I would have started First Steps sooner. I was hoping he would start talking on his own; especially since he has an older sister. I am so glad there is the Head Start Program. I am very glad that Medicaid helped pay for it otherwise we wouldn't have been able to afford the services. Thank you very much to First Steps.

The original meeting with our First Steps service coordinator I received the write up and it was completely wrong. It was as if the coordinator had written up something from someone else there were several things that were wrong and never fixed. The first therapist sent did not even know what an Ischemic Stroke was. She sat and held him and told us about her problems. We finally got a good speech therapist. However, we were never told or helped with any other services. Then, when we were under financial strain, they started charging. When we got behind, they stopped our service. After our therapist went elsewhere we started with another then eventually stopped services because they were not helping all that much.

I do feel First Steps is a valuable program! Early intervention is an absolute must with any developmentally delayed. Kids are much better off if given therapy to get them caught up before entering the school system.

All of our therapists were a wonderful help in the First Steps program and were terrific with our daughter.

The occupational therapist was the only one who could come and see my son. She was very good with First Steps and helped my son a lot. Thank you First Steps.

Thank you to First Steps for all your help and support. You are phenomenal.

We appreciate everything First Steps has done to help our son and our family. Thank you for the great service.

Thank you for everything. We feel very fortunate to have received a year-and-a-half of programming.

I am very pleased with First Steps! It has made a big difference in my twin's lives. I appreciate all the support and information that has been given to me and I encourage others to inquire about the program. I believe my girls are on track because of this program. Thank you.

What a great experience we had with First Steps. Everyone was helpful, understanding, knowledgeable, professional and thorough. My daughter benefitted from her involvement and I felt empowered to help her with the training I received as well. God Bless all who helped to make this available to our children.

I really appreciated the First Steps program. It provided therapy for my child that we would not have been able to afford otherwise. However, our experience was mixed. We had three coordinators in our two years with the program. Our first two coordinators were not good, although I did love our last one. Because of our first two coordinators our physical therapist at the time suggested some orthotics for our daughter and suggested paying out of pocket for them, which was a huge mistake as we figured out later. Overall though, we were able to find therapists that were very helpful and our daughter made many improvements.

Our service coordinator was very helpful, However three of the five speech/occupational therapists that were referred to us stopped coming after a very short time. We did have one excellent speech therapist. We never did get a good occupational therapist who keep coming.

The first speech therapist we had (can't remember her name, but I know she got a new job/she was terrible!) She would show up 30 minutes early a couple of times and would seem so bored and unmotivated with my child - playing half-heartedly and even yawning. The second speech therapist did a wonderful job when she was here, but she cancelled so often it was laughable. Often, it was the same day. Her reasons seemed rather flimsy and I suspected she was just too busy with this job and also her job teaching at a community college. Rather frustrating.

First Steps was great. I found out about it at story time. I would suggest you let the local doctors know about your program. Thank you so much. Those at Parents-As-Teachers were wonderful.

First Steps is a great program. It helped our family (2 parents) with ideas and resources to allow us to improve our child's development and learning. It helped us establish a strong foundation and confidence to fulfill his needs.

Most of our experiences with the First Steps program were positive ones. A few of the therapists were very unprofessional. We had a very hard time getting our therapists to show up for appointments or to show up on time. They were usually anywhere from a half hour to an hour and a half late (when they showed up). This not that big of a deal to me, but it was very frustrating when I took care to arrange my baby's schedule so that he would be in the best mood possible for therapy. That did no good when the therapist didn't show up or came two hours late. Therapy was not very effective if the baby had fallen asleep or was eating when they finally showed up. We also missed many therapy sessions because the therapist didn't show up on time and we had appointments that were already scheduled - usually scheduled around therapy in the first place.

I believe that ECSE services are not comparable to First Steps and that coordinators should wholly recommend that parents look for and obtain additional therapy services prior to leaving First Steps and transitioning to ECSE. Also, I truly believe that an evaluation of a pediatric developmental psychologist would have been helpful. Thanks.

Our son left First Steps a year ago. It is a wonderful program. After one year in the school system, my son's skills went down tremendously. While in First Steps, he was always making progress, in the school he didn't show any steps forward. We are facing a cruel reality dealing with a school that lacks professionalism and doesn't communicate with the families in a constructive way. We are planning to move to Kansas in the near future and have to leave our home because of the future of our son. He needs to be in better hands. As a teacher in Kansas (mom), I see a tremendous difference in educational opportunities. Thank you for the opportunity.

We had an amazing service coordinator!

We have had two different service coordinators and they were both fantastic and a great help!

I feel very fortunate to have discovered the First Steps program. My family had a very pleasant experience with our service coordinator, and hopefully this survey will help.

First Steps is a wonderful organization. Our service coordinator made it possible to receive any services I requested immediately. My children (twin boys) would not have made the excellent progress they have achieved without the help of our service coordinator and our wonderful therapists. Thank you so much for all of your help! It has made a tremendous difference in my family's lives.

We had a great experience with First Steps. Our service coordinator was excellent as was our physical therapist. First Steps is wonderful and a vital program.

The therapists changed my son's life! They are incredible people who have a strong work ethic and they developed a strong bond with our son and our family. There could not be any three people better suited for First Steps!

First Steps was a wonderful program and it helped us a lot. I have recommended the program to more families. The therapists were good and knowledgeable from her physical therapist to her speech therapist. My child was not supposed to even walk or talk. But, she is growing into a very happy and loving child. She has grown so much since beginning First Steps. I am so grateful for the program.

Took child off First Steps and went through another provider.

No longer in First Steps.

The First Steps program was an excellent resource for my family as well as our special needs child. Our service coordinator, Megan Hevel, did an outstanding job locating and arranging the required services in a timely manner. She was always efficient and helpful. Our child greatly benefitted from the program! We did have difficulty locating a physical therapist that would travel to our home. Our service coordinator worked with us to arrange alternate physical therapy services. All of the therapists were both professional and effective for our child. Overall, we appreciated all of the assistance First Steps provided for us.

I thank First Steps so much for their time for working so hard with my child and my family. We didn't get very long with First Steps for his doctor said he was a late talker, then tried tubes and nothing after being two and a half they started referring us to you all and that helped so much to help my son to get words out of his vocal throat. Today, 10/15/08, he is in Head Start and getting speech therapy with the school district. He is starting to talk more around 10 words or so. Thank you all again.

I appreciate everything that was done for our son and my family. If he was still alive, I'm confident we would still be using the resources of First Steps.

From my experience, I wish the therapists would come in and actually work with the kids. I felt like they came in our home only to give us a quick show of what we need to be doing. I think my child would have responded better to longer sessions and more hands-on at least twice a week. My child is now three-and-a-half and I see nothing works better than repetition. He reacts to the same schedule and constant reminder of what works for him. Even if there was a classroom/therapy school where you could have the option of taking your child for longer periods and more structure for what your child is in need of.

My son got excellent therapy through First Steps in Kansas City. Our experience when we moved to Rich Hill, MO is that it took forever to get services. When we got services the therapists hardly ever showed up for their appointment. My son is doing really well due to his daycare program and Early Childhood Special Education. Thank you!

We were not referred for these community resources because they were not needed. Were not appropriate for our situation.

We had a great experience in the First Steps program. Our son has a bilateral severe to profound hearing loss. He was diagnosed at birth. He received all the early intervention deaf education services available. He is a bright, three-and-a-half year old. He has a cochlear implant and one hearing aid. Our school district is allowing him to attend the St. Joseph Institute for the Deaf preschool class. He speaks in sentences and is doing awesome. Thank you First Steps - without you, we could not have afforded his care.

Our First Steps coordinator was delightful. We had a lot going on when we found out our daughter had a hearing loss late and a bit close to turning three years old. He kept us informed of services, needs and options to help our daughter.

Our daughter passed away as a result of her heart defect. We thank you for what your program did for her. If you need further information, feel free to contact me.

The First Steps program helped my daughter tremendously. However, it is hard to find out about the program and I think many people are missing out on these services that would greatly benefit them. One disappointing change that occurred while we were participating in the First Steps program was that the billing process was changed based upon a families income. During that time my husband had lost his job and we were stil eligible for fully-funded services, however, I believe these services are impairative to these young children and any and all financial help should be available to those who need it. Most families with a special needs child face enormous medical bills it was truly a shame to see Governor Blunt make a budget cut on such an important issue. We truly appreciate the program and would be more than happy to offer any suggestions that could help grow the program.

My twins received services from First Steps at the meeting to determine eligibility. I was told that First Steps didn't have a speech therapist that could provide the services and I would need to take them to Kansas City to receive the services. My family was veery grateful to the therapist that did the evaluation, because she volunteered to work with them.

If I was not an educator and dealt with ECSE and IEP's on a daily basis, I am pretty sure that It would have been a confusing process. I was very disappointed in the school district representative that attended the transition meeting. She was not aware of what special ed law is and made some comments like my child wouldn't get services if the therapist's schedule was full. If I wouldn't have known the law I might have said ok.

We cannot thank you enough for all First Steps has done for our son and our family. Because of First Steps, I believe our son is a very different person then he would have been without all your help. The services he received have changed his life. We can never put it into words the signigicant impact First Steps has made on all of our lives. A million thanks.

The coordinator, evaluator and speech therapist were all great. My daughter only qualified through a birth defect and didn't truly need the services, but we also left the state, so discontinued services.

Our service providers were exceptional in helping our child. They understood and learned about our child's disability and tried and went about expectations. Our first physical therapist was great. One therapist did not treat our child as if he had any problems. She did not have any children and she really did not know how to work with kids. Our child's speech coordinator was exceptional. She really worked with our child. Our last service coordinator we had-we had so many-and that was rough when they were always switching. With the help of First Steps, they gave us the information about programs and the school districts. They were incredible.

We used First Steps for speech therapy for my child. Our provider, Cari Ebert, was excellent! She really made a difference. Our child speaks really well now and I have increased my skills (through her example) in helping him with speech. We didn't really transition because we homeschooled. I just wanted to say THANK YOU!

My service coordinator was very nice and helpful. Our speech therapist was absolutely fabulous. We were slightly disappointed in our occupational therapist. I am not sure she truly understood what our son needed and if she did, I am not confident in how she tried to fulfill them.

The only services we needed/received were PT sessions. Both our service coordinators were very helpful and great to work with. The only reason we didn't use more community resources or reach out to our SC more was because we didn't need to. All in all, great program, great people. Thank you.

It is sort of hard to find out about Parents as Teachers and First Steps.

I wish I could get the money I paid the last year of services as I don't think it was worth it.

I'd like to have learned about other community resources from my service coordinator. I've struggled to find them, one by one, on my own. Overall, First Steps transformed my daughter. She would not be able to do all that she now does without First Steps, and we are so grateful.

First Steps was somewhat helpful to my son, however, since I did not know about First Steps previously, he was in the program less than a year. So, his progress with First Steps was limited. Also, our family never had a "transition meeting". First Steps did introduce us to the coop preschool program here in Pettis county and they are great!

We have twin boys who were diagnosed with mild Autism (ASD)-PDD NOS when they were 29 months old. The started speech therapy shortly after their second birthday after Parents As Teachers referred us to First Steps when we became concerned about their delay. After their ASD diagnosis, in fact, the day after we saw the neurologist, our First Steps coordinator had us referred to United Services and we began pre-school then that August. Everyone of our First Steps therapists was great and we had a hard time saying goodbye when the boys turned three. We feel blessed to have had such a great experience and the boys made a ton of progress in the program. We relocated to Missouri from New York where we've heard many stories of parents having to fight for the same services given to us so freely. It's a wonderful program and we miss our coordinator and our therapists. Again, we feel fortunate to have gotten such great services and such fantastic therapists.

First Steps will forever be in our hearts. They helped our family more than I could begin to describe. I only hope that other families can benefit the way ours did from the priceless interventions we received. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!!

I want to thank all of those who took such great care of my son to help him through the tough times. Our family will always be grateful and thankful for that. I hate to be a complainer but, hopefully, in the future and for other parents sake, the service coordinator will be the same person for their child's term. My experience was horrible. Way too many service coordinators were always switching and getting a new service coordinator. Then, when I would get a new person, they wouldn't really know what was going on. My son didn't get all of his help that he needed. He was also supposed to go to Hannibal Regional Center but, that never happened. When I would call to speak with the service coordinator, they wouldn't call me back. Hopefully by now all of that is straightened out so other families don't have to go through that. The service coordinators were great people. Don't get me wrong. They didn't stay long enough.

Since my child tested out, no further services were required or requested by me.

I am so pleased with my experience with First Steps. My son finally started to speak! Thank you.

Please send me information on community resources that we can use! Thank you.

I am very disappointed that our service coordinator failed to get my child all of the help she needed. Specifically, the speech therapist and behavioral therapist that evaluated my child both recommended that she also get an occupational therapist and my coordinator thought we should "wait and see". As a result my daughter had to wait until her six month review for her therapist to recommend occupational therapy due to their slow progress. Finally, she received an evaluation and began to receive occupational therapy after six months! Our coordinator, Chris Elwood also failed to notify us of any other services and when asked point blank "is there any advantages of having our daughter diagnosed (we suspected autism)" she said no. Now, I find out, after our diagnosis of autism that First Steps would have paid for a wonderful service at Judevine and I have no idea what else?! I feel cheated.

We had a very positive experience with First Steps. We were given the opportunity to change our plan. Plus, we were assigned great people to work with.

The most valuable service we received through First Steps was the Judevine program for Autism. Our son took part in the three week program and it helped greatly. Our service coordinators were both unorganized, untimely and often unavailable. We utilized the therapists' services until our son turned three. After we began to have our own therapists and we were told (and realized ourselves) that he was given mediocre therapy through First Steps.

Our family decided to stop using the services of First Steps when our son was 18 months old. Our son has Down Syndrome. I did not agree with the "family needs" approach that First Steps takes. Although I can respect that approach. I kept asking the professionals, in their experience, what will help our son progress and develop in all areas of development. The reason we stopped using First Steps was primarily because we found an organization that provides all inclusive developmental guidance for our family. They also provide us a specifically designed program that we implement with our son daily and it continually gets revised. This works for our family, and for many families across the country and even outside of the US. This organization is NACD, the National Association of Child Development. (www.nacd.org). Please, also note that we tried to incorporate our NACD program into our First Steps IFSP and we got resistance. If you would like to learn more about the NACD approach, I would be happy to talk with you. NACD has been amazing for us - truly inspiring. Thank you.

Overall, I was very happy with the services our child received through First Steps. My only regret is that the services ended at age three. The services made a huge difference in my child's development! Thank you.

First Steps has helped our daughter so much. She is now taking steps in her gate trainer at school. We are so proud of her accomplishments and are very grateful to the First Steps program. Thank you.

I found it very difficult/confusing to navigate the First Steps system. Our service coordinator and therapists were helpful once we were in the system, but figuring out my son's eligibility proved difficult. Also, searching the Matrix and finding good providers was a maze in itself. It took me months to find a new SLP and months to find an ABA team. That wasted precious time since my son was already over two-years-old when he entered First Steps. I must say that the saving graces were my son's OT and his developmental therapist and gymnastics coach. They supported both me and my son and gave me practical at-home exercises/techniques to use with my son. I also believe that the center where my son received training was invaluable in increasing my confidence in handling my son's behaviors and sensory needs.

After our initial assessment, no concerns were identified by us or the specialist provided. We were referred to First Steps after the traumatic birth of our son. There was a possibility of brain damage. However, we were thrilled that this was not the case. He has not shown any signs for concern whatsoever. The initial assessment was a great service to confirm our thoughts. He is a perfectly normal child with no issues.

The speech therapist that worked with my child was very caring and committed to my child's success. However, I did not feel that my service coordinator or those at the First Steps coordinating office were helpful at all. I called several times asking for an occupational therapy evaluation for my child and could not get a returned phone call or evaluation. My child is now receiving occupational therapy services through his ECSE education. I would have appreciated those services earlier to help him further. All-in-all, I am thankful for my services at a minimal cost. A returned phone call would have been nice.

