



Practice Manual

Chapter 12: Exit From First Steps

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Office of Special Education
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12 EXIT FROM FIRST STEPS

The family's final impressions when exiting First Steps are just as important as first impressions. Whether a child and family has participated in First Steps for only a few months or for three years, the Service Coordinator makes every effort to ensure the family leaves with a positive experience from their time in First Steps.

SECTION I: EXIT PROCEDURES

Missouri Part C State Plan Section XIII. (34 CFR 303.209)

The Service Coordinator must prepare every family to exit from First Steps and complete all necessary paperwork and data entry in a timely manner.

The Service Coordinator is encouraged to use the *Checklist for Transition and Exit Activities* (see Chapter 10 Documents) to ensure all steps are taken.

A. Age of the Child When Exiting First Steps

Since First Steps serves children who are birth to age three, most families leave First Steps when their child is three years old; however, there are times when families leave First Steps before or after the child is three.

Depending on when the child exits First Steps and the reason for leaving, the Service Coordinator is required to complete certain activities to exit a child and family from First Steps.

1. Exit Before Age Three

Sometimes families exit First Steps before the child is three years old. The process for handling these situations is different, depending on whether or not an IFSP was developed.

Examples of families exiting before an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is developed include when the child is not eligible for services or the parent does not want to participate in First Steps.

Examples of families exiting after an IFSP was developed include when the child completes his or her IFSP outcomes before age three or the parent wants to leave the program before the child is three.

Unable to contact/locate and parent withdraw are common reasons for families leaving First Steps before age three.

a) Unable to Contact/Locate

When a family leaves First Steps unexpectedly, the Service Coordinator may not have time to plan for the family's exit from the program. The Service Coordinator must document all dates and times of attempted contacts with the family in case notes. For more information about the procedures for unable to contact/locate after referral, see Chapter 3. For more information about the procedures for unable to contact/locate after eligibility, see Chapter 6.

Additionally, when a family is determined unable to contact/locate, the Service Coordinator proceeds with exiting the child from First Steps as outlined in Sections B and C.

b) Parent Withdraw

Participation in First Steps is voluntary. The parent may choose to leave First Steps at any time by notifying the Service Coordinator verbally or in writing.

If the parent indicates the family wants to withdraw from First Steps, then the Service Coordinator must explain the consequence of withdrawing from the program (e.g., a new referral, intake and eligibility determination must be completed again if the parent wants to participate in the future). The Service Coordinator should ask the parent if more time is needed to consider the consequences of withdrawing from the program.

When the parent has decided to withdraw from First Steps, the Service Coordinator sends the parent the *Parent Withdraw From First Steps* letter (see Chapter 12 Letters) and a NOA documenting the parent's decision. Sending the NOA to the parent immediately ends the family's participation and the Service Coordinator proceeds with exiting the child from First Steps as outlined in Sections B and C.

2. Exit At Age Three

When families stay in First Steps until the program ends the day before the child's third birthday, the Service Coordinator has time to plan for the family's exit from the program. Several months before the family is expected to leave, it is important for the Service Coordinator to verify with the family and providers that all services have been delivered as stated in the IFSP. To the extent possible, any missed services are expected to be made up before the child's third birthday. For more information on make-up or compensatory services, see Chapter 9.

Approximately one month before the child's third birthday, the Service Coordinator should make a final contact with the family to ask if there are any lingering questions about exiting First Steps. The Service Coordinator should also remind the parent of the destruction of information process in case the parent wants a copy of the child's record.

3. Exit After Age Three

There are two reasons a child could continue in First Steps after age three. The first reason, although rare, is children who have a compensatory IFSP because services that were supposed to be delivered cannot be delivered before the child turns three. For more information about a Compensatory IFSP, see Chapter 6.

The second reason is children with summer third birthdays who are eligible for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), or in the process of determining eligibility, and the parent chose to continue in First Steps until school begins in the fall following the child's third birthday. For more information on transition and summer third birthdays, see Chapter 10.

B. Updating Child Records

Regardless of the reason for a child and family leaving First Steps, the Service Coordinator is responsible for updating the child's electronic record and paper record with all available information about the family's participation in First Steps.

For the child's electronic record, the Service Coordinator ensures all data entry is complete, including entry of all IFSP meeting information, service authorizations and compliance notes. The Service Coordinator also updates the child's electronic record with any lingering case notes and reviews any recent provider progress notes.

If a child was in First Steps more than six months, the Service Coordinator must enter exit data for Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO), which is completed within 30 days prior to the child's exit from First Steps. For more information on ECO, see Chapter 11.

For the child's paper record, the Service Coordinator files any lingering paperwork. The SPOE is responsible for storing the paper record per the record retention requirements. For more information on record retention, see Chapter 2.

