Missouri
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION™

Office of Special Education

Stephen Barr, Ed.D. • *Assistant Commissioner*

205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480 • Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480 • dese.mo.gov

Memorandum

To: Missouri First Steps SPOE Directors, Service Coordinators and Providers

From: Beth Loethen
        First Steps Program Coordinator

Re: COVID-19 Temporary Guidance for Face-to-Face Meetings and Services

Date: March 17, 2020

As you are aware our schools, businesses and families continue to make preparations and decisions related to the coronavirus (COVID-19). As the situation continues to unfold in Missouri, First Steps is committed to the safety and health of all individuals involved in our early intervention program.

Following the lead of many other Part C organizations and guidance from various health agencies effective, March 18, 2020 through April 3, 2020, Missouri First Steps will suspend all face-to-face meetings and services. This suspension includes intake and direct service visits, as well as Individual Family Service Plan and Early Intervention Te am meetings. First Steps will consider extending this timeframe if necessary and will communicate that extension to all involved in First Steps.

The following document outlines several temporary policies for our SPOE directors, service coordinators and providers to utilize alternate methods for referral, intake, meetings and service delivery. These temporary policies are intended to allow for some continuity of services and communication between First Steps families and their Early Intervention Team, as well as, respecting the health of all involved.

This guidance also accompanies the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education guidance on ensuring the provision of early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance can be found here.

Missouri First Steps: Guidance for Referrals, Intake, Meetings and Services Regarding COVID-19

The following is temporary guidance on how to conduct First Steps referral, intake, meeting and services while face-to-face visits are suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance is applicable until April 3, 2020 but may be extended if conditions warrant.

For Newly Referred Families	
Contact #1: Initial Contact at Referral	**Contact #2: Follow-Up**

Contact #1: Initial Contact at Referral

Referral:
- ☐ Send *Acknowledgement of Referral Letter* to referral source, if not parent referral
- ☐ Establish a hard copy EI record with a record access log

Initial Contact with Parent Via Phone:
- ☐ Explain the First Steps program
- ☐ Explain current status of face-to-face visits on hold until at least 4/3/2020
- ☐ Explain *Parental Rights Statement*
- ☐ Obtain enrollment information
  - o Complete page 1of Intake Information Worksheet
- ☐ Explain *Notice of Action/Consent for Evaluation/Initial Assessment of the Child* and determine how consent will be obtained
- ☐ Data Entry:
  - o Referral information
  - o Initial contact information
  - o Case note contacts with family

Obtain NOAC:
- ☐ Obtain *Notice of Action/Consent for Evaluation/Initial Assessment of the Child* via mail, fax or email.
- ☐ Data Entry:
  - o Enter Initial Parental Consent
  - o Case note when and how consent was obtained

Contact #2: Follow-Up

Second Contact with Parent Via Phone:
- ☐ Explain the System of Payments Policy
- ☐ Explain Medicaid consent form
- ☐ Explain Release of Information form
- ☐ Explain current status of all face-to-face visits on hold and any evaluations/assessments will be scheduled after 4/3/20
- ☐ Obtain birth history and developmental information
  - o Complete pages 2-3 of Intake Information Worksheet

Obtain Forms:
- ☐ Obtain Medicaid Consent via mail, fax or email.
- ☐ Obtain *Releases of Information (ROI),* as needed
- ☐ Request documentation with ROI
- ☐ Data Entry:
  - o Complete enrollment data entry
  - o Case note contacts with family and/or providers, attempts to obtain medical records, etc.
  - o Enter evaluation or assessment request
  - o Enter evaluation or assessment authorization(s)*

*Optional to enter the authorization at this time or later, but the authorization start date cannot be earlier than 4/3/2020.

Hold for Evaluation/Assessment:
- ☐ Evaluations/assessments are on hold until face-to-face visits resume.

Missouri First Steps: Guidance for Referrals, Intake, Meetings and Services Regarding COVID-19

For Existing Families When Eligibility Has Already Been Determined	
IFSP Meetings	**EIT Meetings**

IFSP Meetings

Any IFSP meetings held must be conducted via phone or secure video internet connection until April 3, 2020; however, this timeline may be extended if conditions warrant. The below strategies are to assist in maintaining IFSP timelines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parent Decisions:
- ☐ Determine how paperwork will be sent to and returned by the parent (i.e., email, mail or fax)
- ☐ Parents may decide to delay Initial IFSP meetings until in-person meetings resume.

Initial IFSP:
- ☐ Explain current status of face-to-face meetings are suspended until at least 4/3/2020
- ☐ Explain *Parental Rights Statement*
- ☐ Plan for and facilitate the IFSP meeting (see Checklist for 45-Day Timeline Activities)
- ☐ Obtain *Notice of Action/Consent for Initiation of EI Services*
- ☐ Obtain *Financial Information for Family Cost Participation*
- ☐ Obtain *Consent to Use Private Insurance*
- ☐ Review *System of Payments*
- ☐ Data Entry:
  - o Case note parent contacts and decisions
  - o Complete IFSP meeting data entry per Checklist for 45-Day Timeline Activities

Interperiodic/6-Month Review/Annual:
- ☐ Follow the Exception to In-Person Meeting Guidance in Practice Manual Chapter 6 page 19

Transition:
- ☐ Parents may delay the transition meeting.
- ☐ If parents wish to hold the transition meeting, the meeting may be held over the phone and the school district may attend if the district is open and available.
- ☐ Late Referrals: If a child with a summer birthday is referred and a referral to the school district cannot be made because the district is closed due to COVID-19, then print off documentation of the district closure and print off a fax receipt or dated email indicating the referral was sent to the district. Proceed with the Summer Third Birthday IFSP. Once the district is back in session, verify that the referral is now in process.

EIT Meetings

- ☐ All in-person EIT meetings are suspended until at least 4/3/2020
- ☐ EIT meetings may be held via conference call or secured internet connection.
- ☐ If teams do not have access to large group conference call capability, then EIT meetings may be postponed until face-to-face meetings resume.

Services to Children & Families

- ☐ Inform families of suspension of face-to-face visits until at least 4/3/2020
- ☐ Missed face-to-face visits through 4/3/2020 are not applicable to compensatory visits. However, once face-to-face visits resume, the IFSP team may determine the need to make-up any missed visits.
- ☐ Service Coordinators must continue service coordination activities with families during this time, including contacts with families, progress note review, data entry, case notes, authorization update and IFSP facilitation.
- ☐ If the parent chooses consultation as an alternative to face-to-face visits, then the authorization does <u>not</u> need to be changed and the provider can bill the time spent on consultation on their direct child authorization. See consultation guidance in Practice Manual Chapter 9.
  - o Providers must complete progress notes on consultation visits, including documentation of how services are provided.
- ☐ If the parent chooses teletherapy as an alternative to face-to-face visits, then the authorization(s) will need to be changed via an IFSP meeting with signed NOAC. See teletherapy guidance in Practice Manual Chapter 9.
  - o Providers must have training in teletherapy to provide this service methodology.
  - o Providers must complete progress notes on teletherapy visits, including documentation of how services are provided.