This experience for me was definitely positive and impactful. I do not believe myself, my family or my child would have made the gains and progress we've made without First Steps. I have so many wonderful things to say, I will just type instead. I have nothing but great things to say about First Steps and the care and support myself, my son and my family received during the years he was in the program. I am sure we would not have been as informed about how he was progressing, what we needed to have further looked into, and there were areas identified early on, that allowed for special treatments, surgeries, and attention that would have gone unnoticed by an untrained eye. All the therapists and service coordinator our family encountered, were professional, prompt and very informed. I grew tired of the visits, but they always came with a smile and great encouragement throughout the process. I became a little therapist myself. The care and instruction I received taught me to be observant, report changes promptly, and they gave instruction as to how to go about resolving many of the issues I was unsure of and who my child could see. I would love to be an advocate for many families about the First Steps program and what it offered me. I was anxious about bringing a child with a Grade III bleed home, and I was not given much hope upon him being released from the hospital. Three years later my child is now happy, healthy and has little residual effects from the whole ordeal. He still has some challenges with eye-hand coordination, some visual acuity issues, some speech issues, and a few other issues, but overall, I would say he is 110% better off. Without First Steps there are many physical and mental delay cues I would have missed and not have had addressed early enough to be corrected like orthotics early on to help ensure that he would be able to run, further speech therapy because of paralysis in his tongue, strabismus and eye surgery that ensued, swallow/oral stimulation issues that discovered no enamel on his teeth and lead to surgery thereafter. The eye issues only allowed limited use of his field of vision to only being able to see straight ahead. Had I waited much longer he would have had blindness in one eye. I think being patient, consistent, and determined to see if all this time and therapy was going to work, was initiated by much conversation and concern from the therapists we had. I can only say thank you to the First Steps team, his great and attentive service coordinator, and now his Early Childhood team for all they do. I can never thank them enough for the help, instruction, information, care and being a constant source of hope in the wake of having a "special needs" child. I am sure everyone's story may not be like mine, but how would you know if you stop or are not consistent with the services? I made sure to make time to keep every appointment, therapy visit, and follow-up on suggestions. I felt, as a parent, it was my job to ensure my child the best that I could offer him in the way of a firm send off into the real world. He now appears to be soaring with a few ruffled feathers. Those are minor issues though. My son is a joy to all that encounter him and I am sure I owe that in part to the First Steps program and its team members and now the ECSE he is now a part of.

I didn't know this was available until Children's set me up.

We quit the program but not because we were unhappy. Our children progressed greatly!!

Our therapist spent more time talking (socially) to me (Mom) than doing therapy with our son. I found this frustrating. He gained from the experience, but not nearly as much as he's getting from one-on-one therapy with ECSE.

Our relationship with our coordinator and providers was very positive. Each played an important part in helping my son reach his potential. We are very fortunate to have been provided such valuable services from such skilled and dedicated providers.

Note: Comments are typed as written on the surveys with the exception of the correction of most misspellings. Names and other personally identifiable information of children, families and providers have been redacted.

Not all things requested were included in the IFSP. Not much information, unorganized, uncoordinated transition. No service, NONE, from "service coordinator". Awesome weekly service providers (speech, occupational, etc.). Not a good experience with service coordinator.

Noreen was very helpful to us because she had a son who went through the same things that my daughter is now going through. She was always willing to talk to me and give me advise. But, I don't feel the program itself gives much further then providing funding for services. Questions 11 and 15 on the front page were a surprise to me. We were never offered anything other than our meetings to discuss our daughter's goals and IFSP, etc. These other things, like learning to deal with a special needs child and how to be their advocate would have been great. I also think it takes way too long to get the ball rolling. Once you find out your child has a problem, you want to be able to start dealing with it ASAP. We had to wait for so many meetings before we ever got going on therapy, etc.

Our therapist is awesome. Only mom and dad were caregivers. Our daughter has been in preschool and we (mom and dad) work with her daily. We had speech services the longest and the speech therapist did an amazing job working with our daughter. She is far beyond her age in her speech. Teaching her and us while working with her. Providing confidence and self-esteem are just a few of the wonderful services we, our family, received.

Is your child receiving ECSE services? Yes, but privately; not in the school district. In creating our child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), I was asked about areas where our family thought things were fine and where my child and family needed help. They asked, but didn't take my answers into consideration. We are receiving all of the services listed in the IEP. We declined IEP because it was not appropriate. Special education services are helping our family improve our child's development. For the services we pay \$26,000 a year and it is helping tremendously.

These specific people have made a great deal of difference in all three of my children's lives one way or another. They each have special needs.

First Steps was wonderful for us. My son was able to get some of the help that he needed. He has severe brain injury. I believe that he needs more intensive therapy than what he gets. Without First Steps, some of my son's needs are not going to be met. My only complaint with First Steps is that I feel that children with severe needs should be able to stay in the program longer. First Steps is a wonderful program, but Missouri should allow children with profound and severe needs to stay in the program longer. A child should either qualify not based on abilities. It is not a fair system now - you only get a slot if they think your child is the most severe at that time. All severely disabled children should get the help.

The school programs are better. First Steps needs help.

The only thing that was less than satisfactory in our experience with First Steps ws the availability of a speech and occupational therapist in Montgomery County. Therefore, we traveled 50 minutes to Mexico, MO to receive the services my son needed. Not being in the home, the therapists did not see all of our real life difficulties. We were never offered travel reimbursement for the months that we traveled.

First Steps should make RDI available to children with PDD. I am supposed to be receiving behavior support from the ECSE and am currently not receiving that support. It is in the IEP and nothing has been put in place. My First Steps coordinator was all about getting me the minimum for my child. Never the maximum or providing one with all the ways First Steps could help us. I had to find out from other parents at a school I paid for out of my own pocket. I am a former SSD teacher and I am disappointed with the system as a parent.

Our service coordinator was excellent. She made the process easy with her enthusiasm and expertise.

I think this is a wonderful program. I couldn't have done it without the help of First Steps. If there's anything that I can do to help other children, let me know. I am an RN and thank God for you and your support. Lots of love and thanks

We were extremely disappointed in the amount of time it took to begin services. The first time through testing, she did not qualify. Qualifications for speech/language services only are too strict. Isn't early intervention the key? (She qualified for services at two years and ten months. First time through testing, the twin girls were two years and three months)

Great job! Very helpful and caring staff. Communication was good. Our son has improved 100% since he came to us because of their hard work and caring attitude.

I think that First Steps is a wonderful program. However, I do think there is too much of a waiting period before services actually begin due to paperwork, waiting certain amount of time before next step, etc. I would also like to mention that our first therapist was just so-so at her job. However, our service coordinator handled everything and we switched to a different therapist who was fantastic! I really appreciated the service coordinator handling the issue and remedying the situation.

First Steps really helped my husband and me better communicate with our son. Our son also made great progress through the program, and is continuing to gain ground through the special education program. We are very grateful for the services we've received. Thank you.

We didn't receive the proper information for our transfer to Texas and have had to find information ourselves.

Not enough services providers. I had to wait one and a half months after my son qualified for services before therapy began. The therapists we worked with were fantastic!

I feel that the services we received for our son have helped his chances of a successful future. All therapists and our service coordinator were caring and truly interested in his needs. I could never have done any of this on my own. Our therapists were the best of the best. My son grew more with these wonderful women than I ever thought possible. I will continue to praise First Steps to anyone I come across who needs help. With their help our son transitioned into Excelsior Springs ECC with no trouble whatsoever.

I do not have a special needs child; she was just a premie.

Dear DESE, Thank you for sending the survey. I have written yearly that the design of the survey is contrived to give you an improved score. You really don't ask questions that may put you in a bad light such as, "Was your service coordinator friendly?" or "Did you feel your service coordinator explained all the options for therapy for your child?" You also didn't ask a single question about the payment system. Let me tell you, it stinks. Not because I have to pay some money on a monthly basis, but because the system is not clear on the bills you get, you cannot talk to anyone who knows your case at the 'clearing house', and, God forbid if you don't write exactly what you are supposed to on the check. It doesn't get cashed and your therapy for your child is stopped. Another year and another survey that shows where your fundamental beliefs point. I think you care more about the statistics than in really improving the First Steps Program. I have had experience with the 'before' and 'after' of the First Steps program under Matt Blunt and I must say it is worse. Having SSD administer the First Steps program and trying to move away from having experts actually give a child therapy is really criminal. Teaching the parents to provide therapy for the child is like me teaching you to do your own hysterectomy. I'm sure you picked SSD because you know they will cut therapy and save you money. That is great education!

First Steps is wonderful! All the care givers are fantastic. This program is a much needed and wanted program. Our is so much farther along than we expected when we first started with First Steps. He starts pre-school in August and his outcome will be so much better than originally thought. Thank you all so much.

They were great! We wish we would have heard about it sooner.

Jennifer Larson, our First Steps coordinator, was WONDERFUL!

At first, we were denied First Steps. Until Parents As Teachers spoke up and reapplied. We went through two or three coordinators before we found the last one who actually cared and did her job. We went through three speech therapists before we found one that was great, but they then had to quit. We finally decided that he was going to be going to early childhood classes and he would get what he needed there. I basically knew about the resources before First Steps through my son's doctor. I believe there are some people out there that really do care, love and want to help kids. Then, there are some people that I don't think should be working with kids because of their personality or understanding. The therapist and coordinator I had was understanding, compassionate, fun and GREAT! Thank you.

I felt that the whole time my child was in the First Steps program, we were lost. They never told me if my child had a disability and if he did, what it was. The lady would come to my home and give my child crackers and blow bubbles. I didn't understand what that taught my child. Through all of the assessments, evaluations, home visits, I was told nothing! All I was told was that he qualified. But, "qualified" for what reason? I am very dissatisfied with the program!

Our son made sufficient progress in the six months he received services, and we received enough instruction on how to help him further, that we have not sought any additional outside help. He is currently doing great and his speech delay is currently very minimal. The services he received were excellent.

Our service coordinators were great. However, several of them decided not to return to my home due to discussions with a nurse that we terminated. This affected our daughters needs over inappropriate acts of conduct. I was not receiving updated papers on her care and not knowing what I should have been doing with her. I later received them from another coordinator. I did not find any negative reasons for them to discontinue services. In the end of receiving services I was not happy and would not recommend these ladies to anyone. I worked and they were talking negatively about my family with our nurse in front of my daughter accusing me falsely that I was overmedicating her when it was doctors orders that she receive the medication. Also, one service provider was rude to my mother when she came to check on Trinity. Our nurse's last day when she was terminated. Their selfish acts of not returning phone calls and not giving me the appropriate paperwork was uncalled for as well as talking about me and discussing my daughter's medicines with her nurse without permission. Before this nurse came, things were okay. After the therapists did not return, my daughter was doing great; rolling over, almost sitting up and becoming extremely active.

Realized that our son had delays at one year and three months old. It took three months to see a developmental therapist and First Steps initial visit, seventeen months for the speech therapist and eighteen months before we began receiving occupational and physical therapy through CT school initially. The physical therapist was through First Steps and started at 22 months. The occupational therapist started at 22 months.

First Steps changed my child's life. It was the best thing we ever did. Early intervention was the key to his success.

They really helped us out afater they changed people. They were very nice and helped us a lot. She is growing leaps and bounds.

Our service coordinator was/is considered a resource even though our daughter has "graduated" from First Steps. Marilyn was fantastic! Thank you.

This will be our first summer without the help of therapists. We are hoping we can provide our son with appropriate speech and OT tools to continue his growth for the fall semester at ISC. We are disappointed he did not qualify for additional (extended) services over the summer months but look forward to continued work with his ISC teachers and therapists. Any resources that can be recommended for summer services would be appreciated!

Give Christina Elwood a raise. She is wonderful.

Our therapists were awesome! Thankfully, my child had no lasting effects due to prematurity so she has had no contact with First Steps since November of 2007. We loved it!

Our daughter was only in First Steps for a couple of months before transferring to ECI. Our daughter needed OT, PT and Speech but were only granted OT initially. Through my perserverance, our daughter finally received speech. Our daughter is now enrolled in ECI and is receiving all three disciplines. Because of the short duration with First Steps, many of these questions really did not apply.

Missouri would benefit by looking into services provided by a school for developmental delay for children starting at age eighteen months through three years (DD) and then three years to five years pre-school - DD and typical children. Services we received in Jasper County were outstanding due to our therapists-wonderful to work with and very helpful to our child.

Thank you so much. Our son is improving so much that other family members have noticed a big improvement thanks to you. We were able to get him in school with therapy he needs.

Our coordinator, Amy, was very helpful. The therapists were also wonderful. Our family benefited from the First Steps program.

I feel my child was initially inadequately tested. The one hour/one day a week was minor in realized benefits. The child is minimally better today than when he began after a year. His vocabulary is still around 50 to 75 words. He mumbles leaving the last part of his words out of his speech.

I learned about First Steps from the doctor that diagnosed him with autism. She also informed me about the Kansas City Regional list and talking to someone about my son getting on the autism list, and SSI with social security office. When I called First Steps and explained what was going on with my son. There was a lady that came to the house a few days later and she explained some things about First Steps to me, but I never did meet the service coordinator. After a few weeks passed and the therapist started I did see some improvement, but my main concern is that he still isn't talking on his own. He just repeats everything being said.

Head Start denied my child access to their program. We are still struggling with childcare. I have done my own research on resourses available to my child and I'm not finding much assistance. The speech therapist for First Steps showed up twice and cancelled the rest of her appointments. Very disappointed.

I have three or four different therapists for my child and I think it would have been better for my child to just have one. But, it did teach me as well as my child in some areas. Thank you for all they did in the efforts.

It was hard to find a therapist on the website on my own at first because they did not update it and it was frustrating to call and have them say they don't serve my area anymore or don't have any openings. When I did find one she quit after 2 or 3 months. I was upset that I would have to go through the whole Matrix search again and I ended up just asking my service coordinator to find one for me. She did, and I liked our second speech therapist even better. My service coordinator really helped me. My son is now three and a half and has met all of his speech goals and speaks better now than most kids his age. Thanks.

First Steps is a wonderful program that Missouri is lucky to have. My son has improved dramatically with their help. I firmly believe he would not be as accomplished as he is today without First Steps. This program needs to stay in Missouri. Thank you!

Small side note: I am grateful for First Steps. It has prepared/helped my son in so many ways. Early Intervention is the best. ECSE is the very best thing that could happen to help my child.

Working previously in another state with a previous child made us ask about help. The teachers needed to read up on our disability to better help us. They didn't quite know much about hydrocephalus or brain/neurological issues and we had to constantly explain things to every teacher.

We had a awesome coordinator. First Steps has helped my son a lot. First Steps, keep up the good work.

Due to income level most of these services were not available to our family.

My son is enrolled in Easter Seals, which is Hawaii's Early Intervention program and is doing well!

I found out about First Steps from a friend whose son used the services when my son didn't qualify for speech therapy because he had the language of a thirteen month old instead of a twelve month old. It was my friend who informed me and urged me to have him tested for occupational therapy, etc. First Steps never gave me additional information on how to help my son or what else could be tried or they had to offer us. I only gained this knowledge from my friend. Once he did qualify for services through First Steps, having the therapists come to our home was a huge help. I have two other children and it would have been difficult/impossible taking them or getting childcare! We had three different service coordinators so never really got to know them or felt they know our son/situation. Of the three therapists who helped our son, one was amazing. Very sweet and patient. She is a perfect fit for her field. Another was the opposite. We felt she lacked patience and understanding which our son also interpreted, as he did not look forward to her visits as he did the other two ladies. First Steps did help my son and we will always be grateful. We no longer see some of the things he does as bad, but understand why he does them and how we can help him. I'm happy to say he is a real chatter-box! Thank you.

Thanks for everything you did for my son. He still asks about you guys and when you are coming over to play. Please keep in touch with us. Thanks again

Until we had our current coordinator we had a hard time finding physical, speech, developmental and occupational therapists. Once our current coordinator came aboard she was able to find them all. She also linked us with LEEP. Without it my son would not be walking with his trainer, or talking. LEEP should be in all schools. We drive him 30 minutes twice a week to attend. In our own district, they aren't half as well put together.

First Steps is wonderful! All the care givers are fantastic. This program is a much needed and wanted program. The boy is so much further along than we expected when we first started with First Steps. He starts preschool in August and his outcome will be so much better than originally thought. Thank you all so much.

We didn't find out about First Steps until our son was almost three. First Steps helped us understand the problem and get started, but wasn't able to help with therapy. Our school does not offer enough to help, so we have to pay for private therapy.

First Steps has been wonderful to work with. Cassie Geithman is our service coordinator and she is wonderful. I have two grandchildren I am raising. They have worked with both girls. The oldest graduated out and required no service from the school district. The youngest is still in First Steps and has sensory disorder. Peri Bozdech is wonderful with her. Jill Brew worked with both girls and continues to work with my youngest and she is excellent. All of these people should be commended. Thank you

We had four different service coordinators during our "stay" with First Steps. The start of speech therapy was delayed for "months" - probably 5-6 months. We were told that there were no speech therapists. Our daughter did not say a word until she was 22 months, so she had a significant delay. Thank you.

Thank you for the survey, but daughter passed away in October of 2007.

My family was impressed in the beginning with First Steps and then that idea went downhill very quickly. The first speech therapist was wonderful. Her name was Cathy and she later took another job. Our second speech therapist contacted me after weeks of waiting. Cynthia, on her second visit, advised me if I did not get my son diagnosed as Autistic immediately, he would in turn start robbing banks with butter knives when someone told him to. Our third speech therapist never showed up on time. She could be hour(s) early or late sometimes giving notice. This process put my son back and he did not want to work with other therapists. The very best thing that came out of First Steps was our occupational therapist, Jill Roesch. She helped my son in ways I never imagined. She was always on time but on the off chance she would be late, she would call. Jill called even when she was on time. I did not find that our coordinator gave much thought to when I called. I was never called back in a timely manner. The last time I called I was told someone would get back with me. No one ever called and our service ended. The only time I heard back was to make sure that his services would be over and someone from the school would contact me. We never had a meeting with First Steps and the school in the same room. Hopefully, other families will have better luck.