C. End Enrollment Reasons for Inactivating the Electronic Record

Once the Service Coordinator has confirmed the necessary data are entered in the child's electronic record, the Service Coordinator is ready to end the child's enrollment in First Steps.

The Service Coordinator must inactivate the child's electronic record within 30 days after the child and family exited the First Steps program.

It is important for the Service Coordinator to remember access to the child's electronic record is limited once the record has been inactivated. While the Service Coordinator can read the child's electronic record and enter case notes without time limitations, any data entry of IFSP information, service authorizations or other details about the child's participation is not accessible once the electronic record is inactivated.

To inactivate a child's electronic record, the Service Coordinator must enter a date and a reason. The end enrollment reason is the primary reason the family is exiting First Steps.

The Service Coordinator can select from the following list of end enrollment reasons:

1. **Child Deceased** means the child passed away. It is imperative the Service Coordinator inactivate the child's record as soon as possible since ending enrollment will ensure the Central Finance Office (CFO) stops mailing Family Cost Participation (FCP) statements to the family.
2. **Completion of IFSP** means the IFSP team has determined the child has met all IFSP outcomes and no longer needs First Steps services.
3. **Data Error** means the child's electronic record was entered erroneously.
4. **Inquiry Only** means the SPOE determined the information received from the referral source was not enough for a complete referral to First Steps, or the child referred was three years old or older.
5. **Moved Out of State** means the parent notified the Service Coordinator (verbally or in writing) about moving to another state.
6. **Parent Withdrawn/FCP** means the parent decided to withdraw from First Steps due to FCP, which may include the ability to pay a monthly fee, an overdue balance.
7. **Part B Eligibility in Process** means the child's eligibility for ECSE is in process but not yet determined by the time the family exits First Steps.
8. **Part B Ineligible – Exit to Other Program** means the child was found ineligible for ECSE and the SPOE referred the child and family to another program (e.g., Parents as Teachers, Head Start, health services).
9. **Part B Ineligible – Exit Without Referral to Other Programs** means the child was found ineligible for ECSE and the family did not want a referral to another program.
10. **Part B Referral Refused by Parent** means the parent did not give permission for a referral to ECSE (i.e., parent opted out) or the parent was referred to ECSE but later the school district indicated the parent was no longer pursuing ECSE.

- 11. Part C Ineligible** means the child was determined not eligible for First Steps.
- 12. Part C Referral Refused by SPOE** means the child was referred to First Steps; however, the SPOE did not proceed with an evaluation of the child because a developmental delay or disability was not suspected.
- 13. Transition to Part B** means the child was found eligible for and transitioned to ECSE at the local school district.
- 14. Unable to Contact/Locate** means the SPOE determined the family cannot be contacted or located.
- 15. Withdrawn** means the parent notified the Service Coordinator (verbally or in writing) about the decision to withdraw from First Steps for a reason other than FCP.

It is critical that the correct end enrollment reason is selected for each child who exits First Steps because the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is required to complete federal reports on the reasons children leave the program.

➤ **Inactivation Reasons for Children Referred to ECSE**

For a child referred to ECSE, the Service Coordinator must select one of the following Part B reasons that describe the child's status with ECSE at the time the child exits First Steps:

- Transition to Part B
- Part B Eligibility in Process
- Part B Ineligible – Exit to Other Program
- Part B Ineligible – Exit Without Referral to Other Programs

SECTION II: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question 1: What is the end enrollment reason for a child who has been determined eligible for ECSE but the parent withdraws from First Steps two weeks before the child's third birthday?

Answer: The child's First Steps electronic record is inactivated with reason "Transition to Part B." The Service Coordinator sends the *Parent Withdraw From First Steps* letter (see Chapter 12 Letters) and NOA documenting the parent's decision.

Question 2: What is the end enrollment reason for a child who is referred to ECSE but the school district is going to end the referral or evaluation process before the child's third birthday because the parent is no longer pursuing ECSE?

Answer: The child's First Steps electronic record is inactivated with reason "Part B Referral Refused by Parent."

Question 3: What is the end enrollment reason for a child with a Summer Third Birthday (STB) IFSP whose eligibility for ECSE is not known by the time the child's STB IFSP ends?

Answer: The child's First Steps electronic record is inactivated with reason "Part B Eligibility in Process."

Question 4: What is the end enrollment reason for a child with a STB IFSP whose parent initially signed consent to pursue ECSE eligibility but the parent has not completed the ECSE eligibility process by the time the child's STB IFSP ends?

Answer: The child's First Steps electronic record is inactivated with reason "Part B Eligibility in Process."

Question 5: If the wrong inactivation reason was entered, how does the Service Coordinator correct the reason?

Answer: On the Child Detail tab in the child's electronic record, select Enrollment from the top bar, then select the correct "end reason" and click on the "save" button.