

# PARENT CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for First Steps Families ♦ Fall 2012

Missouri First Steps provides early intervention services for children, birth to age three, who have delayed development or diagnosed conditions that are associated with developmental disabilities. Funding for Missouri's First Steps program comes from a variety of sources, including:

- Federal (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)
- State (General Revenue)
- Family Cost Participation
- Private and Public Insurance

The following is a brief summary of the System of Payments policy for Family Cost Participation, Private Insurance and Public Insurance.

## **Family Cost Participation (FCP)**

FCP fees are based on a sliding scale that considers the adjusted gross income for the family and the number of family members. The Service Coordinator collects information [at the initial and annual IFSP] in order to calculate the fee. The parent has 15 working days to report a change [in income or household size] to the Service Coordinator. For families assessed a fee, the minimum fee is \$5.00 and the maximum fee is \$100.00 per month.

If the family has failed to pay their FCP monthly fees, the head of household receives prior written notice by mail indicating that First Steps services [except those provided at no-cost] will be suspended on the 90th day of non-payment.

## **Private Insurance**

As required by state law, private insurance carriers practicing in Missouri help pay for the cost of providing First Steps services. If the family has private insurance [and agrees to share insurance information with First Steps], parental consent to use that private insurance must be obtained before a new First Steps service begins or before a First Steps service increases in length, duration, frequency or intensity. Parents may withdraw consent at any time; however, according to state law, an increased fee may be charged to the parent for refusal to access private insurance.

In the event the availability of health insurance is negatively impacted due to First Steps participation, the family should contact their Service Coordinator.

## **Public Insurance**

Public insurance refers to MO HealthNet/Medicaid funds. Missouri informs families of public insurance programs but does not require a parent to sign up for or enroll in public benefits or insurance programs as a condition of receiving First Steps services.

If the family has public insurance [and agrees to share insurance information with First Steps], parental consent to use that public insurance must be obtained before sharing personally identifiable information with Medicaid and before a new First Steps services begins. [If the family has public insurance and agrees to share insurance information with First Steps, then the fee is \$0.] Parents may withdraw their consent for First Steps to use the parent's public insurance at any time; however, the family will be assessed a fee per month.

*The state regulations governing the First Steps program, including the System of Payments, are under revision. The proposed changes are posted on the web and available for public comment until October 29, 2012. To review the changes or make a comment on the proposed state regulations, go to: <http://dese.mo.gov/se/stateplan/index.html> and under the "Part C-Ages Birth to 3" column, click on "Proposed 2012 Version."*



# A Missouri Family's Story

By Leah of St. Peters, MO

When Brian was 22 months old a neurologist diagnosed him with autism. My husband was devastated and depressed but I was actually relieved to finally have a reason for why Brian was such a difficult baby. He cried all of the time, couldn't sleep through the night, didn't speak, and the closest thing he did to playing was roll cans of food around on the floor. First Steps helped out so much. We got to go to a three week parent training that told us more about autism, described various therapies and how they helped and showed us that Brian could actually learn when things were presented in the right way.

One of our biggest obstacles was eating. First Steps sent an occupational therapist (OT) to help Brian be able to touch and eat different textures of food like fruits and vegetables. She taught us how to use a feeding strategy to get him to tolerate different foods – a strategy that still helps us today. First, he would have to, slowly, tolerate the sight of one food. After a few days/weeks, we would move to letting it touch our plate, then to touching the food, kissing the food, licking the food, maybe even taking a bite (especially if its covered in mayo)! During this program, she also taught him that it was okay to get his hands messy and how to use a napkin to clean up. Other ways the OT was invaluable was the identification of his sensory needs and showed me how I could help Brian by using a pressure vest, swinging and jumping on a trampoline. The early intervention my son received from First Steps changed the way we viewed our son, the way we played with him and gave us hope that one day he might be like any other kid.

## Just for Fun...Hard and Soft

The activity "Hard and Soft" can help children recognize likeness and difference, develop their memory and provide tactile recognition.



### Materials needed:

- Soft Objects (such as cotton ball, handkerchief, stuffed animal, feather, soft materials)
- Hard Objects (such as wooden block, spoon, crayon, wooden or metal toy)
- Shoe box or pillowcase

One at a time, hand your child the different soft and hard things you have gathered and talk with your child about which are soft and which are hard. Place the items in the shoebox or pillowcase and ask your child to find a soft or a hard object without peeking.

Another way to use this activity would be to place all objects in a box and as your child removes them, talk about which are soft and which are hard. You can also take a walk around the house and show your child items that are either soft or hard, and talk with your child about why some things need to be soft and others need to be hard.

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