We really appreciate all the services that our son received through First Steps. It was a blessing for our family in such a difficult time. The coordinator and all the therapists were great; were accessible and willing to help the best they could. Again, thanks.

We loved being a part of our child's speech team. It was so hard getting him to and from the school he transitioned to after leaving First Steps. I babysit two infants and 2 three-year-olds so it was not effective for us to continue services. We have since switched pediatricians because we found out that my son's tonsils are very bad. He will be getting them out next week. He tested as having a hearing loss and they think it will clear up after surgery. They also think his speech will improve. Thank you very much. My family loved First Steps. Greatest thing we could have done at the time.

First Steps is a very awesome program. It helped my son, who was losing words to start talking. Not only that, it helped him into early preschool at three years old. That has helped him bloom into the never stop talking three year old I dreamed he could be. He is so much more social and loves being around other kids. Before, he knew he wasn't like the others because he wasn't able to talk. Thank you! Call us if you need a great reference.

We enjoyed the First Steps program and felt it was beneficial to our child. We had poor communication through our service coordinator. Phone calls were never returned and I had to do all the work to get my daughter help through another facility after she turned three. This was my only disappointment.

Because I have had three other children with special needs. I was able to ask and stay on top of my coordinator but assessments and programs available and help available should have been readily available and explained thoroughly. My child's main problem is communication but in a world where we don't eagerly and readily communicate this creates conflict and frustration. We, as a whole do not know what questions to ask when you have not experienced these things before so they should be reiterated on highly and strongly. Although my child is not as severe as others but much more severe than his elder siblings and most of these programs are new. People in whole should be made aware by physicians and care given that they are available to all for helping a young mind develop and older minds understand what they are dealing with. My husbands family still stuffs our son off as being slow but will catch up with school. People need to be educated as to what they are dealing with and made aware of the development possibilities or the ignorance will leave this bright light to dim and fade away in our society. These words I leave you after screaming for help with four children with autism and I am still screaming and jumping up and down as the problem is not getting better as the general public is ignorant to the problem. We continue to breed and ignorant society and that is NOT what this country was built on. I have raised two children who have had a great recovery from this spectrum. The third child had also recovered but was unfortunately killed at the age of seven-and-a-half years. The youngest child is recoperating but not achieved full recovery. I have spent many hours and much money advocating and educating others and my children as to the problem. Court systems still do not comprehend an autistic child and they don't understand they don't make a complete recovery that there is no cure. They don't understand that it is a problem. They only see what recovery has been made and consider the child in question without flaw. But, the underlining problem still exists. Make people aware of what can be done to help and shout it out and educate the adults if they cannot be educated then matters to have an outside advocate should be set forth to understand the childs needs. Make them aware!

Although First Steps provided great opportunities for our child it would have been nice to have a bigger selection of therapists to choose from. Our speech therapist did not click with our son and I feel like it was not beneficial at all. But, she was the only one available at that time. I also felt like our occupational therapy evaluation was not right. Our child receives OT now at his school, but the OT evaluation through First Steps said he did not qualify. Our developmental pediatrician was appalled that he did not qualify. Our service coordinator Nicole was wonderful!

We opted out September of 2007 because my child was doing so well.

We appreciate the help we received with reference to the speech therapy. That is the only service that we utilized unless the early child care is a part of First Steps. I feel that there were a lot of services and information we should have been made aware of.

We didn't find out about First Steps until our son was almost 3. First Steps helped us understand the problem and get started, but wasn't able to help with therapy. Our school does not offer enough to help, so we have to pay for private therapy.

We had the most wonderful service provider! She was great with me and my child.

I believe, overall, First Steps saved our son and family. I am forever grateful to our coordinator and his ABA therapist. They truly changed our lives for the better. However, the other therapist I worked with DID NOT have a clue and in some cases did more harm than good.

The First Steps program is a wonderful program. I feel that it has made a huge impact on my child's growth and learning ability. We went through a lot of therapists and service coordinators but everyone was very helpful. We learned a lot from each and every one. I am forever grateful for the First Steps program. THANK YOU for a program such as this one.

Our coordinator was awesome! She was always available and willing to help when needed. I feel that she excels in her position. She goes above and beyond her call of duty. She returns calls promptly and if she does not have an answer to a question, she researches and responds rapidly. She was a tremendous help to me and my family. She is an asset to First Steps.

My son only had a few months with First Steps. Due to not having two or more delays, he only had a speech problem and I was told that at age two years old First Steps would not take him because he did not have two or more areas of concern and so I didn't get any services. Only until he was diagnosed with Speech Apraxia did he receive any help from First Steps. But, by this time, he was already two months from his third birthday. I wish that we had more time with First Steps so that he could have gotten more out of this program. I never received any help except getting him into the Early Childhood center in Fox school district. I had wished to get more therapy at a low cost somewhere.

We don't receive First Steps now because our son is three years old. We liked the program when we had it.

Our daughter needed minimal physical therapy from being born premature. While we qualified, we did not need or actively engage in services beyond physical therapy and even then it was minimal. I don't feel we are overly "qualified" to answer most questions.

My child was found to be 49% delayed. He definitely had a life-long disability. When we were finally able to get into the developmental ped (six month visit) he was given the "official" diagnosis and then started receiving four services through First Steps. We private paid for one service while waiting the six months. I heard that a therapist and one service coordinator can make a clinical judgment on kids so close to cut off. Maybe there should be a policy about something like this.

First Steps is a great program. It really helped my son and with ECSE he is making great strides. His primary difficulty is in speech and language and this has improved dramatically. My only complaint is how long the placement took and not knowing if the program was secure due to possible budget cuts. I am very glad to see that the program has survived. Keep up the good work!

We are grateful for the help of First Steps.

I am so glad that my child qualified for speech. It greatly enhanced his abilities and put him up to where he needs to be.

First Steps has made a huge impact on my daughter's life. She would not be as ambulatory as she is without the services provided by First Steps. It is such a god send for our family and others. Thank you.

Our service coordinator and her supervisor were terrible to work with. The ladies who came to our home and worked with our child were the best thing that ever happened to our family.

Thank you! You've made a huge difference in our family!

Thanks for all the help with our child.

I strongly believe that a hearing test should be required for children with speech issues before speech/language assessment.

We have two children in the First Steps Program. One son was two when we started getting help with you and he is now three and a half. Our second son was one year old and now he is a year and eleven months old.

We're just getting started in the program.

We found out almost too late about First Steps. Our daughter was already two and a half before she was enrolled. All the available services were not explained to me. Our service coordinator was very unorganized and self-absorbed. Our therapists were more help than she was. We were late enrolling her into the school district. But, the actual services we did receive greatly helped my daughter develop as she should have. She is now reaching her age level of development. I give credit to First Steps and their assistance in my education of my daughters needs.

Because of First Steps we believe our son is doing well and learning to cope with his disability and work through it instead of letting it hold him back. Without the early intervention and intense therapy he received, we believe he would be delayed a lot more than he is. We greatly appreciate all the services we received.

The Missouri First Steps program is an EXCELLENT program. However, you are lacking qualified therapists that are greatly needed. Speech and OT is almost non-existent in my county and the surrounding counties. Although my son improved tremendously because of his developmental therapist. There is no telling how he would have flourished with the proper therapies he needed. Even though my son is on SSI and has proven delays, at six months old, he was turned down through your program until the intervention of the Ripley County WIC office at age 2. He gained so much in the year he was in your program it makes one wonder where he would be if he hadn't been overlooked to begin with.

I have nothing but praise and admiration for our caseworker. She was awesome. The First Steps program has always been wonderful to my three children who benefited from your program. I don't know where I'd be without you. I only wish these services continued after the age of three. We have moved to a different school district and I'm finding their early childhood program is not very good. My son, whose three and a half, has had a major speech loss and is not adapting to their program very well. I MISS FIRST STEPS!

I am thankful for the information provided to me that allowed me to contact First Steps. This information was provided by my son's doctor. Plus, the services my son received during his time in First Steps was excellent and made major changes that would affect my son the rest of his life. I am happy that the Governor realized that this program is essential to provide assistance to children with special needs. I hope the program stays around long-term and my son is proof that the program is very effective!

1. When creating the IFSP, the service coordinator just asked, "What do you want?", or something similar. It would have been more helpful to get information about what he needed and then determine how this would work with the family. I am not an expert in child development. 2. We received services in four areas: The third area was great and the fourth was okay. If we would have been in First Steps longer, I would have made a change. 3. It would have been helpful to know about DMH Regional Center. I have just now completed the paperwork for services we are eligible for.

Finding occupational and physical therapy services in rural areas are just impossible. This area needs help greatly. Also, finding transportation to and from services also.

First Steps was excellent at identifying my child's disability (speech) and allowing us to continue services with the speech therapist who discovered his lack of speech. We could have done without a service coordinator. She was not helpful or informative. First Steps is a worthwhile program which should not be stopped.

This was an excellent program. I don't have one single complaint and am forever grateful for the First Steps program.

Monique Jamison was our physical therapy provider. She does a wonderful job. I would recommend her to anyone. First Steps is a wonderful option. Great job to all.

I strongly feel what Governor Blunt has done to this program is a horrible thing. So many children need these services that do not get them. It has been proven to start helping our children prior to school age increases the "chances" for normality. Blunt has destroyed First Steps and it is a crying shame. He should look around at other states and see what they are doing. I was one of the lucky ones and got out before Blunt destroyed it! It was a wonderful program. I never thanked my therapists enough for what they did for us. Top notch therapists!

Our physical therapist was awesome. First Steps was an exceptional program. What a great help it was to our family. Thank you for offering First Steps!

In speaking with other families of preemies, we were not informed of any assistance from SSI or other services, other than the regional center. I think that families with special needs children are financially strapped as it is and any help would have made a much bigger difference to us. Thank God, our child did not require any extra special items or assistance or we would have been bankrupt.

We had a good experience with First Steps overall except; the service coordinator was very nice but hard to get a hold of at times. She was a little forgetful when it came time for my child to go to the school district and transfer. She forgot that I told her I wanted to meet at a certain date with the school district (to get started). If I had not called the school district asking if we had an appointment with them, we would have missed our deadline because she forgot to tell them the date I wanted to meet with them. She claims she did not talk to me about it. But, I know she forgot because I wrote it on my calendar. She was very nice, but a little flakey.

If it wasn't for First Steps, my child would be in a wheelchair. She has Cerebral Palsy, AC1 Malformation, Spinal Bifida and Autism. She walks and now is trying to talk. Thank God for First Steps. Her brother has the same issues and is doing very well.

Early intervention is extremely beneficial to children and their families in dealing with a deficiency. So much development can be encouraged with the right knowledge and activity. My child's needs were being met initially and improvements were made each week. Then my coordinator decided we did not need as much services and her improvements diminished significantly. I also saw my child could benefit from services outside the home and my coordinator was adamant that it was not a First Steps service possibility. I was frustrated with my coordinator because I felt she did not want to see my child continue to improve with services provided by First Steps. My child continues to receive physical therapy on a weekly basis and is making progress, but is still behind. I understand funding is limited, but my service coordinator was willing to approve weekly in-home visits again and I thought St. John's physical therapy program was a better motivator and a better fit for my child. My coordinator would not agree because she said that was First Steps policy now (in-home only). The cost for in-home and facility care were about the same. Actually, St. John's physical therapy program was less (\$50 versus \$60/hr). Overall, I think it was a tremendous advantage to have First Steps services for my child, but the program could use more supportive coordinators and/or a more flexible policy. P. S. I decided not to file a complaint because this occurred over the last nine months of her service and I had spoke with my coordinator's supervisor who was difficult to work with as well.

First Steps was a great help. We thank you and I'm sorry I was late getting this in the mail back to you.

I already knew about most of the resources.

Our child was initially assessed by First Steps at age two. The only assessment completed was speech. Our child did not qualify as his/her delay was only 30%. Our child started individual speech therapy and two months later, group speech therapy to address possible Verbal Apraxia. The individual and group speech therapist believed there was something besides Apraxia affecting our child. So at age two years and four months we took him/her to a neurologist, who diagnosed our child with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This, as I have been told by many professional therapists, should have been caught at his/her two year First Steps evaluation. Although I am very thankful for the services our child is now receiving, I believe a failure to do a complete assessment resulted in our child losing five months of services he/she needed. As you are aware, ASD is best treated the earlier it is diagnosed and treatment begins. Our child being "put in the box" of being only speech delayed prevented him/her from getting very necessary services. Diagnoses do not fit into neat boxes and neither did our child. I hope your evaluation process will improve so no other child loses out on precious time. A concerned parent.

We are very thankful for the First Steps program. I don't know what we would have done without this program. Our 26 week premature twins are doing great now and I don't think they would be doing so well had we not had this program. Our therapists were wonderful. They guided and told us what we needed for our children to catch up in the development. Otherwise, we would have no way of knowing what they needed. I hope everyone in the future needing this service can have the same opportunity as we did.

The First Steps program was awesome. They provided my daughter with valuable skills and increased her activity level. Her first coordinator was awful. She delayed speech therapy by one and a half years. She never filed appropriate paperwork after the initial speech evaluation. My daughter is delayed in this area and thankfully, due to the school district, she finally talks. Read our file! Thank you.

First Steps is a great program and I loved it. If it wasn't for my Nurse's For Newborn and the First Steps program, my son would not have accomplished as much as he has. I just want to say thank you for all everyone in the program has done for me and my son. Thank you all.

First Steps helped my son to put words together. This increased his productivity and happiness. Fits were reduced by a large amount because he now had the ability to verbally express his thoughts and desires.

Wonderful program. Our child was delayed in his speech. Just a few months with a therapist did the trick. Therapist was well educated and a pleasure to work with. Thank you.

I had a wonderful experience with First Steps. Our service coordinator was very supportive, knowledgeable, helpful and very prompt with responses and action. We easily obtained therapists in three different areas: speech, development and occupational. My son only qualified for speech but had unlimited therapy options. I think this is important for children who are "borderline" for qualifying for certain therapies. I hope that First Steps continues to be available for all children that need help. The help that we received changed our family's lives for the better. Our son needed that extra "push" to start communicating and improving his developmental growth. We couldn't have done it on our own. Thank you!

Thank you very much for this wonderful service and the fine caring people who helped our son.

Our child received speech therapy. The KCMO School District was very hard to work with on this. The service coordinator arranged the first meeting with the speech therapist, and that was all. The speech therapist was very good and very helpful. Our child is now up to speed on this and is not in any other programs.

First Steps is a wonderful program! I think it is a shame that families have to pay for some of the services thanks to Mr. Blunt.

First Steps has helped me out a lot. I am glad that we have a program like this that can help kids that need it. If it wasn't for First Steps, my son would still be behind in speech.

Early intervention services offered through First Steps were invaluable to the successes our child has made in his development. He is much happier and we have better skills and knowledge to help him. He had great therapists. Our First Steps providers helped us all tremendously.

Our child has not participated in the program for the last couple of years. It was not deemed necessary and she is not now considered disabled.

Our family is very grateful for being a recipient of First Steps services. We enjoyed having our son's speech therapist in our home. She was remarkably encouraging and always cheerful. I miss her now! Thank you. My only problem with the program was just getting started. We live in a rural county and at the time we began there had been a turnover situation with the intake coordinator and it took a while to get started. I was also startled at times when I would receive the statements showing how much the service coordinator received for her part, when she was rarely available to me. Again, I understand we live in a rural county, but we were put off at times by how we could not catch up with her for any meetings. Our therapist did a lot for us. I want to stress that point, but dealing with anyone above that was much more difficult. Thank you

Once we moved to Lincoln County, the services that were supposed to be provided, weren't provided and communication with our service coordinator was all but non-existent. I am thankful that most services my child received were through St. Louis and St. Charles counties or I would have answered this questionnaire quite differently (NEGATIVELY).

My son benefited a lot by the First Steps program. His vocabulary has increased greatly and he is more involved when we are out places. Our teachers were awesome. They dealt with our son well and helped him in a big way. We will always be grateful to these people and this program. To me this program is exactly what kids like our son need. We would recommend it to any parent that asked.

I had a two year old who wasn't talking yet and then First Steps came in and gave him the jump start he needed. A speech pathologist worked with him for six months. Great program! Great therapist! She gave my son the help he needed. We quit services because he was well on his way to talking, but also because I would have to start paying for services.

