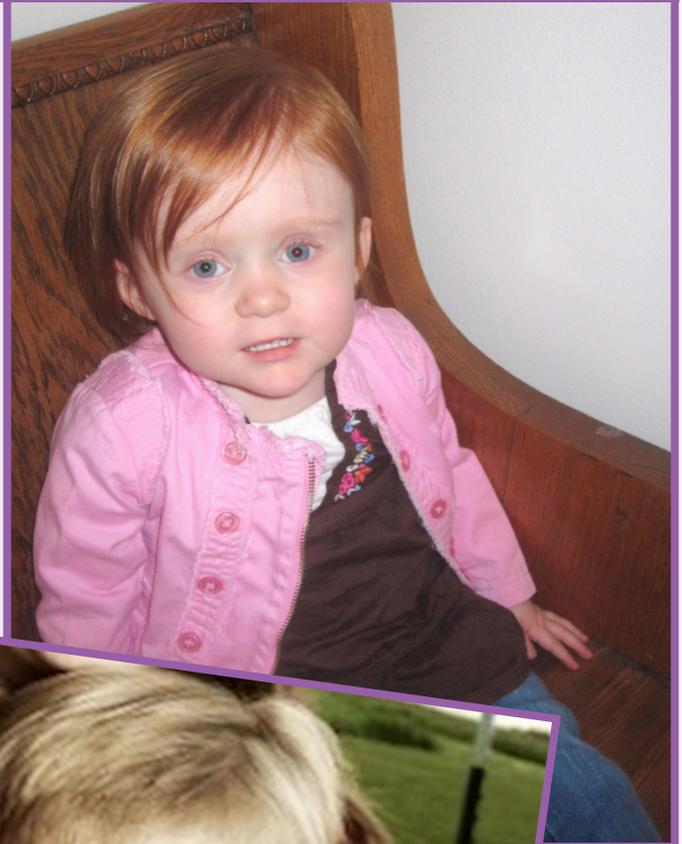


# Year at a Glance

2014-15



## What is First Steps?

First Steps is Missouri's Early Intervention system for infants and toddlers, birth to age three, who have delayed development or diagnosed conditions that are associated with developmental disabilities. First Steps is a voluntary program which provides families the tools they need to help their child be successful. Families play an integral role in their child's development.

## What is a SPOE?

First Steps is operated through contractual agreements in ten regions across the state. The regional offices are known as a System Point of Entry (SPOE) and they provide service coordination, intake and eligibility determination, as well as all local administrative activities for the program. Building a strong network among the SPOE and primary referral sources in a community assists in the early identification and referral of children who are potentially eligible for First Steps. Missouri is a geographically diverse state, yet regardless of location within the state, all Missouri children and families receive support from a SPOE in their area.

## What is an IFSP?

Children found eligible for First Steps have an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) which reflects a family's concerns, priorities and resources with regard to the development of their infant or toddler. Families participate as partners in the planning, development, implementation and review of their IFSP. The IFSP process is unique to each family. Service coordinators and service providers recognize that families are diverse, and collaborate with family members to ensure the development of meaningful goals and related services that assist the family in improving their child's functioning in everyday routines and activities.

## Who is Eligible for First Steps?

Infants and toddlers who have one of the following criteria may be eligible for First Steps:

Newborn Condition	Diagnosed Conditions	Developmental Delay
<p>Referred prior to 12 months of age with a birth weight less than 1,500 grams, with one or more of the following conditions diagnosed at birth or within 30 days post birth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APGAR of 6 or less at 5 minutes</li> <li>• Intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH) (Grade II, III, or IV)</li> <li>• Any Positive Pressure Ventilation greater than 48 hours, including ventilator or oscillator</li> <li>• Resuscitation/code-event requiring chest compressions</li> </ul>	<p>Referred prior to 36 months of age with a diagnosed condition including, but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autism Spectrum Disorders</li> <li>• Chromosomal Trisomy</li> <li>• Craniofacial Anomalies</li> <li>• Disorders of the Nervous System</li> <li>• Disorders Related to Exposure to Toxic Substances</li> <li>• Infections/Viruses/Bacteria</li> <li>• Other Chromosomal Abnormalities</li> <li>• Other Genetic/Congenital/Metabolic Conditions</li> <li>• Sensory Impairments</li> <li>• Severe Attachment Disorders</li> </ul>	<p>Referred prior to 36 months of age, with a half-age developmental delay, as measured by appropriate diagnostic measures, in one or more of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive development</li> <li>• Communication development</li> <li>• Adaptive development</li> <li>• Physical development, including vision and hearing</li> <li>• Social or emotional development</li> </ul>

