

PARENT CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for First Steps Families ❖ Spring 2014

Early Childhood Outcomes

First Steps services are designed to make the most of each child's potential, as well as strengthen the family's ability to help their child. Parents of young children in First Steps want to be sure First Steps services are helping their child develop and learn. Parents can participate in discussing how services meet the needs of their child through three Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) measured for every child in the United States who receives early intervention. These outcomes help show how a child is developing and participating in activities at home or in the community.

ECO focuses on what a child can do in his or her everyday routines and activities. The information parents can provide to professionals is invaluable and can guide professionals in determining how the services they are providing are meeting the child's needs. The following questions can help parents consider information for ECO:

Outcome #1: *Gaining positive social emotional skills, including social relationships.* This outcome measures how children interact and play with their family, other adults, and other children.

- How does my child relate to family members, close family friends, caregivers, and strangers?
- How does my child show her feelings?
- How does my child calm down when upset?
- How does my child show he understands social rules, such as sharing and taking turns?

Outcome #2: *Learning and using new knowledge and skills.* This outcome measures how children learn and use basic language/communication skills such as counting and problem-solving which prepares them to be successful in kindergarten.

- How does my child copy others' actions or try to learn new things?
- How does my child try to solve problems?
- How does my child demonstrate an understanding of concepts such as numbers and shapes?
- How does my child communicate her thoughts and ideas?

Outcome #3: *Using appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.* This outcome measures how children gradually become more independent by learning how to move from place to place, feed themselves, and take care of basic needs.

- How does my child get from place to place?
- How does my child let me know he wants something?
- How does my child let me know she needs help?
- How does my child help with dressing or undressing, using the bathroom, and brushing his teeth?

By learning more about ECO, parents can gain confidence in their ability to observe their child, understand how their child functions compared to other children who are the same age and increase their ability to contribute to IFSP discussions. When parents get involved, they help their child to be an active and successful participant in their family, community and school.



A Missouri Family's Story

By John of Columbia, MO *

Hello, my name is John. I am a first grader and six years old. This summer I learned to ride my bike. For years my mom would always tell me that when I got older I could ride my bike to kid's houses and give them speech, occupational and physical therapy because I have learned so well from my little brother Henry's therapists. Henry is four. When he was one he started to get services from First Steps. Gerti, Kim, Susan and Nicole all came to the house. I would wait excitedly at the window as they came up the drive anticipating the fun we would have. We helped Henry move, use his hands and talk. When I was younger I wanted to invite these friends to my birthday parties. There were two of them during the First Step years. I became a great helper. I got excited for any chance to celebrate my brother's successes, the sitting up, the crawling, the walking, the bubble blowing, the playing with all the fun toys and finally the talking. I knew if I shared enthusiasm and joy that my brother Henry would have more successes. I have always been great, even better than my mom, at knowing what Henry is saying. I help him do so many things like take turns, build things, pay attention, and communicate. I know these things come naturally to me and that for Henry, he has to work hard. But, he does work hard!

Henry is getting stronger and is a better talker now. I can play with him at the park, swim with him in the pool and read him books. He comes to my soccer games and comes to eat lunch with me at my school. Henry is too big for First Steps now, but I still love to go to his speech therapy sessions at the office with Ms. Carrie and Cole and to see him ride his horse, Yogi, at Cedar Creek. I still consider Henry's First Steps therapists important people in my life. Last summer when I learned to ride my bike, Henry learned to ride his trike at the same time on the blacktop behind Russell School. I cheered and cheered. I am one of Henry's best cheerleaders. Lucky thing is that we both have great cheerleaders. Henry and I have four older siblings, Casey, Jolene, Silas and Claire whose cheers also echo off of the Russell School.

*Written by John with support and assistance from his mother, Tara.

Just for Fun...

All By Myself

Tiny hands sometimes have difficulty turning the pages of a book. To make this task easier, board books (books with pages made of sturdy cardboard) can be adapted with commonly found objects to allow children to read independently. For example, try attaching popsicle sticks to each page of a board book with glue to make the pages easier to turn.

My Favorite Books

Creating a personal book can help hold the attention of a child who has trouble staying focused on a book. To create a personalized book, slip printed images of family members, favorite places, or preferred toys into page protectors. Put the page protectors with pictures into a three-ring binder. Page fluffers — large tabs used to separate pages like those described above — can be added to make turning the pages easier. Enjoy the book with your child!



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