My child is still enrolled in First Steps. I had to provide the information regarding my child's evaluation to the service coordinator. She came to my house without any information regarding my son. By just seeing the results (that I provided her with) she immediately said that my child was not eligible for First Steps. It was then, because of my intervention and phone calls, that a therapist came to my house and did another evaluation on my child and recommended my son be accepted into the program. The first service coordinator was not easy to work with and I'm happy that we were assigned another coordinator who is very pleasant. The first coordinator made us aware that there were other options available (outside of First Steps) for us to get help for our son. It were solely up to her, we would not be in First Steps. Questions #4-#6 were answered honestly and based on our experience getting into the program.

It was very difficult to receive information and follow-up/follow-through from our First Steps experience. This is how I developed skills to advocate for my child. It took seven months to get a response, proper diagnosis, etc., to even begin participating and my child will have only five months benefit of the program. Professionals clearly said repeatedly how early intervention could benefit my child, and how it was definite that he needed it. It was distressing to jump through hoops for seven months knowing that we were losing valuable months of therapy. I'm also distressed to think that other families with more special needs and less education would have the same experience that I did.

Services for First Steps were easy to access and eligibility easy to understand. However, eligibility for ECSE is very difficult to understand. Criteria was not explained in a way that we could understand and we were not informed of acceptance into the ECSE until approximately one week before school starting. I also felt that during transition and IEP meetings that school personnel did not always agree or accept First Steps providers observations, evaluations or suggestions, even though they had been working with the child for months. It would be most beneficial for families if the members of the IFSP team could also attend IEP meetings until the child actually begins ECSE. First Steps employees went above and beyond in assisting that we were aware of our rights and made necessary phone calls to assure that we were aware of the laws regarding children with special needs.

Our child's needs were relatively minor compared to others who receive First Steps services. However, we feel he received the same attention as any other child with special needs which made us feel that all the effort of having him evaluated was not in vain. Our son enjoyed his therapy sessions and we appreciated the feedback and suggestions.

I thought the speech therapy services we received through First Steps were better than what we now receive from the school district.

My daughter had a significant speech delay and received speech therapy through First Steps. The service coordinator, while helpful, seemed to me to be an additional step I had to go through to talk to the people I needed to talk to. Speech therapy did not seem to help my daughter much. I found a product called ProEFA, an essential fatty acid supplement that helped her much more. She has taken the supplement for six months now and is almost caught up to her age group. If the state would like to save money, research could be funded to study this product and maybe substitute essential fatty acid supplementation versus speech therapy. Call me a kook, but instead of paying out hundreds of dollars per month for service coordinators and speech therapy, you could pay about \$7.00 per month for supplements.

We accidentally found First Steps on the internet that was based in Florida. We had to actively search for someone who knew about First Steps locally and who had a number. Once we got our service coordinator, it went much more smoothly. However, we needed to keep asking if there was anything else we can do for her. We had a very positive experience with Boone County Family Services. They were especially helpful when we transitioned to ECSE and helped with some roadblocks we encountered. I couldn't have gotten through without them and I am very grateful. Boone County Family Services then called me and said my daughter was a good candidate for the Lopez Waiver. They got everything done and coordinated. She did get the waiver and that has been our family's lifesaver. Boone County Family Services were and are awesome. We are very thankful.

I felt, at times, totally disconnected from my service coordinator. There was not a thorough understanding during the transition period and afterwards, not enough information to know what to do and how to proceed now that we are no longer in First Steps. Initial contact was from a friend that used the services, otherwise, I would not have known about the program.

We were very pleased with our therapist and coordinator. We remain in touch with each of them and feel they were a very important part of our child's first years of development. It was also a blessing to not have to worry about payments on therapy with so many other doctor bills during that time. It would sadden me to think that in the future families may not have the same luxuries as we did with First Steps. For us, it was well ran and awesome.

First Steps is outstanding! I have personally spoke with Governor Blunt and my friends who are State Senators and representatives. I have spoke and met with area First Steps/Cooper County Sheltered Services. I have talked to the Boone Hospital providers about discontinuing services. My son has received excellent care and is developing well. Both of my children were born at 27 weeks and without First Steps would not have developed as well. My daughter was not as delayed. Not only is the care excellent, our service coordinator and therapists are wonderful with him. They truly care about him and want him to succeed. We are sad to have our daughter leave because she has been with him since she was born and in the hospital. I am very concerned about services not being available through Boone because of cutbacks and they are losing money. I know they have a business to run but these are innocent children who NEED First Steps. Thank you!

The only problem we had was that my child did not receive speech every week. There was no one available so he received less than he needed for awhile until I called around to find someone myself. It would have been helpful to have a list of available therapists.

She was great. She was very helpful through the whole program. I even had to call her a few times at home, but she was still very happy to help. The speech therapist did a fantastic job helping my child. When we started First Steps, she had a vocabulary of nine words. But, now she can say just about everything. A BIG thanks to First Steps for helping us get services our child needed and for helping us take the "first step" toward bettering our child's life.

Our child was a foster child that moved from Newton County when he was two years and 4 months old. We didn't know he was in First Steps at that time. We were told that his records were lost in the system. It seemed that since he was so close to turning three, no one wanted to work with him.

My caseworker was extremely overworked. I am still learning of resources available to me that I wish I would have known about earlier. At times I think it was just a matter of me not yet knowing what questions to ask. Sometimes I think it was too much for someone who was trying to inform me of all she could in an hour per month. I would have liked to receive more information by email, etc.

I thought the services (speech/language) we received through First Steps were better than what the school district gives.

We had my son tested through First Steps back in November 2005 when he turned 2. We didn't qualify. The I paid \$200.00 for St. Johns to test him and through the results of that test, First Steps qualified him in April. So now he is in the program and I'm thankful and we are finally seeing some improvements. But I am aggravated that the services didn't start when he was 2. I wonder how much further ahead he would be if they would have. I also wonder where he would be if I hadn't taken the matter into my own hands and paid the money and went elsewhere for further and more detailed testing? It's just something for First Steps to think about. I feel sorry for the people that aren't qualified and don't have the resources for further testing. I am positive children that need these services are slipping through the cracks. My child was almost one of those children.

We had a relatively short period of time with First Steps but during this time there was turnover within the program which caused a small amount of problems in getting appropriate information.

We found out about First Steps through the NICU at St. Johns. We are very grateful for the program and only have the highest compliments for First Steps.

I am having a very difficult time finding daycare.

The First Steps program helped my child grow tremendously. It is a wonderful program. I am afraid to think of where we would be today without it. Thanks.

We loved our son being in the First Steps program. We were constantly and consistently aware of all his therapists and evaluations when meetings were coming up, and all other related issues to his care. I feel like the assistance without cost was wonderful. Because of our income and both parents working we didn't qualify for any other help. There are so many medical costs and appointments and my son only has Down's Syndrome. I can't imagine what other's have had to go through to afford care and help with their child's needs. I didn't know about First Steps until I had a child with a disability. It was like it was a secret as are all other aid and/or assistance programs. The fact that it only helps children with disabilities, I was shocked with budget changes and cuts. My last comment is that I hate the school district so far. Only his teacher and paraprofessional showed up for his first and only IFSP meeting. I have only met one of his therapists. My husband has met two. I think that this is only because he takes him and picks him up from school. I have not gotten any evaluations or contact from therapists and because of where we live and daycare, we transport him (our son) daily, which breaks up my husband's work day. We were told that they would give us some names of daycare providers that he could go to. I'm happy with our daycare provider and am not willing to change (forced change so it works best for them and means more change for our son-NO WAY!). Then, if we wanted an extended school year, our son would have shipped down to Troost. So, we lose therapy for this decision. We are in the Kansas City school district, which I'm not even sure if it is accredited anymore. After being treated so wonderfully while in First Steps, this is awful. Thank you!

First Steps is a vital program. I felt we were very well taken care of. If Matt Blunt ever again decides it is unnecessary, I will do my part to ensure it never goes away. Great service and great therapist. I felt like we were priority. P.S. Our daughter is now three and half years old and never stops talking.

First Steps was such a blessing to our family. The early intervention is so important and made a huge difference in my son's development. The therapists were professional and knew what they were doing. Overall, I was very satisfied with First Steps and grateful for their services. The only things (which were few) that I was disappointed in was: 1) I had to push for the Behavior Therapy my child needed. Their services were inadequate to begin with and I had to make my own roadmap. They did end up providing the services though. 2) Therapists seemed to cut the sessions short, sometimes just 2-5 minutes short, but that adds up over time. After I mentioned it to them, it improved.

An area not addressed on this questionnaire is the procedure to acquire the various therapists approved on the IFSP. What a terrible hassle for the parent. The matrix is confusing. It is not updated either. Trying to contact the therapists was very difficult - untimely responses. By the time therapy actually started for my son, almost two crucial months passed from the date of the IFSP. This process of acquiring therapists needs to be streamlined. A parent obviously has enough on their plate.

During meetings, facilitators use terminology not familiar to parent. It would be beneficial at IEP meetings to have definitions for areas being addressed (i.e. adaptation skills). Also, sometimes in meetings, it seems very focused on the "procedure" and paperwork and not addressing the child's needs. Overall, I have been extremely pleased with both programs.

I feel that the First Steps program was an integral part of my child's development. We spent every day, every hour, every minute with him and so we were able to communicate with him and understand his communications. It took people who did not see him every day to "open our eyes" and we knew that we needed help. First Steps taught him, and us, what we needed to do to get him on the right track. Thank you.

Our transition process was okay but not the easiest. The First Steps program ended and I felt left on my own in the area of getting my child tested or evaluated. Why doesn't First Steps allow my therapist to administer the developmental or assessment tests? It was so hard to enter into the "special services" department of our school system and have them test my child when they knew NOTHING about him. There was also this attitude of, "Well, I guess we'll HAVE to test him since First Steps didn't". No one seemed to want to carry the "assessment" of my child. It seems logical to the parent, that the people that have worked with their child, often since birth, would be the ones to assess or test him/her before they are passed on or graduated from the program. This is a common complaint I've heard in the First Steps program. If it's a money issue, just give the parent the option to pay for the test. I would have gladly paid for the test myself if only someone would have communicated with me. Our testing/assessment experience was not a bad experience but it was not a good one either; strange place, strange people, and hard to schedule. I wish so much that our transition into the school system could have started off better. Thanks for allowing me to voice my thoughts.

I was very pleased and thankful for the First Steps program. It benefited our son in so many ways and we gained so many friendships and resources. As you can see, I marked a couple of "Don't Know" questions under the ECSE section. That is because there is very little, if any, communication with his therapists. I have made attempts to keep tabs on his progress and what he is working on but received very little feedback. He attends classes twice a week receiving 15 minutes a day with each therapist. To me, this isn't much at all. From what I can make of the goals, it is more about adapting to the school setting as opposed to improving or even maintaining what he has gained thus far. I just feel the school program could be even a little more aggressive for the benefit of the children so they don't lose what they gained in the First Steps Program.

We participated in the marked resources but it would have been easier if First Steps had told us about them.

I am so grateful for the First Steps Program. My daughter would never have been doing this well without it. It has been a wonderful experience.

My daughter attends Central Institute for the Deaf. She is profoundly deaf and uses a cochlear implant to hear. She is talking in conversation and is excelling in every area. Most of her success is due to early intervention and First Steps working in a swift manner. As a parent, I had to be proactive and diligent in pursuing the needed services and First Steps provided the services in a timely manner and I found the entire experience educational and inspiring. I believe early intervention is crucial to a disabled child's success in life, along with completely committed parents or caregivers).

Our family and son is much better off because of the services provided by the First Steps program. Children born prematurely or with disabilities are at such a great risk form the moment of birth and this program is crucial to their development and well being. I was therefore shocked and dismayed when I heard our Governor, Matt Blunt, was going to cut this program. I cannot imagine what he could possibly be thinking by cutting this program? Perhaps I should not have voted for him? I sincerely hope Mr. Blunt does not ever consider this again. Maybe if his son was born 3.5 months early, had a brain hemorrhage at two days old, had breathing problems, heart problems, kidney problems and eye problems, he would think twice. This program is INVALUABLE to these children and their families. Shame on you Mr. Blunt, but please learn from this and do not allow this program to be cut. Give these children the best possible start we can offer them.

We were very pleased with Missouri's First Steps program, especially with our coordinator. She took the time to truly understand the needs of our child and to ensure that he received appropriate services. She was also very helpful during the transition process, making herself readily available to answer our questions.

I think that First Steps was very beneficial to my daughter. The therapists helped her and taught me how to help her.

The speech therapists who worked with my son would often come late and leave early. I really don't think it helped him very much.

Several of therapists we saw seemed to operate on the theory that all children have sensory integration disorder (DSI). This resulted in therapies that were a complete waste of time. I complained about this to our service coordinator, and she strongly agreed with me and promised to have our son evaluated by someone who was not "gung ho about sensory integration disorder" (her words). The result was an evaluation by a therapist who insisted our son had this disorder despite the fact that he failed every item but one on the checklist. When asked if she had every evaluated a child and NOT come to the conclusion that he had DSI, she answered, "No, you can always find something". A complete waste of time and worthless.

First Steps saved our family! Our son suffered two cardiac arrests his first week of life and his prognosis was dire. We learned about First Steps in the NICU after hearing that if he survived, he would have life-long disabilities. Through First Steps our son received occupational, physical, speech, developmental and nutritional services. We slowly watched our son emerge from unresponsive to a vivacious, energetic three year old who runs, smiles, speaks, eats and attends school. His delays are quite unnoticeable to most today. We are a middle class family, but the medical bills were, of course, our number one financial priority at the time and there is no way we would have been able to pay for the services he required. We are greatly appreciative of the excellent services and amazing therapists who helped us teach our son. We were heartsick to hear of the funding losses to this program. I am a firm believer that those three short years of intensive therapy saved our family and my son from a lifetime of needs.

First Steps was a wonderful program to be a part of. It made dealing with my son's delays much easier and equipped me with the tools needed to work with him on a daily basis. He couldn't have gotten the therapy without the program. We had such wonderful therapists. You'd never know today that he'd been through occupational, physical and speech therapy. We are very grateful to the program! Please keep up the great work for other needy families! The program truly blessed and changed my son's life.

My son is not in First Steps anymore. Last year he was and it was a great service.

As a former elementary school teacher, I know first hand the importance of this program. I have been impressed with every aspect of this program. Early intervention is the key to help a lot of children. The intake coordinator and the service coordinator were extremely knowledgeable and helpful throughout our entire experience.

My daughter's first speech therapist was clueless and made no progress with her. Our second therapist was wonderful and helped our family and words couldn't express our gratitude.

The First Steps Program was the crucial step that helped our child overcome his paraxial and start speaking. Our speech therapist was wonderful and was a huge reason our son did so well. The only negative thing I have to say is that we never had any contact with our service coordinator apart from the first meeting and the transition meeting. In terms of that, we felt alone in the program. Luckily, our speech therapist was familiar enough with First Steps that she was able to guide us through the program.

The services we received from 10/02 to 10/05 have helped us as a family and most of all our child. Our coordinator, went above and beyond to see our child received all the services needed. Between her and my son's occupational, physical and speech therapists, it helped our son in the YCDD school program at Dexter School System. This program is a great assist to all Missouri residents. Thanks again.

We relocated to another state shortly after my son's second birthday.

My child had speech delay and I am convinced he would not be where he is today without First Steps. He is doing very well at this time. He was almost not accepted into First Steps. I hope this program continues to recognize and qualify children with delayed speech even if there aren't other apparent issues!

Thank you First Steps.

Thank you. Although my child did not qualify for services after leaving this program, you helped me find a program through my husband's employer to help my child further. You have made a huge difference in our family and in my son's life.

We have experienced First Steps through St. Louis City from March 2003-June 2005. During this period, my son had two different physical therapists, one occupational therapist, and one developmental therapist. The first physical therapist was wonderful but due to her move out of state, we had to have another physical therapist. I learned each physical therapist in First Steps has different knowledge's and experiences. I wish there was some educational system for new therapists so that the family does not have to suffer for their lack of knowledge. We had a fantastic occupational and developmental therapist and there was no complaints about them. I also wanted to mention that the service coordinator did nothing for our family. She asked us to write a support letter for her, but I felt like we didn't need service coordination during the First Steps program in St. Louis. When we moved to Jefferson City, we had a wonderful service coordinator and learned for the first time what service coordinators can do for us. During the transition period we had a misunderstanding due to a large amount of information that we had to process and I wish there had been a pamphlet or something that we could have gone over after those meetings. My son benefited from First Steps and I hope your program will keep improving and serving more children in the future. Thank you.

When my son started with First Steps, he was not sitting up, holding his bottle or talking. First Steps helped my son so much that now at three he is walking with the help of a walker and feeding himself and using sign language to communicate. We love First Steps. We were one of the families on the Capitol's steps supporting First Steps when the threat of canceling was heard. Thank you!

Excellent program! My child greatly benefited from the services he received. Our service coordinator was thorough, knowledgeable, timely, and kind! Receiving services in our own home cannot even compare to having to go to a "service clinic" setting. He did so much better in "his comfort zone", in his own home for this therapy. Thank you to all who dedicate themselves to such a truly wonderful program.