Eligibility\* is determined through an evaluation of the child, during which the service coordinator reviews information about the child's birth, medical history and developmental history. An evaluator may administer a test to determine the child's abilities. With the parent's consent, the service coordinator may gather information from caregivers, child care providers, educators or other family members.

\*Eligibility criteria for First Steps, including examples of diagnosed conditions, are available at:



## Who Referred Families to First Steps?

First Steps receives referrals from parents as well as many community programs such as hospitals, physicians, child care centers, preschools and other public agencies.

Referral Sources in 2014-15	% of Referrals
Medical Providers (Hospitals, Physicians, Other health care, Public health)	38.0%
Parents	36.8%
Social Service Agencies (Mental Health, Health & Senior Services, Children's Division, Shelters, etc.)	13.2%
Early Childhood Programs (Parents as Teachers, Early Head Start, School districts, Child care programs, etc.)	12.0%
TOTAL	100%

## When Parents Made the Referral, How Did They Learn About First Steps?

In 2014-15, Parents Learned About First Steps From:	% of Parent Referrals
Medical Providers (Hospitals, Physicians, Other health care, Public health)	46.6%
Other Sources	33.5%
Early Childhood Programs (Parents as Teachers, Early Head Start, School districts, Child care programs, etc.)	17.2%
Social Service Agencies (Mental Health, Health & Senior Services, Children's Division, Shelters, etc.)	2.7%
TOTAL	100%

### Parents: Are You Interested in Sharing Your Experiences?

Parent participation and feedback are important in helping the First Steps program make a difference for children and families in Missouri. Here are some ways parents can get involved:

- First Steps regional council meetings are held throughout the state to provide an opportunity for parents to share their experiences and participate in discussions with local members. Contact your local SPOE office at **(866) 583-2392** for more information.
- First Steps state council meetings are held in Jefferson City to provide an opportunity for parents to share their experiences and participate in discussions with state members. Email the First Steps program at [sefirststeps@dese.mo.gov](mailto:sefirststeps@dese.mo.gov) for more information.
- First Steps newsletters provide an opportunity for parents to share their experiences with other families and professionals serving young children. Visit the MPACT website at [www.ptimpact.org](http://www.ptimpact.org) for more information.

## Charlotte's Story:

By Lesley of Jefferson City, MO



Charlotte & Daddy in the NICU

Like a vast majority of families that are served by First Steps, we never expected to be a "special needs family." My husband and I were excited to start our family, and we were shocked when we found out that we were going to start out with twins! The pregnancy started out good and we couldn't wait to have two baby girls! We found out at 20 weeks, that there were some problems with the smaller baby, and began being watched very closely. At 29 weeks pregnant, at a routine ultrasound, we found out that our daughter, Annabelle, had passed, and our other daughter, Charlotte, was in pretty serious distress. I was rushed in to an emergency C-section. While we were mourning the loss of Annabelle, there was also a sense of relief that Charlotte was here, seemingly healthy and had a great set of lungs!

We spent 55 days in the NICU. During that time, we were told that Charlotte had some damage to her brain due to the stress she was under after Annabelle passed. We were told that it could develop in to Cerebral Palsy, but we were confident that she was not harmed. While we were in the hospital, the staff kept talking about "First Steps." I had never heard of them, after all, very few parents prepare for special needs parenting when they are expecting. When I would ask "What does First Steps do?" the answer I got over and over was, "they will just help."

