

PROVIDER CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for First Steps Service Providers ♦ Summer 2009

Supporting Families: An Important Goal of Early Intervention

As early interventionists, therapists and other professionals understand the importance of engaging families and building families' confidence and competence in caring for (and nurturing the development of) young children with disabilities or developmental delays.

In April 2009, key stakeholders in the Missouri First Steps program came together as a follow-up to their initial 2007 meeting. Anne Lucas, technical assistance specialist, and Joicey Hurth, associate director of the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC), helped the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in facilitating this year's meeting. Lucas and Hurth presented "Seven Key Principles: Looks Like/Doesn't Look Like," a document prepared in 2008 by the Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments that describes what supporting families "looks like" in practice:

Principle 3: *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. Key concepts include:*

- *EI providers engage with the adults to enhance confidence and competence in their inherent role as the people who teach and foster the child's development*

- *Families are equal partners in the relationship with service providers*
- *Mutual trust, respect, honesty and open communication characterize the family-provider relationship*

Implementation of this principle is accomplished when early interventionists use professional behaviors that build trust and rapport with families; value and understand their roles as consultant and coach; and provide informational, material and emotional support to enhance families' natural role as the primary people who foster their children's learning and development. This also includes helping families identify natural learning opportunities in daily activities, involving families in discussions about what they want to do and enjoy doing, allowing families to determine success toward achieving outcomes, and celebrating competency and success.

For more information about the Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments and the "Seven Key Principles" document, go to <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/EITEAMpage.htm> or visit the family-centered services section of the NECTAC Web site at <http://www.nectac.org/topics/families/families.asp>.

WebSPOE Tips: Mileage Reimbursement

1. Mileage reimbursement rate increase

The provider mileage rate increased to \$0.47 per mile on July 1; there was no change to the invoice form. Providers must submit only one monthly invoice for the total miles driven in providing services to First Steps families. The invoice is available online at <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/Mileage.html>.

2. Mileage reimbursement documentation

Provider mileage is paid only for travel to the natural environment. Each provider mileage claim must correspond to an active service authorization for the provider and must match a service delivery date for that authorization. Mileage logs should be completed for all miles claimed, be maintained by the provider or the provider's agency, and be available to DESE upon request. Detailed instructions and an example of a tracking form are available at <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/Mileage.html>.



Early Intervention Teams (EIT)

Please visit the new EIT page on the First Steps Web site at <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/EITEAMpage.htm>. This page contains information on EIT definitions, stakeholder meetings, national research, professional organizations and other resources related to teams.

EIT Spotlight

The following information comes from the Southeast Missouri regional team:

The team has been in place since early in the summer of 2008 and currently serves 10 children. Three team members are independent providers enrolled on the Matrix, and one is enrolled through an agency.

All of the team members live in the same community and have been providing First Steps services to children for a number of years. They

have also worked together professionally both in and out of the First Steps program.

As one team member said, "We have always tried to work together informally in a transdisciplinary approach when we have served on the same IFSP team, so taking the next step to EI teaming and the primary service provider model was very natural for us." Another team member agreed and added, "When professionals communicate frequently and work together with the children and families, everyone benefits."

Scheduling monthly meetings can sometimes be a challenge because of busy schedules and the fact that most members have responsibilities outside of the teaming pilot. However, flexibility and a commitment toward working together have ensured success for this EIT. The real success, though, is evident in the satisfaction families have expressed with this model and in the progress children have made.

New SPOE Contractors

On July 1, contract changes occurred in four of the 10 SPOE regions. An updated map and contact information are available online at <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps>.

Region 1: Greater St. Louis

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1215 Fern Ridge Parkway, Suite 101
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Region 2: St. Louis County

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Region 5: Greater Kansas City

Daulton Group
230 Phelps Road, Suite H
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Region 10: Southeast

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