We are delighted with the services offered for my son's speech. Clay County Health Department has been excellent and we thank everyone involved.

We loved our second service coordinator. We did not like our first service coordinator because she didn't help. Our second service coordinator informed our family about the transition process and options available for our child. A smooth and effective transition occurred thanks to her. She did all the paper work one month before my child's third birthday.

Overall, I was very unhappy with my experience with First Steps. In a matter of six months, three therapists quit. It wasn't until our third therapist that we found a good one. She discovered that, in addition to speech and language services, our son needed occupational therapy as well. However, it was too late because we were already in the process of transitioning to Early Childhood. Our service coordinator was not very sympathetic either. It was obvious she was working for the bureaucracy rather than advocating for the needs of my child.

First Steps has helped me understand and work with my child better and so he can have a better future. Thanks First Steps

Our family is very grateful for the services that First Steps provided. We tell others often about the first class treatment and services that we received. We are very hopeful our son will be totally caught up by kindergarten. He has improved greatly with all his delays and his confidence shows! He might not have been so lucky if services were not available.

First Steps was the best thing for my child. I really do not think he would be as far as he is without it. If I would have had to pay for these services, we could not have afforded it even with insurance. We really hope other children can get the benefits our child received. Thank you so very much.

Without Missouri First Steps my twin boys would still be in a world closed off from ours. Today they are bright, interactive, excelling individuals who are learning to be more engaged and expressive as each day passes. I can't thank you enough for opening the doors for my children. Their future is much brighter thanks to these wonderful services.

My child is now within her age group and beyond. She is now on a consulting basis once a month and progressing rapidly. If we had not been fortunate enough to have had First Steps and all the people within, I'm not sure my daughter would be as far as she is. She still has some weakness on her right side but without knowing she's got hyposthenia, you would never know it. Thank you to First Steps.

I wanted to say that my son's speech therapist gave him the ground work he needed to start him on the path he is going. His speech therapist always kept her appointments, was always on time and, if needed, would stay longer than her hour to answer any questions I had. She told me about the Young Children with Developmental Delay (YCDD) which I had no clue was out there. Because of her, my son tested into and is now actively part of this program. He still has a long way to go, but he has truly come so far. She even made a point to be there at his screening and talked with me and the YCDD teachers. I am forever grateful for her and what she helped my son to accomplish. I hope this helps your survey even more. Thank you.

First Steps is a wonderful and valuable program and I am very glad my daughter participated in the available programs and therapy. It is a lifeline to families with a special needs child. I would have been lost without First Steps!

We were already at WIC and had Parents As Teachers. Answer to #4: When my son was in the hospital, no one at Children's Hospital told us about the First Steps program or Nurse for Newborns. I found out through our Parents As Teachers from the Northwest School District R-I. If it wasn't for her I would have never known. The program has helped our family out. We now have a little boy who can be a little boy (with continued help from the school district.) You as a program need to get the word out for your service to be better used for all the children who are really in need. Thank you!

#21: The information provided came from my therapist.

Thank you for all you've done for our son. There are no words to describe! Thank you.

We were made aware but did not use services.

My child was part of the First Steps program before all the changes took place in 2005. We don't know how the services are under the First Steps Program. The reasons I scored the people who worked with my child lower was because I didn't agree that some individuals and organizations were working for the best interest of our child. This forced us to move in order to get the proper education for our child.

I believe that without the help of First Steps services and our service coordinator, my son would not be where he is today. The programs and opportunities made available helped us and him reach his potential.

First Steps came out to our home, assessed the foster child, and had speech therapy in place the next week. This child has made an improvement of fifteen months age equivalence in 11 months time. Before last year I had never heard of First Steps. We were sent to the program through Parents As Teachers.

I feel that I could not answer these questions well due to the fact that my twins are quite normal! My family and I feel very blessed that we were accepted to First Steps but did not need the help because of the twins being mentally and physically alright. Just being ready for help by First Steps gave us peace of mind until we were sure that all was well.

I love his speech therapist. I am not impressed at all with his lead teacher but I was impressed with the paraprofessional. The speech therapist was wonderful to work with. She truly cared for his well-being. He has blossomed in many ways. He is now enrolled at Border Star. I am very impressed with his teachers. I attribute all of my son's progress to them. He has made many strides and now possesses the self-confidence and abilities of other boys his age. However, I am not at all impressed with one of his other teachers. I find her rude and inappropriate. Fortunately, my son has very few special needs. I cannot imagine having a more challenged child in her class and having to hear the things she says and the way she says them.

This service is a blessing. My son is doing very well. The teachers are wonderful. I am very thankful for this service you provide. Keep up the good work! Thanks again.

#4: During transition period of First Steps. #10: Our service coordinator, once established, helped my family, in a timely manner, get the services we needed.

The state needs to do what it can to support programs like First Steps. Early intervention is always best. We know we have a long road ahead of us but knowing we gave our daughter the best help we could through therapies with First Steps, we know she will and has benefited from the help she received early.

First Steps has helped our family a lot. We are so thankful for their services and all the therapists that my son had have all been very nice and worked well with him.

My son has a lot of medical needs. I don't know what we would do without First Steps. We spend a lot of money on medical bills and I am concerned about the new copay system.

The Missouri First Steps program allowed our child to access speech services that he needed in order to be understood. Without those services, his speech would have been more than 50% unintelligible. You can imagine how frustrating this was for him-and the behavioral issues we faced because of it. He continues to willingly work with the early childhood speech pathologist to develop his articulation. Thank you to the First Steps program for literally giving my child a voice.

Our First Step coordinator was outstanding at all times in meeting and exceeding our families needs. She always recommended excellent therapists and as a result we had a very strong team working with our daughter and supporting us in our IEP going into ECSE. We have missed her since our transition!

My family thanks Missouri First Steps for all they provided for my little boy. He would not be doing as well as he is if it wasn't for early intervention. Although he is autistic, epileptic and is developmentally delayed, the early therapies he received I know helped him a great deal. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

I would like more information regarding First Steps and a list of other organizations that are provided to help my son's development so he can improve better.

First Steps saved us. When we started First Steps, our daughter couldn't crawl or walk. Through weekly physical therapy she gained these skills and in a year was declared on schedule. She still is not where most of her friends are but she's on track with developmental charts, and she can keep up with her friends to play. I don't know where she would be without it. Through First Steps we also took advantage of speech therapy as our daughter is deaf in one ear. She had a slight speech delay but with the therapy, she actually is beyond other kids her age now in speech and language skills. The therapist worked with her but primarily gave me the knowledge I needed to help her. As we worked with therapists, they noted some issues that we thought were just personality. An occupational therapy evaluation determined the issues are actually a sensory integration problem. This has saved us a lot of arguments and frustration. Without First Steps, our family would not have been able to afford therapy for our daughter. Even if our insurance would have covered the therapy, there is a \$25 co pay per visit and this would have been financially crippling to us, even to just have one therapist per week. First Steps gave my daughter the jump start she needed and I'm confident that because of what we've gained, she'll be a success.

#21: It was confusing how to go about getting approved for therapy through the school system. After Leaving #1: He received services for a few months and now just has follow-up visits. After Leaving #6: Services provided did help but not currently receiving any.

We were very upset when we learned that our service coordinator should have referred us to KC Regional Center. I am still having a difficult time learning about this organization and how they can help us. I feel the service coordinator got the ball rolling with the school district and then just deserted us. Even though she didn't help us in the end, we still strongly believe in the First Steps program and will do whatever necessary to make sure it is an ongoing program available to Missouri children.

Our family has benefited greatly from the First Steps program and participation. It has been a great service and we DO NOT agree with Governor Blunt's assessment that this program overlaps with other services and could be taken over by private insurance for payment and coordination of services through PAT and school districts. The program was very well organized and catered to those people who have special needs children. We fight EVERY service provided to our daughter with insurance because it was a congenital defect. By breaking this funding, it is making it more difficult to obtain services and it's doing a great disservice to those individuals who need it most; those disabled and in need.

First Steps was wonderful for my son. He was not talking at all and was very frustrated. He would have severe tantrums such as banging his head on the wall. With the First Steps speech program his frustration slowly began to disappear. Our speech therapist was wonderful. She had him saying things to help him everyday to start with. This eliminated his frustration. By the end of First Steps he was putting three or more words together. It has been wonderful for our family. Thank you.

Boone was great, but we were not happy with Moberly Rehabilitation. That's why we switched.

Child's mother is EMR and has no transportation.

I enjoyed working with the First Steps providers that came to my home. They helped me and my child tremendously. I'm glad I was involved with this program. Thank you.

Our family was very happy with the First Steps program. The program taught us techniques which we still use to help teach our daughter. She is now in an early childhood program and still making huge progress. Without the early intervention I don't think she would be doing this good. Our therapists were great and all the information we received was very helpful.

I initially contacted First Steps when my son was about eighteen months old. I was told that they allotted services based on gestational age (he was six weeks premature at birth) and that the child was to function at a 50% deficit. Therefore, he was too young to qualify for services. It was not until after he was diagnosed with Autism that First Steps became involved. I wonder how much more beneficial the services would have been if he had gotten them at eighteen months. I feel as though I should not have been turned away over the phone without them even seeing him or giving him any tests. But when we did start with First Steps, it was wonderful. Most of the therapists we had were amazing and we thank God every day that they were in our lives.

Our daughter was speech delayed. The First Steps program got us the speech therapy we needed to get her caught up before she starts school (kindergarten). We are so pleased and appreciate the First Steps program.

We moved here from another state due to our jobs. My son had been in the equivalent program "Early Steps" since he turned two. If there had been no First Steps program here in Missouri, we would not have moved here. We've had a great experience and my son has made outstanding progress.

When our son was diagnosed with a visual impairment, we were devastated. We soon learned how normal our lives could be and that he would do fine because of the people who helped us through First Steps. We always felt like we had people we could go to with concerns and were so thankful for the therapists that worked with our son. Our service coordinator helped us get special glasses which have helped him feel more confident and increased his vision. We can truly say that we feel blessed by God for giving us a little boy with special needs. Because of First Steps we had a strong knowledge base and support from the beginning. Our son is now in preschool and is doing better than we could have imagined. Thank you so much for all you do for Missouri families!

Even though my child, fortunately, has never needed any intervention nor does he have any "special needs", I do appreciate the services that were made known to me and the support and assistance (if I should need it) would also come assumingly from our caseworker. It's nice to know that there are resources like First Steps available to families in need. Thanks for all the invested time.

The First Steps program was recommended by my pediatrician and was very helpful. But, it was not easy to exit the program when I felt I was wasting their time and mine.

My child is currently receiving services through her insurance company. Our special school district first agreed to do reciprocal services with another county and when it came time for services they denied reciprocal services therefore making it impossible to get my child to and from our county special school district.

My daughter had a severe speech disability. First Steps made a huge start in our communication with our daughter. This program is a true benefit! We truly appreciate First Steps!

I was disappointed by the fact that we didn't get occupational therapy earlier for my son. We expressed concerns initially in key areas and really had to push to obtain intervention. This is such an important program to our community. Our son has developed immensely through ECSE services. I am just disappointed how First Steps managed the process through transition.

Our therapist was great with our daughter and has helped my daughter by giving her the building blocks she needed to begin to communicate her wants and needs in her everyday life.

First Steps was an excellent program for my son. Without this program he would not have received the therapies to the extent he needed them. The team approach of the therapists and parents working together in the child's home environment is essential. We cannot imagine where our son would be without having had these services!

The service coordinator we originally had was great. When it was switched to the state appointed coordinator, we were very disappointed. After the switch it took her three months to contact us and that was only after our occupational therapist had brought us to her attention. We would have missed our transition meeting if it had not been for our speech therapist.

I am pleased with the time we have had with the program although it has been short. Not nearly enough time to give the help he needs. Also, I need to find a program to help my son. He is not doing to well yet in school. I know that not a lot of time has passed yet. I need to know what steps to take if he doesn't progress or even get the kind of help he needs.

I was never told about "community resources".

I cannot express the gratitude that I feel towards First Steps in helping our child and the entire family with issues such as the development process for us as parents and for supplying the information that helped when situations became stressful (i.e., sleeping issues and time out issues). It helped to have guidance in my child's behavior. Thank you.

Our experience with First Steps was exceptional. Our coordinator was flexible and in continuous contact. Our initial assessment was done in a very timely manner and information provided by the speech pathologist was so helpful and comforting. The service Matrix used to choose a provider was quite OVERWHELMING. We were given a recommendation (2 separate people) for our speech pathologist and so that decision was easy for us. But, if she were not available, I would have been very stressed out choosing, interviewing and screening the "best" speech pathologist to work with my child. And that process could have taken months. Also, I needed a person who "specialized" in my son's certain speech disorder. I would recommend and encourage anyone to contact First Steps to provide services to their child and family. We are so very lucky to have these services available in our state. Thank you!

First Steps is a wonderful program and the people of Missouri are fortunate to have it.

I would like to still be in First Steps. My son was having surgeries and we went to see family in Kansas and the next thing I know is that I no longer had First Steps due to not responding to a letter that I hadn't received in time. I no longer have a phone but could receive information by mail.

We feel our child is and already has slipped through the cracks in his education plan. He has ADHD and is sensory-seeking with behavioral problems. Due to this he can't be in a regular classroom setting due to over stimulation. We have looked for two years for a daycare that is trained to deal with kids like him. We feel that since he didn't qualify for the school district, he's going to be one of those "left behind" in Education. We are scared and don't know what to do. We have talked with his First Steps therapist and she tells us to have him re-tested with the school district. We plan to do this in March 2007. Hopefully, he'll qualify this time, but if not, the Head Start classroom is too much for him. We just wish First Steps had a program for children ages three to five that don't qualify for the school district.

I was told that my son had F.A.S. I was also told that there were no tests to actually determine if he had it. So, there was the assumption that he had it, but no way to prove it. Other than nightmares, he was a very normal boy. His learning progress was normal for his age. In some things, he was advanced for his age and still is. This program should be for children who are mentally challenged. Extensive tests should be done to verify that there is a mental problem. Otherwise, the program labels children without proof. That could be very detrimental to children and their families. The woman who worked with my son was so patient and he loved her. But her visits were no more than an hour of playtime. A more needed program would be to teach parents and children how to adjust to the transition from foster care to the homes they will go to. I was never made aware of such a program. When children are taken away from their parents, there should be a way to get them into a relative's home right away. This way, they won't have to suffer the emotional turmoil of being placed with strangers. This program should be for children who have been proven to need it, and not on the assumption that they need it.

I'm not really sure what all she receives, but she is getting a lot of help and I'm so happy for it.

Initially our service coordinator was supportive in getting our daughter the services she needed. However, less than a year later, her attitude changed drastically, not that our daughter didn't need services but that First Steps wouldn't provide it. First Steps motto is that it is a "group" service plan where parents, providers and coordinators all have input and make joint decisions; NOT TRUE. Our coordinator made decisions that went distinctly against all three providers recommendations. As a parent, we valued the providers input (as they saw her once a week) versus the coordinator (once in six months). I believe most probably (>99%) can tell when a provider is recommending service you really need versus just saying it to get more "customers". Especially when those providers are so good and so popular that they have waiting lists! This was our only, but a huge, disappointment with First Steps. My daughter improved in physical ability close to 100% with First Steps intervention as well as in speech. With fine motor, she made great strides. She is an advertisement for First Steps! We also learned a lot about issues facing our then seven-year-old who had many similar struggles as our three-year-old but went undiagnosed.

Kept changing teachers which has impeded trust levels.

We hope through Governor Blunt's cutbacks that he does not take anything away from this program. We feel that First Steps helped our daughter.

As with all programs, the service you receive depends upon the therapist. My son's first speech therapist didn't do a whole lot with him. Not having any background ourselves, we didn't know that she really wasn't doing her job. Our son had another speech therapist who was excellent and so was our occupational therapist. Our service coordinator switched several times and I had to push to get my son's three year services taken care of in a timely manner. Overall, I think First Steps is a great program, but parent's need more education on what the therapist is doing to improve the concern areas of a child.

I really can't even imagine what my child would be doing right now if it weren't for First Steps. It is a wonderful program. The therapies that my son received were so beneficial to him and we were able to learn the right techniques in helping him. We are so grateful!

We are very grateful for the First Steps program. We were able to get the help we needed to help our son make great progress. There were a couple of problems that we had during our time as a First Steps family. Our first speech therapist left the program and it was difficult to find a replacement due to availability. We missed out on almost two months of therapy while we searched for a new therapist. Our second, and larger problem, was when we had our son evaluated by Liz Gallagher (occupational/physical therapist) for possible sensory delays. She evaluated him and said he was basically fine. She advised us to get braces for his legs to help with toe walking, but that the other issues we brought up would just "clear up" over time. It took us requesting another evaluation (after the six month waiting period) to finally get him support for his sensory delays. He has made great progress (more than all the progress before the occupational therapist) since he is getting the support he needs. I wish we would have not had to wait for a second opinion.