After we got home, we met with Terri, Charlotte's Occupational Therapist (OT). We fell in love. She was so sweet with Charlotte, and was so encouraging to not only Charlotte, but to my husband and I as well. We eventually added Mary, a Physical Therapist, Mary Beth, a Visual Instructor, and Brooke, a Speech Language Pathologist.

At 10 months old, my husband and I got the news we were both dreading and knowing would come: Charlotte has cerebral palsy. She isn't going to grow and develop like her friends. We were heartbroken but also, again, relieved that we had a direction. The first person I called after the diagnosis was Terri. She talked us through everything and helped us with the next steps. Over the next 3 years, our First Steps team became our family. When we felt lost, we turned to them first. They helped us navigate waters that we didn't even realize we were in.

I often think back to those first days in the hospital when First Steps was described as "they will just help." I can't think of a more perfect description. They just help. They help with therapy, they help with equipment, they help with emotional support for families; they just help. We are so thankful that Charlotte started out her life with First Steps. They set our whole family up for success!



Charlotte & Terri (OT) during a home visit

## When It's Time to Leave First Steps

Before First Steps ends at age three, service coordinators and service providers help families identify community resources so parents can continue to meet the needs of their children. This process is referred to as Transition from First Steps. Children leave First Steps to attend Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) through the local school district or other community programs.

Reasons for Leaving First Steps in 2014-2015	# of Children	% of Exiting Children
Child turned three years old:		
Parent requested referral to ECSE - Eligible	2,451	61.2%
Parent requested referral to ECSE - Not Eligible	363	9.1%
Parent did not request referral to ECSE	204	5.1%
Family withdrew from First Steps	408	10.2%
Moved out of state	220	5.5%
Child completed IFSP outcomes	185	4.6%
Unable to contact the family	149	3.7%
Child passed away	22	0.5%
Other	2	0.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,004</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Reghan's Story:

By Paul & Kathy of Moberly, MO

If we had only known then what we know now, we might not have been so scared of the unknown. On August 16, 2012 our daughter shared the secret (through an ultrasound) that she had always known -- that she had Spina Bifida Myelomeningocele. Spina Bifida was not a part of our vocabulary or our world. We did not know what this foreign word meant for our family or our future. On that day our view of how we saw our lives, our family, our home, our community and our world changed. On October 23, 2012, Reghan underwent her first surgery before birth to close the opening of the spine. On January 6, 2013 we met our daughter and she started to share with us her story and show us, not what the doctors told us might or might not be a possibility, but what SHE was capable of. We are so grateful that First Steps has been a part of her story since birth almost. Our First Steps service coordinator, Tristy, met with us shortly after the day we came home from the hospital at just two weeks old.



Reghan & her brother, Ian, at the zoo

We are very grateful for First Steps because in those very first days we had no idea where to begin. One of our fears with a child that needed a little extra care was how this was going to change our lives. And it did change our lives. We moved to a different home within seven months of bringing her home. We have had to change our plans for our financial future. We had to make modifications to our new house and find ways to store the new equipment that has been necessary, plan family trips around doctors' appointments and be a little more deliberate and thoughtful in preparing for time spent away from the comforts of our home.

While all these were challenges, we were fortunate that we left the hospital with a lovable baby girl who just needed to have her needs met. We also returned home from the hospital with a First Steps team that was there to help us every step of the way. From Reghan's wonderful Physical Therapist (PT), Micky, to guidance offered from her Occupational Therapist (OT), Stephanie, to the countless evaluations and access to equipment that would allow us to get out and enjoy our community, the services offered by First Steps has been invaluable. First Steps services have allowed our daughter to be independent and be involved in the world around her. We always tell people that Reghan's "wheels", as we refer to her assistive devices, give her freedom - freedom to explore, to participate, and to be involved and independent. Our First Steps PT-extraordinaire, Micky, has been our educator, our advocate, and our resource that always finds the answers to our questions...or finds someone who can answer our questions. She has truly become part of our family and both our daughter and our son look forward to her weekly visits!



