



This brochure was developed in collaboration with the **University of Missouri-Kansas City Institute for Human Development.**

Contact your local First Steps System Point of Entry (SPOE) office for more information by calling toll free:

**866-583-2392**

# Health Care Providers and Early Intervention Teams

## First Steps Belief Statement

### SERVICES AND SUPPORTS ARE INDIVIDUALIZED

First Steps providers design their services and supports so that families or primary caregivers can carry out the strategies. These supports and services build each family's capacity to enhance the development of the child. Services and supports should fit into a family's life – not be added on.



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**Missouri First Steps Early Intervention**  
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Health care providers often identify young children who have developmental delays or disabilities and refer their families to programs for services and ongoing care. Missouri First Steps is Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and offers services to meet the needs of the family as well as the child. First Steps has groups of providers, each referred to as an **Early Intervention Team (EIT)**, that provide services and supports to eligible children and families. It is important that both health care and EIT providers work together to provide the best services possible.

## What Is an EIT?

An EIT is a **transdisciplinary team model** in which members represent four core disciplines: physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology and special instruction. These disciplines integrate their collective expertise to provide more effective assessments, intervention strategies and services to families. Main supports and services to the family are delivered through one team member called the **primary provider**. Team members are recognized as the authority on their primary disciplines; however, they share techniques, strategies and professional opinions with the other EIT members. Transdisciplinary team members draw upon one another's strengths without overstepping the boundaries of each discipline.



## Distinction Between Medical Services and Early Intervention

The health care community and First Steps share a common interest in helping children with developmental disabilities grow and make progress, yet the focus of each differs. Health care providers attend to the child's medical-related issues, which might be contributing to developmental delays. Treatment services are normally delivered in a medical or clinical setting, and the family might not be present.

First Steps focuses on early intervention related to the child's developmental needs within the context of the family and its daily routines. Families participate as an integral part in the delivery of

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*First Steps providers are  
consultants and coaches to families  
and other primary caregivers.*  
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services because they provide learning opportunities every day. Intervention services are typically delivered in the family's home by the primary provider, who represents the EIT in promoting the child's optimal growth and development.

## Rationale for the EIT Approach

Early intervention specialists agree there are important aspects to consider when working with infants and toddlers in their natural environment. A workgroup sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs developed key principles for early intervention specialists. These principles include the following:

- Infants and toddlers learn best through everyday experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts.



- All families, with the necessary supports and resources, can enhance their children's learning and development.
- The primary role of the service provider in early intervention is to work with and support the family members and caregivers in a child's life.

*(From "Seven Key Principles: Looks Like/Doesn't Look Like," available online at [www.nectac.org/topics/families/families.asp](http://www.nectac.org/topics/families/families.asp))*

## Benefits for Families

The coordinated efforts and expertise of the EIT members, coupled with informed decision making by the **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team**, offer numerous benefits to families. Within the EIT model, the family receives:

- **Unduplicated information** because the primary provider communicates the EIT's guidance to the family.
- **Individualized services** because the primary provider and the EIT consider the family's and child's unique situation and circumstances.
- **Comprehensive support** because the EIT members collectively design early intervention strategies that are grounded in the wealth of knowledge from their respective disciplines.