Services have drastically decreased between the time my seven-year-old enrolled in the program and the time my now three year old was in the program. My children did not receive the quantity of services for a good start in their development. Having three children with Down's Syndrome, I can personally attest to the decrease in quality and quantity. "No Child Left Behind"...regardless of the consequences.

Communication with our service coordinators was not ideal, but the speech therapist who worked with our son was exceptional. Our son is an active boy, and she was amazing with him. He no longer qualifies for any services and his speech is great.

Thank you!

Twice, we had very bad service coordinators. We had wonder providers. I do feel we as parents had to push additional services when we felt it necessary and only wish someone explained all the services we were able to receive because we could have used special instructors and possibly a behaviorist. Our service coordinator had set up to pay the remaining balance on my daughter's AFO's and we are still dealing with this bill. First Steps has not paid the \$101.00 bill that is owed to Children's Mercy. Our service coordinator did not help us to prepare for the transition to Great Beginnings early childhood preschool. We went to meetings just one week before my daughter's birthday and felt overwhelmed by all the information there was. Our therapists were very helpful and helped my daughter to succeed in many ways and for that we are thankful. I also wish we could have learned, and still could learn about different services and groups that can help with things our daughter needs.

Our family is extremely grateful to the "First Steps" program providers!

First Steps is an amazing program and was so instrumental in our son's development and our understanding of how to help him through. Our son has Down's Syndrome and is at this time, testing at "low normal" in his development. We credit this to the First Steps program and the wonderful therapists we had in what seemed a very short 3 years and were very sad that it had to end. His OT was with him for the entire three years and has yet to stop talking about her. She is very special to all of us. He went to the Special Learning Center in Jefferson City at two and half years old and absolutely blossomed in that program, also receiving First Steps therapy there. We loved our speech therapist as well as all the magnificent teachers. We are so thankful for the support and guidance First Steps provided and all that you have given our son. We believe he may be governor one day!

My daughter's speech was improved through the First Steps program. I was empowered to work with her myself and through First Steps support and our frequent work with her at home, she no longer requires intervention. It is a valuable program to support parents.

The OT who evaluated my son determined he needed services. The service coordinator and her supervisor disagreed even though they have no education in child development. I was told that since I was in a related profession to use my community resources. I was run around for 2-3 months at which time I reached DESE and was advised to have my child re-evaluated and this time he qualified. He lost 2-3 months of help during a critical time for his feeding development. The service coordinator did not attempt monthly contact and has since said she learned more about feeding and has qualified three more kids the same way. Wish my son didn't have to be the guinea pig and lose critical time. SC should have more child development background.

We did not need the help of our service coordinator because our therapist was supervisor. I did not need to gain skills to work with professionals and advocate for what my child needs. We have overcome her special needs thanks to our therapists. We finished before the time. Her delay was temporary. Thank God! We're fine now. Thank God for First Steps! Our therapist was the greatest! We still call and see her as a friend. Keep her happy there. You need her.

We are very thankful First Steps was there to help us when our child was receiving services. Keep up the good work!

I heard about First Steps through Parents As Teachers. This program has allowed my child to grow and develop far more advanced than if I attempted to do this on my own. I also did not have to worry about fighting with the insurance company to pay for services. This program is awesome, and I am blessed to have had the opportunity to work with all the therapists and workers that help us enter, go through, and exit this program. Keep up the good work!

I am concerned that the new fee structure will cause children like ours (premie who needed only minimal assistance) to not get services because it is a flat fee regardless of the number of services needed. A fee for number of services needs to be included in the plan.

Our first attempt to get our son in First Steps was not successful. As a mom with two older children ages 8 and 10, I knew our 2 year old had a serious speech problem and our Parent Educator and Pediatrician agreed. First Steps would not even test him saying he had to be delayed in two areas and much more delayed. We were told to wait and have him tested when he was older because, after six more months and no improvement in his speech, he might qualify. We ended up taking him to SLU where he was only said to be delayed with recommendation for one time speech per week. After six months he was tested by First Steps (I broke down and cried) and qualified for two 45 minute speech sessions per week. He has now (3 years and 9 months) been diagnosed as Apraxic. The recommendation has been speech 4-5 times per week. We are told he would be doing so much better had he begun this intensive speech at age 2. So sad that Missouri doesn't care for their kids!

I would just like to say thank you for the First Steps program. I'm sure it saved my son, and not only that his progress was so dramatic, you would never know now that he hasn't been talking his whole life-and all he did was grunt a year ago! Now I don't have to worry about him going to school or anything and I'm just grateful for the program-this is a good program and I hope it continues for the children, their families, and the community. Also, not in the least, I would like to say how much we really appreciated our son's speech therapist and, obviously, did a GREAT job. She was wonderful and our son loved her and flourished with her help. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

I thought our service coordinator was extremely helpful. She provided information on a timely basis and explained everything. We are so appreciative of First Steps and the help we received from the therapist. Our son enjoyed spending time with them while he made great gains. Thank you!

Question #22: We did not have a smooth transition because our First Steps therapists were not "allowed" (paid by First Steps) to be at our meeting with the school district. Before Matt Blunt cut the budgets and First Steps made some huge changes, we had a wonderful service coordinator and outstanding therapists. When service coordination moved to an agency, we were never sure who our coordinator was (we went through two, I think). We were never called and our last IFSP (?) meeting was done over the phone on the last possible day. I have since heard that two of our therapists are no longer working with First Steps due to the hassel and when I encouraged a friend to get help for her daughter, she was turned down. She was told over the phone that her child didn't qualify without anyone ever bothering to go see them. Now, I no longer feel like I can refer my friends to First Steps for help.

First Steps had no OT's available in this area and we had to travel three hours (round trip) for a single hour of OT, which we couldn't do more than once a week although our son clearly needed more OT than that. The speech therapist assigned to work with our son had never worked with autistic children and was generally clueless. First Steps did not help me transition to other services. I had to contact the Regional Center and the ECSE programs on my own. The service coordinator we had worked with was replaced and no one notified us. The new service coordinator came to our first meeting with the ECSE program, but she was a total stranger to us and completely unhelpful. So basically, we had to waste a lot of time and effort on bureaucracy, evaluation and received very inadequate services in return. I do not blame the individuals involved. They were doing their best, but this program is clearly criminally underfunded.

We have moved out of state, but we have no complaints or suggestions about First Steps.

Question #10: First service coordinator wasn't very helpful at all and kind of snotty. The second service coordinator was very nice and helpful and listen's to what you've got to say. The first service coordinator took forever to try and get my son into First Steps and never called back. The second one got him in right away.

I would not recommend this program. Highly unsatisfied. Caused more problems than originally started with. Nothing was gained other than lots of crying

Our daughter was born at 31 weeks and has benefited from the PT she receives to continue to develop at her gestational age. We appreciate the support and kindness of our service coordinator and physical therapist.

Our first service coordinator did nothing to help us and didn't return my calls. Just before my son turned 3, I got a new coordinator and he was much better but was very busy. I am still owed services that were never provided. I gave up on pushing to get them because I was getting nowhere. Also, after I lost my job I was told I would have to start paying for services. Two of my son's therapists were gifts from God. No one else seemed interested or lacked the knowledge to help me. Everything I learned about my son's disability I learned on my own. Unfortunately, I am now having the same experience with my son's preschool.

Nobody set it up for him for six months so I had to argue with people to get him in Farmington.

During our years in First Steps, we were in three different SPOE regions with different service coordinators and intake personnel. Each SPOE or region had service coordinators who were right-on and those that did not fulfill their job (eg. Not authorize services that were said to be authorized). The new system, with service coordinators under DMH or SPOE should be helpful in having service coordinators accountable.

My service coordinator was awesome! She repeatedly went above and beyond and I trusted that she always had the best interest of my son and our family in mind. It was wonderful to have someone so concerned about the well-being and progress of my son. She is not only an asset to your organization, but to every family that is lucky enough to have her as their service coordinator.

We are grateful for the First Steps program and the support of our First Steps coordinator. We could not have asked for anyone better! It it were not for First Steps, we would not have been able to financially offer/provide our son with the services he needed to get where he is today-a fully functioning three year old fitting in with his peers!

Our daughter entered the program in April of 2005. I called First Steps on a Friday morning and our intake coordinator was at our home by Monday afternoon! Her efficiency and promptness was amazing! Our first service coordinator was compassionate and concerned. She frequently called to check in on us and was very helpful as we prepared for our transition to Early Childhood. Our therapists were outstanding! They took a genuine interest in our daughter and her needs. They provided very individualized and effective therapy. They were professional, yet compassionate. Our daughter responded beautifully to them. Our second service coordinator and was very knowledgable, but we only had her for a short time. Our final service coordinator was SO DIFFICULT to reach and did not return phone calls on follow-up. I was SO FRUSTRATED. It took 10-15 phone calls to get a behavior evaluation and follow-up reports. In fact, the therapist who did the evaluation finally emailed it to me because First Steps never did respond! At this point, my daughter was exiting the program (August 2006) and I was grateful for the services we had received, but was glad we were leaving such a DISORGANIZED MESS! I feel like the organization did a complete turn-around in the sixteen months we were in it. I sincerely hope the problems are rectified because my daughter's development progressed greatly thanks to the therapies. Let's get this figured out so that anxious parents get their phone calls returned promptly and get the services their children so desperately need. RESTORE THE FUNDING!

First Steps was instrumental in the beginning in helping to identify what areas my son needed help in. Everyone was wonderful to work with and very supportive. I feel so blessed to have been a part of this program and recommend it highly!

A 50% delay, in my opinion, is way too much. The percentage should be lower (30%). You are missing many children who would benefit greatly from your services. I have seen several come through my classroom who, sadly, enter kindergarten behind their peers when, they could have had a jump start. I know other states have a lower percentage needed, and we can do it too! Thanks.

Our service coordinator is so supportive and a wonderful advocate. The services provided by First Steps, in particular, the ABA Therapy made a tremendous impact on our son's compliance (behavior and communication). She went the extra mile by providing us with extra education materials, allowing for compensatory services and attending my son's Transition meeting with me at the ECSE building.

I really feel that "speech" is a tricky thing. On one hand, you feel like your wasting taxpayer maoney and resources that could be used for a child who truly needs it. I didn't buy into the whole thing. Everything the therapist did at \$100.00 per hour, I did or was doing already with my child. I feel his progress would have happened with or without the therapy. I think things need to be watched closely.

Pediatricians need to provide First Steps information. Thanks to our Parents As Teachers partner, we were put in touch with the program. Without the early intervention, we would be in a very poor place right now.

First Steps has been a very well organized and helpful service to us. Everyone we have worked with has had our daughter's best interests in mind. We've been so impressed with the services we've received. Thank you!

I truly enjoyed participating in First Steps. It was a godsend to my family. Everyone was helpful, kind and pleasant. The therapists were excellent and really cared for my child! Thank you First Steps for our beginning.

The First Steps program was very valuable to my family. My son was two when he started with speech therapy. Later, he was diagnosed with PDD NOS on the Autism scale. Also, after review and my persistence an occupational therapist and a behavior therapist was added to his weekly schedule. He made so much progress under his therapists. I cannot stress that enough. The therapists were great! My largest complaint, as I've stressed many times, is the lack of information about First Steps. It was extremely difficult to get ahold of someone to even get my son evaluated. I had to call at least three offices to find the right one. The first years are so critical in a child's life, which leads to understanding and proficiency in later years. I just don't understand why the information is so hard to get about the program. Again, the program is wonderful, once you can get it started. Thanks for your time.

Question 7, Page 2

We have participated in Parents As Teachers but, due to our child's age, no longer do.

Question 9, Page 1

Our service coordinator did an excellent job in helping us get started and with the transition out of First Steps. We did not hear from her at all (in person or by phone) but maybe once or twice while receiving services. The couple of times we had questions during this time, she was good about returning our calls.

Additional Note:

Our son received speech therapy and his therapist was excellent. His verbal skill increased significantly during his time with her in speech therapy. Thank you so much for providing this service.

I am very happy that First Steps was there to help my son talk. He has improved 80% in speaking (100% in my book). Also, with the help of the school district, he's continuing his lessons. Thank you!

The speech therapy was very inconsistent, including one month when the therapist did not even show up. I am very disappointed with the amount of therapy my child received. When asked about community resources, we were referred to, there was none.

Our son is now fast approaching four years old and was in First Steps from eighteen months old to three years old. I shudder to think where he'd be now without the help he received through First Steps. At eighteen months old he had only one word, "ball", and did not gesture at all. Much of the time, he did not understand us and could not communicate his needs and desires. He didn't like being touched at times and often had trouble with his balance. He did not play with toys in an age-appropriate way, preferring to repeatedly press buttons on toys for lights and sounds and to spin on the floor. He had major feeding issues that included not chewing food, not self-feeding and a general distaste for eating in general. He was thought to have sensory integration issues - being oversensitive to touch (tactile) and undersensitive to movement (vestibular). He likely is on the mild end of the Autism spectrum. Since receiving help from First Steps, (speech, occupational and developmental therapy), he has made HUGE developmental leaps. He communicates almost as well as other children his age and he understands us. He can tell us what he wants and needs, and can converse. He is beginning to play with toys in an age-appropriate way and to play with his peers. His balance is greatly improved. He has made progress on his feeding issues, although he still has a long way to go. (He has qualified for and is receiving early intervention services through the Special School District in St. Louis County due to a severe delay in adaptive skills and moderate delays in other developmental areas.) By looking at him now you wouldn't think he had special needs. He is one of those who easily would fall through the cracks. Our hope is that with the help of First Steps and the Special School District, he will be able to attend mainstream school by kindergarten, and we are confident now that that can and will happen.

I, myself, am an educator and am happy this program is available to families with children having special needs. It is programs such as these that benefits the children when they transition into school. Early intervention makes a world of difference. Thank you.

We have utilized First Steps for two of our three children. It was such a great program. All of our three children have a speech/language learning disability and this program has helped our children so much. The case manager and speech therapists were wonderful. Thank you. Lori Summers

First Steps was the best thing that could have happened to our child and family. She has made tremendous progress and we learned so much. Our service coordinator and all the therapists were very knowledgeable and very helpful. The program was wonderful.

My child's transition meeting was not held six months before turning three because of being in the hospital. It was scheduled six months prior, but was rescheduled.

I (we) have two sons that have received ECSE. I was unaware of First Steps services for my first son until he qualified for ECSE. He has Autism and would have benefited greatly if only we knew there was help out there! Our second son, who received First Steps services for speech delays GREATLY benefited from First Steps. Thank you for all the wonderful support.

First Steps is wonderful and useful! My twins wouldn't be where they are in development without the help, assistance, and diligence of First Steps coordination, therapy services, and transitional services with Special Education.

Thank you.

I was very happy with the individualized service my daughter received in the First Steps program. I fully believe that she will be able to attend a regular classroom when she becomes a kindergartner. I do not know if that would have been possible without First Steps. My first service coordinator was wonderful. I was sorry when she left. All of the therapists were terrific.

Our early intervention specialist was wonderful! She was genuinely interested in our child and helping us increase our skill level to parent her effectively. However, I felt our service coordinator didn't do much of anything. Things that she was supposed to take care of, she dropped the ball numerous times and did not seem very interested in our child at all. We were very unimpressed with her services.

First Steps was incredible to meet my son's needs and make corrections early enough to prevent additional, perhaps more traumatizing, services (such as IEP services in a school setting). Thank you very much.

Our child is an adopted special needs child that came to us through the foster care program in our county. He has brought so much fulfillment to our lives as well as an array of challenges. Without First Steps we would have drowned. They were our life support system and helped us move on to the decision to adopt. We love those guys.