Shriver Family Photo 2015  
From Left: Reghan, Kathy, Ian, Paul

Reghan's Spina Bifida diagnosis is a part of her but it has not stopped us from enjoying life. Living life may need a little more planning than it used to, but Spina Bifida has not stopped our family from living, from exploring and letting both of our children be children. First Steps has provided us with the tools and specialized professionals that have enabled us to continue enjoying the things we did before August 16, 2012 (diagnosis day). It just may be in a different way. We want to say thank you for our First Steps Team, and for making our beginning transition easier! We are HAPPY and so blessed to have our son and our daughter a part of our life today!!!

## Annual Performance Report

Each year DESE sends a report to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs about the performance of the First Steps program. The report contains information on the state's performance, including:

- First Steps services began within 30 days after parent consent
- First Steps services were provided within the family's home or other natural environment
- The Service Coordinator completed referral and IFSP activities within 45 days after referral
- For children transitioning to Early Childhood Special Education, a transition conference was held at least three months before the child's third birthday

Annual Performance Report Results for 2014-15	% of Compliance
#1 - Timely Services	95.5%
#2 - Natural Environments	99.3%
#7 - 45-Day Timelines	100%
#8C - Timely Transition Conference	100%

To view the full report on the performance of the First Steps program, go to [www.dese.mo.gov/special-education/state-performance-plan](http://www.dese.mo.gov/special-education/state-performance-plan) and under 2015 Submission, click on APR 2013-2014 under Part C - ages Birth to 3 (First Steps).

## A Five Year Plan to Improve Child Outcomes

First Steps is designed to improve both a child's development and the family's ability to help their child grow and learn. Three developmental areas are especially important to a child's participation in everyday activities: (1) demonstrating positive social-emotional skills, (2) acquiring knowledge and skills, and (3) using appropriate behaviors. In order to determine the progress a child has made in First Steps, these three areas are measured when a child enters and exits the program.

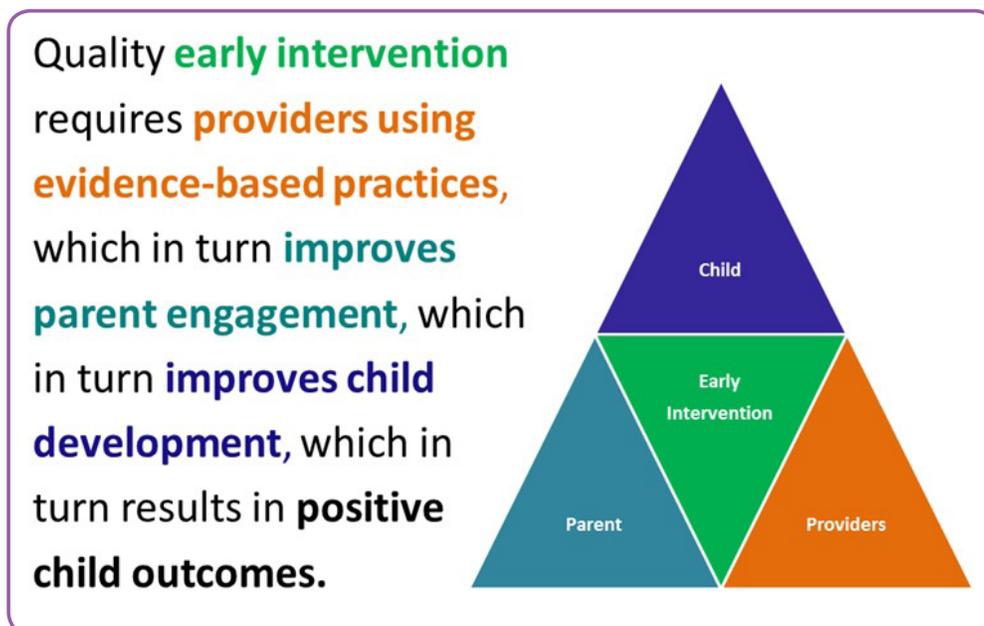
The U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs requires each state to develop a five year plan to improve child outcomes in at least one of the three areas. The five year plan is called a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). The SSIP goal is to improve the quality of early intervention services provided to children and families participating in First Steps.