February 15, 2007: Comments on the First Steps Program: Our child was born 16 weeks premature and has cerebral palsy. He began receiving assistance through the First Steps program a couple of months after he came home from the hospital and were very pleased with the interaction and services provided by the therapists. We truly believe that they had a great influence in the progress that he has made, not specifically from the time that they had with him each week, but more importantly, from the guidance and interaction that they gave to us as parents in showing how to work with him on a continual basis. The "Play with a Purpose" principle-to ensure that whatever we did had a goal of his improvement. We have one significant problem with a specific provider that we feel must be addressed through training and guidance to your contact staff. Our child was in an in-home daycare; a mother with two young boys of her own. While playing, one of her boys pushed our son, resulting in a fall and a minor head injury. This was evaluated by the responding paramedics, the sheriff's deputy (who responds to any 911 call involving a child), and multiple doctors (emergency room, his neurologist and primary care physician). All stated that the injury was consistent with what they would expect from a fall of a child with cerebral palsy, and since there was no evidence of any other injury, they were satisfied that nothing improper has occurred. We contacted a provider to cancel her next session and relayed the events to her. She made no statements of concern to us in any manner, but after ending our phone conversation, she contacted her supervisor and then the Division of Children's Services to "Hotline" the incident. She later stated this was solely due to her "mandated" reporter status. She did this even though she admitted that she knew nothing of the incident, if anything improper had happened and with knowledge that all medical staff were satisfied. The results of the investigation were that we now have a permanent file with Children's Services, and we were warned against letting our child play with other children, as kids can play rough and since he has balance issues, he might fall and be injured in the future. The investigator actually stated that if we ever allowed our child to play with other children in the future, and if that play resulted in an injury, that we would be considered as parents that make "poor decisions". We were terribly disappointed in the manner in which this was handled by your provider. Our child had been in this home for the previous nine months, seeing three First Steps therapists weekly. During the course of those nine months, three hours per week of in-home interaction, we never heard any word of concern from any of the providers. It was only after filing a report with Children's Services that this provider stated that she didn't like the setting and therefore, felt compelled to report the incident. We immediately ceased any further contact with this provider, ceased use of the childcare provider and called a meeting with the other therapists. Both indicated that they had no prior concerns with the location and were surprised to hear of what happened. We were compelled to formalize what we had previously thought was a given - if a therapist saw anything of concern at a caregiver's home, that we would immediately be notified and would remove the child while the therapist waited for us to arrive. This incident has tarnished an otherwise positive experience with the First Steps program. We realize that this is likely just the case of a single, poorly trained and unprepared provider who didn't understand the ramifications of her actions, but it casts a poor light on the program. Our future guidance to any parent who may choose to participate in the First Steps program will be to ensure that they protect themselves from the actions of the therapists and to document agreements to immediately report any concerns to them if they are using out of home care. We would sincerely request that you consider requiring mandatory education of the providers in terms of when to report concerns to Children's Services versus when to report those concerns to the parents. A contract, or up-front agreement between the parents and the program indicating under what terms a call to Children's Services will be made, versus when a parent will be notified of concerns would be beneficial. We are extremely disappointed that the provider chose not to inform us of her concerns, chose to allow our child to remain in a location that she stated she was uncomfortable with, and chose to contact Children's Services as opposed to contacting us. These choices reflected negatively not only on us personally, but in our opinion, on the First Steps Program.

First Steps is a great program because it helps children with disabilities get the help that they need.

Have an older child (PDD-NOS) that needs funding for meds, diet, and doctor appointments and tests. We received funding for two years but not anymore due to budget constraints I assume. She hasn't been to her doctor for two years now. Our insurance doesn't cover any of it because it's out of network. I wish our service coordinator could continue to pursue funding or help us find funding elsewhere. We don't know where else to turn.

The services my child received were excellent. Getting him into the program was next to impossible even though his verbal skills were at a six month level, his cognitive ability was at age one. I believe better training is necessary regarding eligibility rules (i.e., 50% deficit at one area but not all areas). It shouldn't be so difficult to get a child approved who obviously needs services. Early intervention is the key and saves money later.

I don't feel that I was made aware of many programs and services that were available and could have been beneficial. I relied on my coordinator and others to inform me of what was available but felt that suggestions were not made to me. If I found out through other means it was agreed on. Examples: Physical therapy was a given and occupational therapy was ruled out. Then nothing else was mentioned. I instigated hydrotherapy and behavioral therapy and hippotherapy, none of which I learned of through First Steps.

I do not recall how we found out about First Steps, but it was not through our physician. I do not remember receiving monthly calls by our service coordinator. During my son's time in First Steps, I asked for special instruction. I was told "no" because there was no funding for this. I researched it more and found that he qualified for this. When I brought it to my service coordinators attention, she asked me to research it and bring it to the First Steps SPOE and coordinator to make my case. I brought research in journal and an instructor to the meeting and my request was granted after much discussion. But, I am an intelligent person who knows how to find resources. I would hate to think what happens to those children who do not have this opportunity.

I wish I was eligible for First Steps earlier in my child's life. I believe that earlier intervention would have been a bigger help to my child.

After requesting help from our pediatrician, they referred us to Special Learning Center in Jefferson City who then referred us to First Steps. Our First Steps coordinator was a "god send". She helped us get in contact with speech services and we truly believe with this early intervention, our son will be able to lead a more fulfilled life. He currently attends Special Learning Center in Jefferson City, which is just another "godsend" to our family. First Steps is the program that helped us get where we needed to be. Thank you.

I was very happy with all the help I received at First Steps. I was very nervous to leave and have our son go to the next level of special education. But, our coordinator helped me with that process. She is a very good listener. She went out of her way to help me with any questions or concerns I was having with First Steps. Thank you for all your help with our son's therapy.

We greatly appreciate everything First Steps has done for our son and our family.

The family-centered approach was fabulous! It is so important that the parents are the primary helpers to the child and the therapists did not just do all of the work and call it a week. It was extremely beneficial to our child and our whole family that the therapists came into our home (a safe, secure environment for this adopted child) and frequently used toys/objects which belong to us. This allowed all of my children to continue to practice the skills with those same objects every day. Our therapists were amazing and truly loved working with all of our children. (This also made the one with special needs feel more normal.) Too bad the services change at age three.

Thank you.

Although I believe First Steps is an extremely important program, I do not believe my child received the quality services he deserved. The providers are essentially unsupervised and act on behalf of their own interests by scheduling times, etc. to their own benefit. My son was diagnosed with Apraxia and listed as profound but had his services reduced because the coordinators supervisor was questioning his amount of services of two times per week that was granted. The coordinator stated that if I appealed, that his services would likely be reduced again. I now have him receiving services through special school district four times per week. He should have been provided with the services earlier instead of playing catch up. Due to the budget cuts, coordinators are now forced to be skeptical and reluctant to offer services-afraid of repercussions from their organization. I strongly feel a disservice was done to my child. You can't do something part way and expect to see results. Had my son been dealt with fairly and properly, he could have been another First Steps success story.

She is the best. Please make more people like her! I feel that if I had any questions that I could call her and she would still help! Not only was she a social worker, but a friend that I trust. Thank you.

My child only received one service though he was recommended for three. No one else showed up. When I called the coordinator, she said she would find out what was going on and I never heard from anyone after that. I am thankful now that my son is in a place that gives him what he needs and helps me understand more of what is going on and what I can do to help. Although, the therapist that did come was great, she only came about four times. I was very disappointed in this program.

My child went nine weeks without being contacted or seen by their speech therapist. The matter is resolved and we have a new service coordinator and speech therapist. Our new coordinator is great!

Re: Cutbacks

I wish there would have been more hours allotted to children with Autism (or any disability) where studies have shown in moderate-higher functioning Autistic children, given more intense intervention at an earlier age, dramatic improvements, therefore, needing less intensive services when reaching school-age. Luckily, my son has received additional services, which we pay for out of pocket to make a dramatic difference in his progress. Sadly, many children do not or can't have this opportunity available to them, making life for them not as complete as it could have been just having been given a little bit more earlier on. Please do not allow anymore cutbacks in the First Steps programs and definitely consider putting some money back into it from the budget. The program does work and I do believe lessens school districts demands if these children have already been receiving services. Thank you for your time. God Bless

Our service coordinator is wonderful. She helped us feel at ease and was extremely efficient and always got right back with us if we called. Our speech therapist has got to be one of the best speech pathologists on the planet! She looked at our boys as more than just needing speech and was excellent at incorporating what the other therapists were doing into her own teaching. She taught me so much and helped me to help my boys. We are still using her suggestions and have seen amazing results. Our developmental therapist makes her "lessons" fun. The boys don't realize how much work/learning they are doing because her activities seem like playtime to them. She did a great job and the boys really liked her.

I really enjoyed the involvement in First Steps. Without First Steps, my son would have not gotten the services he needed. It is a great program and when the Governor decides he wants to get rid of the program, I will be right there letting him know what a huge mistake he is making. When Governor Matt Blunt was going to eliminate it, I was right there emailing him and signing the petition to not get rid of First Steps. Early intervention is very important to special needs children. Without a program like this, all of the special needs children would have unhappy lives. This is the best thing anyone could have come up with. Great program and I love all of the support throughout the treatment plan. Thanks for all the help assisting with my child's special needs.

Our first service coordinator was fine but our second one was not very informative, unless I asked or called.

First Steps is a wonderful program and it has helped our child tremendously with his developmental delay (speech) which, if left untreated, would have had a significant negative impact on his early life. He has gained confidence and skills that he is lacking and that we didn't know how to help him! Thank you so much.

We didn't know about First Steps until a Parents As Teachers coordinator informed us. At first, our calls to First Steps went unanswered. Apparently, the initial FS coordinator was not only very disorganized but flighty and easily overwhelmed. But once our child was in the system, we quickly saw results. His speech therapist and occupational therapist were wonderful! We loved them and still keep in touch with them. As our son approached his third birthday, his case manager changed. The man who took over was neglectful and didn't return calls. Our OC ended up coordinating the final meeting and the man STILL didn't show up. He was horrible. Other parents complained apparently and about two weeks before my child's birthday, the man was fired. We then had a wonderful case manager who had to work double-time to make final arrangements for our child's meetings and what not. But that year of therapy did wonders for our son and my family. They were my support system when my hubby was working 80 hour weeks and my family was far away. First Steps is wonderful. I am so very grateful.

The therapy is only as good as the therapist. We were fortunate to have a wonderful speech pathologist who made a real difference in our child's life. She arrived prepared and eager to work with our child. She worked the time allotted and taught him and us so much! Our occupational therapist was equally good and a great source of information which we still apply every day. We were, however, most disappointed with our service coordinator. She would go for four to six months at a time without any contact with us. Several times I needed to contact her and she would not call back for over 3-6 weeks. I would call 8-10 times and leave messages. Finally, and only after calling her supervisor in Jefferson City, would she call immediately. Other families had had this same problem. We were not very impressed with the developmental therapists. They were uninformed and unmotivated. The First Steps program is a wonderful program and very beneficial to so many families. Nonetheless, several employees need to improve their professionalism.

To Whom It May Concern:

First Steps is a great program. My child really benefited from your services. Please let that be a program that stays with the children like mine. It really helps her be independent and learn ways to communicate with others. She is eligible to continue with the school program in the fall which is FANTASTIC! Please continue to provide these services to other children with special needs. She really likes school.

Our service coordinator was so kind and always listened to our needs. We enjoyed working with him and appreciate his guidance during the process of getting our son the services he needed.

Outstanding work! Thank you for your help. I hope that this service will continue for needy children and families.

Overall, I believe the First Steps program is greatly beneficial to the children and families it serves. However, our initial enrollment seemed to take a while. I have the unique perspective of being a service provider as well as a family that received services. As a family, I found that First Steps was not good about keeping families informed about what was going on in First Steps. Most information I received as a service provider was from our social worker. Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns and express our feelings about the First Steps program.

We were very pleased with the Missouri First Steps program and the Early Childhood Intervention Services through the Jefferson City Public Schools. Our son has blossomed with the help of these services. Thank you.

The First Steps program helped my son to talk more than anything else. He has Apraxia of Speech. It took two attempts to be reviewed for eligibility, but he got into the program. What a difference he made in just the first year! He also received occupational therapy services for his sensory issues and now 95% of the sensory issues are gone! I hope that First Steps remains a program for a long time. Early intervention truly pays off sooner than later!

I have heard that First Steps is moving toward a "family model" approach. My understanding of this is that therapists would basically consult with families and teach them how to work with their child. This will not work for all families and especially those with severe needs. As an educator myself, I know how important early intervention is! The state can either fund services for our youngest children or do it when they come to school. Either way someone pays. So, why not do it as early as possible so they (the child) can be as prepared for school as they can. I also know that requirements to qualify have also gotten tighter as well. Many children are not getting what they need. We were lucky enough to get what we needed for our child but others haven't been so fortunate.

We were very grateful for all the services we received. The program helped our son in ways we couldn't have imagined. I don't know where he would have been without it. Our family hopes the Governor realizes what a successful program it is and how much it is needed. I hope he never has a child with a special need because then he will realize how stupid he sounded almost eliminating First Steps. Thank you for everything. You not only helped my son but our family. We benefited from it as much as he did.

I cannot say enough about how positive and helpful our families involvement with First Steps turned out to be. We were very apprehensive about having our child labeled. But our apprehension soon disappeared thanks to our service coordinator and the therapists that were assigned to work with our son. The strides that were made during his time in the program were incredible. And probably, the best benefit of the program was the education we as parents gained from our therapists. These, in turn, helped us to work on specific areas with our son. Thank you First Steps!

I had no idea about the First Steps program until my parent educator told me. I wish my doctor or someone would have told me about First Steps sooner. This program made such an impact for good on my son's life. My husband and I both are very thankful for the services First Steps provided our family. The transition from First Steps to the school district was very difficult. The school district was not interested in what we thought about our son's development at all, and only concerned by what their evaluator thought. Our son stopped receiving language therapy due to his evaluation scores and just received speech therapy. After 2 months of only speech therapy, his new SLP with the school district changed his IEP to include language therapy. His current IEP now meets his needs and we are satisfied, but have had a very difficult time dealing with the school district in general.

I have only good things to say about my service coordinator and the therapists who work directly with my child. However, I feel I have been short-changed on my child's therapies. My feeling this time (this is our second special needs child in First Steps) was not, "What can we do", but, "How little can we get by with". Our daughter needs more therapy more often. But, we would only be able to swap one therapy visit for another and not add any. Also, since we started therapy, she has needed a weighted rest and we have yet to get one. On that same note, we got appliances and things for our son that were three times the price through a First Steps approved provider than they were in a special needs catalog. That seems like a great place to save money instead of heaping more paperwork on already overwhelmed service coordinators and mothers too.

We did have a great service coordinator. When we transitioned out of First Steps, however, with all of the changes and issues occurring with the state budget and First Steps, our services were basically non-existent. And now, there's really nothing available through the Regional Center for us. If there is, we have not been advised of any.

I feel I did more work and research when it came to the occupational therapy than what we received through the work of the therapist that came to our home. She was lazy, would not show me much that I could do through the week. We would have been better off without her. The physical therapy was great!

We had an excellent coordinator who was a joy to work with. She and the speech, occupational and physical therapists were a wonderful team that showed care and understanding as well as being very engaged with our child and our entire family. We would highly recommend this team and/or these individuals.

There is a real problem with the way ECSE is run compared to First Steps. In First Steps, parents are an active part of the team and are shown how to work with the child. ECSE and the school treat parents as outsiders that don't know their own children. The school doesn't welcome parents into therapy sessions so that they can work on the skills at home. First Steps talks about inclusion while the schools practice segregation and that the child doesn't belong with regular kids. Therapy is not provided in the classroom as they should be. Children are pulled out of recess and classroom time when therapy could have been completed with their peers. There are problems with schools all across the state and not just at my son's school. Teachers need to be taught how to teach children with special needs in the regular classroom. Schools and society needs to quit segregating our children.

The First Steps program is a wonderful program. This program actually surpassed my expectations and I feel that because of this program and the therapy services we received, my daughter is developing at an unexpected rate. Everyone who was involved with my daughter's therapy program were very supportive and always willing to help answer questions that I had. I can't say enough good things about this program and we are so blessed to have had the opportunity for early intervention through this program. To be honest, I do not know where I would be without the education that I received regarding my daughter's disabilities. I recommend that you keep doing what you're doing for families like mine. We are very thankful for the First Steps program.

We had excellent service providers. We had SLP, OT and specialized instructors. They have all made a difference in our boys lives. Other parents I have talked to have not been as fortunate. I'm concerned for those families. I'm a specialized instructor in a public school. First Steps is a wonderful program. I support it. I just think there might be a few bad apples spoiling the cart. We loved our service providers and coordinator. We got services almost one week after calling. Apparently, that is not happening anymore. Parents are waiting weeks and months for services.

Our family had therapists (OT and Speech) through the same company so the therapists knew each other and spoke on a regular basis about my child's progress and what works for him. I found this to be very beneficial and would recommend this to families. Regular communication rather than just IFSP meetings really made a difference.

We owe First Steps eternal gratitude for the help my daughter received. She's a new kid. Thanks!

To Whom It May Concern:

First Steps was great for our daughter. If it wasn't for a friend of ours telling us about First Steps offering help to children who need it, we feel that our daughter wouldn't be doing as well as she is today with her arm in which she has Brachial Plexus. Our daughter's therapist deserves high recognition for the work that she does for the children. Our daughter absolutely loved her and responded to her very well with the activities and exercises they did together. She is through the Special Learning Center. We have already recommended her to someone that we know and they are also taking their daughter to see her. We cannot say enough on how pleased we were with the services that we received. Thank everyone for everything on how to help our daughter. One more thing, if it wasn't for Governor Blunt, we would probably still be with First Steps if the service was still available. It's hard enough to live in this day and age by just paying regular bills but, he had to add something new by people paying according to their income. Sorry, we won't give that man anymore money than we have to. We hold no grudge toward your organization. You truly help children who need it and the governor needs to see that. Thank you again.