The SSIP consists of three phases:

- Phase I - Analysis
- Phase II - Plan
- Phase III - Implementation and Evaluation

Phase I was submitted to OSEP March 27, 2015. The report contained a comprehensive analysis of First Steps data and infrastructure. Stakeholders helped the state identify the following measureable goal for the SSIP: to improve social and emotional outcomes for children enrolled in First Steps by the time they exit the program. To help the state meet its improvement goals, stakeholders also helped select levels of improvement activities.

During the next five years, the state will use a child outcome pilot project to monitor and measure children's progress in First Steps.



To review the full Phase I report and listen to a recorded presentation on the SSIP, go to [www.dese.mo.gov/special-education/state-performance-plan](http://www.dese.mo.gov/special-education/state-performance-plan) under 2015 Submission in the Part C – ages Birth to 3 (First Steps) section.

# Cost Effective Service Delivery Model

In 2008, the First Steps program began implementing a transdisciplinary approach to services using a model called Early Intervention Team (EIT). In a transdisciplinary team model, providers work together to support the family and outcomes are based on the family's daily routines and activities; in comparison to a traditional therapy model where multiple providers see the child individually and outcomes are based on test scores. Each EIT is required to have at least one Special Instructor, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Speech Pathologist and Service Coordinator. The development of statewide teams was gradual over a five-year period of time in order to educate the early intervention community, disseminate information and develop regional plans. By July 2014, 99% of all new families in First Steps were assigned to teams.

In 2015, a study\* was conducted to analyze the cost of First Steps services to determine if services delivered in the transdisciplinary team model were more cost effective than services delivered in the traditional therapy model. Statewide fiscal data for direct services, EIT meetings and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings from the past six years (i.e., 2009 through 2014) were analyzed to identify trends.

Results of the study indicate the transdisciplinary team model is more cost effective than a traditional therapy model. The results also indicate services delivered in a transdisciplinary team model are more personalized given an increase in the amount of dietary/nutrition, social work, translation, counseling, health and vision services.

\*To review the 2015 study on the First Steps Service Delivery Model, go to [www.dese.mo.gov/special-education/first-steps/first-steps-resources](http://www.dese.mo.gov/special-education/first-steps/first-steps-resources) under the Missouri Research and Demonstration Projects section.

## First Steps Child Count and Cost

	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15
December 1 Child Count *	4,539	5,024	4,999	4,988	5,388
December 1 Child Count Percent of Change	8%	11%	-0.5%	0%	7.5%
Total Children Served in FY **	9,864	10,659	11,194	11,613	12,720
Total Cost per Child ***	\$4,057	\$3,770	\$3,374	\$3,243	\$3,100
Direct Service Cost per Child ****	\$2,886	\$2,670	\$2,380	\$2,294	\$2,251

\* Total number of children with an active IFSP on December 1

\*\* Total number of children who had some type of First Steps service (evaluation, IFSP meeting, or direct service)

\*\*\* Total cost per child including administrative, training, testing and direct service costs

\*\*\*\* Direct service cost per child including evaluation, IFSP meeting, direct service and mileage



205 Jefferson St. P.O. Box 480  
 Jefferson City, Mo. 65102-0480  
 Phone: 573-522-8762 Fax: 573-526-4404  
 E-mail: [sefirststeps@dese.mo.gov](mailto:sefirststeps@dese.mo.gov)

Website: [www.dese.mo.gov/special-education/first-steps](http://www.dese.mo.gov/special-education/first-steps)



The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, or disability in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to Department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Office of the General Counsel, Coordinator – Civil Rights Compliance (Title VI/Title IX/504/ADA/Age Act), 6th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-526-4757 or TTY 800-735-2966; fax number 573-522-4883; email [civilrights@dese.mo.gov](mailto:civilrights@dese.mo.gov).