Our daughter made great progress with her speech. My husband and I consider ourselves very fortunate to have had the First Steps Program available to us. We appreciate our PAT instructor for her assistance in making it possible for our daughter to be referred to this program. This is a great example of how early intervention can make a difference. Thank you.

Both of our families therapy workers were great.

I was an ECSE teacher with SSD for almost 25 years. I was well aware of First Steps. When my husband and I adopted our first child in late 1999, we had no concerns with his development and only used our school district's PAT services. When we adopted our second child, a daughter in 2003, I looked at her in Russia and said, "You will have First Steps Services". What a wonderful program! My daughter really blossomed under the guidance of her therapists and me (of course!). I advocated for her, took advice from my coordinator and other parents I knew (who had First Steps services for their children), got the best therapists to work with her and today, I have a very vivacious, bright little girl, who is liked by everyone who comes in contact with her. I shudder to think where she would be functioning if I hadn't brought her home...FIRST STEPS IS GREAT!

First Steps is a wonderful program that made all the difference with our son. We were able to access First Steps early on and we are now seeing the benefits of early intervention. Thank you. I'm glad the governor reconsidered pulling the plug on First Steps. It is an essential service that must remain available to all families regardless of race and socioeconomic status.

I'M AMERICAN! Why do you need to know my race/ethnicity? Please note, "does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age". I had to fight my service coordinator to get my child re-evaluated when we all knew there were issues that needed to be addressed. I figured out how to help him on my own before I received any services. I felt like I was fighting an uphill battle with one arm behind my back and blind-folded to get the services my son needed. Everyone told me early intervention is the key, but I had the hardest time getting any intervention.

The child is bi-racial.

Our speech teacher was very knowledgeable but did not help our son. We dropped out of the program because the fees were starting to apply and felt our family system could apply what we were taught without continuing services.

The only complaint was that our service coordinator was changed three times. It made it difficult to contact people. I actually had to contact the speech therapist to get one out here. Service coordinators kept telling us they were unavailable.

I contacted First Steps June 13, 2005, by phone. I requested an evaluation. I was told over the phone in that same conversation without even meeting with my family that my daughter did not qualify for services through First Steps. In August, I contacted a behavior therapist on my own and arranged for an evaluation. At the completion of the eval the therapist told me my daughter would qualify for this State Program-First Steps. I explained that I was denied services in June. She contacted First Steps to arrange services and request a speech eval-I did not hear back. My daughter's third birthday was on November 13. She received her speech evaluation (originally requested in August) on November 14th. She was three years old. She was given services for behavior and speech 2 hours a week of each (4 hours total). They offered her six months comp services for the mistakes in January. Therapists refused services because they had not been paid for any of the prior services rendered in September, October, and November of 2005, over 4 months before. I DO NOT hold the therapists responsible for this! In February 2006, First Steps changed management (or something) and no one could explain how or why my daughter could get services. I understand services end at age 3 but MY DAUGHTER SUFFERED BECAUSE HER RIGHTS WERE VIOLATED! I filed a complaint in January 2006 with no response from Jefferson City. I was personally told in January 2006 that my daughter would receive extra compensatory services from February 2006 to August 2006. I have never received any services during the 2006 calendar year.

I just wanted to say First Steps helped my child a great deal. Without it, I don't know developmentally where he would be. Thanks for First Steps.

My son was diagnosed with a form of Dwarfism before birth. He was since diagnosed with a form called Hypochondroplasia. That was hard enough to deal with, especially living in rural Missouri where no one, not even doctors, have dealt with it. Once we were comfortable with that diagnosis, my son started having ear trouble and we were sent to Children's Mercy where he's had 2 sets of tubes and was said to have Apraxia of speech. First Steps had helped us get the physical therapy and speech therapy he needed. The sad part is in rural Missouri it is getting harder and harder to get these services for our kids. Both of my son's former therapists have since stopped working for First Steps and as far as I know there aren't any PT and Speech pathologists around here to help our kids. I don't know what DESE is willing to do to get these people here in NW Missouri to help. My son is getting service through our school, but there are many not getting services at all. Sorry for rambling. I feel so strongly in keeping First Steps going and trying to get therapists up in our corner.

First Steps is a wonderful program. It has been incredibly beneficial to our child even though he's only been involved for four months. The service coordinator, evaluators, and therapists are wonderful people who really believe in the job they're doing. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

We felt we gained a lot of support through First Steps.

The therapists that came out to help our son with First Steps not only helped him, but helped me. I was shown new ways to help him adjust to stressful situations, self-care, speech, and play. I also have the confidence now due to the encouragement from our therapists. Our DT and ABA have become life-long friends of the family! They continue to help me with new ideas even though we have transitioned out of the program. Also, they made it a point to tell me how good of a job I do working with my son at home after therapy. I was very pleased with our services.

It was difficult to learn of the existence of the First Steps program. Our pediatrician informed us. I have several friends with children with special needs that are not aware of the services available. Our Parents As Teachers contact was not knowledgeable and did not give us a referral. More needs to be done to provide pediatricians with the information necessary to make referrals.

The hardest part in getting the services of First Steps was getting the diagnosis. My child qualifies for help but only in a small part of his disability. I think it needs to be easier for children with less disability to get help also.

Our child receives 60 minutes a week of speech therapy. I have nothing to base this amount of time on but always wonder if he could/should receive more if this is supposed to be such a critical time in his life to pursue his speech development? We have pursued more ST on our own to give him more support which is paid out of our pocket.

Everyone who worked with our two babies were super sweet and very helpful. Thank you. Instead of once monthly, we are hoping First Steps will allow them to see our son at least twice a month. We would prefer her to come every week, but her schedule does not allow that at this time. We are very appreciative of all the help First Steps allows us to have. Thank all of you very much.

Our service coordinator was switched in the last 2 months before we transitioned. Although he did great, I would have preferred to stay with our SC who knew us and had been with us the whole way!

First Steps made a tremendous difference in our child's development. We were able to function as a family unit and saved a lot of money in the long run due to her needs being met BEFORE three and not waiting until school age. Additionally, the skilled therapists services were absolutely key in her developmentally appropriate progress and treatment. First Steps' skilled therapists are phenomenal! First Steps not only made life changing progress for our daughter, but our whole family!

We have moved out of state. We are no longer in Missouri. The transition out of state was completed in a very smooth manner.

Even though we received compensatory services due to the delay in the intake process, I was very upset that valuable time was lost. The same thing is happening now with another child of mine. I can't help but wonder where they would be if they received therapy when their need was diagnosed. The therapists themselves are EXCELLENT, but the intake process and referral process is TERRIBLE!

We were totally dissatisfied with our experience with First Steps. By the time our child started to receive services, he was two years and six months old. This allowed only six months worth of services. He has a repaired cleft palate and was receiving speech therapy through First Steps. He received one hour of therapy once a month for six months. Of those six months, the first three months the therapist spent teaching turn taking. He had already possessed this skill prior to First Steps. We were also told we would be trained at particular exercises we could use with our child to develop his speech. This never occurred. We were told we would receive thirty minutes each per month of consultation with the speech therapist and service coordinator. The service coordinator never called us. We received one 15 minute phone call for consultation from the speech therapist. The state was charged with two additional 15 minute phone calls which consisted of one phone call to remind me of her visit the next day (3 minutes) and another phone call stating that she was going to be late (1 minute). All in all, we were overwhelmingly disappointed with First Steps and would never recommend it to anyone.

We enjoyed our speech "teacher". She is great!

The service coordinator and many therapists helped teach my son and helped teach me how to care and raise him. Our family is so much better off now than two years ago. Thank you for this early intervention program!

My twins were 30 weeks gestation and low birth weight. From the day they left the NICU at St. Louis Children's Hospital we were under the First Steps program. Personally, I don't know what I would have done without First Steps. I wouldn't have been able to care for my children without the help of First Steps. My service coordinator was most helpful. She was almost like a Godmother to my twins. She coordinated DT, PT, OT, nurses, suggestions, and daycare services. I've worked in social service myself, but took ill with an auto immune illness that has me debilitated and I am now using the services myself. Being on both sides, I do have a working knowledge of how the system works. First Steps is the greatest program (Social Service) I know of. I will always be an advocate for First Steps because it really does assure that no child is left behind!

First Steps is an excellent program along with Special Learning Center. We are very grateful.

In the beginning we had some problems with our service coordinator but, after we changed things, it went much smoother. Our son's therapists were great. They worked with our son and gave us advice on things we could work on at theme. The services we received from First Steps were very beneficial to the development of our son.

My speech pathologist talked me into leaving my child in our home alone with her during therapy. Once alone, she abused our child leaving him with rug burns that have left scars. When I tried to speak to my First Steps coordinator, she would not return my calls and eventually sent a card with a cat on it. On the inside she wrote how sorry she was. I had to call her to find out what repercussions there would be. They wrote up a report and I haven't heard since what happened. She is a foster parent and speech pathologist for kids! Once in my home, she mistreated my son because he didn't want to be alone with her. She could have broken his arm pulling on him (he was hiding between our couch and end table) and this person was ONLY written up. What about TERMINATION? I can guarantee this isn't the first incident. When I spoke with First Steps, they were shocked she advised me to leave my son alone with her because it is against First Steps rules. My son has not received anymore services. At the time we were advised she was the best. Is this the best for my son or Jackson County?

I would not recommend the First Steps program. This program needs a major overhaul. Lots of waste and people just not doing a very good job. It took days to get a return call from the service coordinator. We had at least four different ones. It took months to get some services started and then one choice of therapists. My son did without a speech therapist until he started the ECSE. We never received information on other programs or assistance that was available.

We were very pleased with First Steps services. Our coordinator and therapists were exceptional. We have lived in New York, Illinois and now Missouri and our children have all received early intervention services in each state. Missouri's was, by far, the system with the most skilled coordinators and therapists. It was a pleasure to work with them. For the benefit of more children though, I would like to see the criterion for eligible children lowered, making sure more at risk children received services. It was a wonderful experience though. Thank you for providing it.

When our son turned two on March 26, 2005, I contacted my Speech/Language Pathologist at Monett Elementary. I was a special education teacher there at the time. Our SLP was also a First Steps provider. She gave the phone number for the First Steps Office in Joplin. After visiting with someone, she arranged to come to my house two days later. She arranged for an SLP to service our son. This was June 10. By June 27, our son was participating in his first speech/language session. First Steps made a huge impact on our family. She provided and taught strategies to help our son express himself. He is currently receiving ECSE and speech services in our school district. First Steps is an extremely valuable program. With early intervention, we are extremely hopeful that our son will catch up on his speech/language skills by kindergarten.

Our child's worker that came to the home was often late or had to make other arrangements. She made our child do things he was tired of doing. She stated it was to keep him on track. While he cried, she still tried to make him do these. I did not approve of this and this is why we stopped our program at this time. Please feel free to call me.

I just want to extend my gratitude and thanks to everyone involved with this program. I am certain that it has changed our lives for the better, forever.

Neither the First Steps Program or my service coordinator were consistent with occupational therapy or ABA. What a joke! Promises were not kept. Words were spoken, but no actions followed. I was promised paid mileage through the state. It didn't happen. A gas card was mentioned, but didn't happen. My son was supposed to receive Applied Behavioral Therapy but it never happened. Therapist and student didn't follow up/follow through. We went through three occupational therapists. What a joke!

The services we received from the speech therapist was terrible. She would show up late and leave early. She showed very little interest in what she was doing and never followed up in getting an occupational therapist to see our child. I spoke to the service coordinator who ultimately did nothing. She never called for the monthly checkups, but billed for it. We quit the services and still received receipts in the mail showing our service coordinator was still billing for us. We moved over to Johnson county (Kansas) so our child could receive the services needed. Within weeks we had a speech therapist, occupational therapist and an ECSE each seeing her once a week. I was very upset that we wasted all of that time with a therapist who didn't see that our child needed a lot more help. Also, when I called our service coordinator to terminate services, she told me to take care of calling the speech therapist and letting her know what was going on. I feel that should have been her job to take care of and it was her job to take care of things when I complained about the therapist. We were/are very disappointed in our experience with First Steps. This is supposed to be a great program that helps our kids. There should be no tolerance for people who cannot and will not do their job honestly. I'm sure there are other parents and children who had a wonderful experience, but we are not one of them. Thank you for your time.

Our service coordinator did absolutely nothing after the initial meeting. She never even returned our phone calls. Our speech therapist was fantastic.

I don't really feel that there are providers for First Steps that are willing to travel. I know we ran into this several times; no one wanted to travel to Perry County. I also received conflicting information from some service providers. After an initial assessment for OT, it was determined by the therapist my son needed services but then we were told she didn't wish to travel to our county and then in the same breath was told our son really didn't need services. So was this therapist being truthful or just saw some easy money? Also we feel the speech therapist our son worked with for over a year wasn't trained to work with small children. He made no progress so we decided to have our son evaluated at a local outpatient program/speech therapist affiliated with a hospital. In a matter of a few short months he made dramatic progress. I don't want to sound negative about this program because for some it is the only resource for the child/family. I know we were fortunate. We had insurance and were financially able to provide the extras for our son. We are also blessed that he is doing wonderfully and has caught up to his peers developmentally. Thank goodness also that my husband and I are educated and know how to access resources if needed. Also, my training in the social services for the past jobs I held gave us a better footing. I also feel that our service coordinator and therapists didn't take the time to explain things because they felt we already knew how to access resources. I really do hope my reflection on our experiences in the program helps to improve the program and service for others. I think it is a much needed resource for so many families and for the children who so desperately need that extra help. Interventions in the young, formative years really do make a huge difference later on.

First Steps really saved this child. He was a foster child and CD set it up for us.

It wasn't until my daughter was nearly three before I found out I could have been getting her help at the Special Learning Center. I found that out through my boss not the service coordinator. I can only imagine now the progress she could have made if only I had known at 21 months that there was a place like the Special Learning Center. Thankfully, the service coordinator I had is no longer in your employment!

Since we were in the First Steps program 2/03-2/06 I have heard of therapy being cut back. We were allotted up to 8 visits a week and it really has helped our daughter. Please! Please allow more visits for these kids. Parents are working with the therapists, but there is so much to do it is important to have two speech, two occupational, 1 physical and 1 special education visit a week not a month to propel these kids to their full potential. Thank you.

Our pediatrician referred us to First Steps. Please make it known to Parents As Teachers workers: My older son had problems that should have been referred to First Steps. Early intervention has been the key for my younger son. Sadly, my older son is trying to catch up. They both have Autism.

It is very frustrating as a parent not to receive help with certain specialists because they can't find room for my child in their schedules. Jasper county needs to hire more. At this point my child has only been able to see two out of the 4 specialists she needs. To my knowledge Jasper County doesn't have an OT at all because the one they did have moved to Arkansas.

I would like to impart my thoughts and feelings about the Missouri First Steps program and other such disability programs. Perhaps this is not all your responsibility, but you are the only one asking. We are not participating in the First Steps program because, in short, we have to pay for services and while the state seems to think we can afford to do this, but we cannot. We were excited about First Steps originally because it was the only program that could help us without requiring us (my husband, myself, my 5 year old, 13 year old and our baby with Down's Syndrome and a cardiac defect) to live in complete poverty. My husband is a paramedic and I work as an LPN when our local hospital has enough deliveries. I also work by running a volunteer nursery/daycare center to help reduce child abuse and neglect. However, we are penalized because of our jobs. We work hard to provide for our family and put a small amount aside for our children's future and college. The federal and state governments, however, apparently feel we are wealthy and can afford the services she needs. I don't know what to say except that we cannot. Between our regular insurance payments, extra medications, the specialists we need to see not being in our network and providers, we have a lot to pay out-of-pocket. Therefore, the reality is our daughter will not be able to receive services until she is eligible in the school system. We deeply regret this but do not feel like it would be morally or ethically responsible to simply not work and require our other children to live in poverty with us so she can receive therapy and disability benefits. Therefore, we are stuck along with many families. I don't know if you even care about our frustrations or concerns about our daughter's development and potential, or maybe you are like our insurance company and fully recognize that we are in a difficult situation but due to financial constraints things can't be changed. But, maybe you could pass on our story to whomever makes the rules about how disabled children and families receive service and maybe someone will decide to care about families like us. I have grown more and more cynical over the past sixteen months and my gripe is that in reality you will just file it and forget about it. Please try to prove me wrong.

10/8/06: My daughter's therapists are very helpful and knowledgeable. The nutritionist has also made a major difference in her eating habits. Thank you for all of the help.

We had a very difficult time with having my service coordinator call me back or our actual therapist coming to see our child when she was scheduled to. She cancelled more than half the time we had her (and didn't reschedule) and she didn't seem very empathetic. Our coordinator changed three times in a course of six months and we always found out at the last minute. Our transition was not great and I still feel that my child needs some kind of services (behavioral and some communication). The school district didn't seem to think so. I was very disappointed with the entire program.