

PARENT CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for First Steps Families ❖ Summer 2013

Parent Participation in First Steps Interagency Councils

Parents are vital participants in early intervention. Your contributions are invaluable at the:

- Individual level: where you are intimately involved in determining the early intervention services your child receives; and
- Organizational level: where you can be involved in determining policies and practices for the First Steps program by participating on a council for early intervention.

Missouri First Steps has two councils that require parent membership:

Regional Interagency Coordinating Councils (RICCs): Ten RICCs have been organized throughout the state to assist the System Point of Entry (SPOE) with the evaluation of the effectiveness of the First Steps system within the region. RICC membership includes parents of children with disabilities, service providers, community partners, and local representatives of programs serving children and families.

State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC): One state council has been organized to advise and assist the First Steps program with the state and federal requirements. The SICC meets four times a year, usually in Jefferson City. SICC membership includes parents of children with disabilities, service providers and state agencies serving children and families.



How do parents join the Interagency Coordinating Councils?

Parents interested in joining a RICC or the SICC, should contact their Service Coordinator or SPOE office. RICC members are selected by the SPOE and SICC members are appointed by the Governor. Members of both councils are expected to participate in quarterly meetings, serve on the council for a period of time and share experiences and opinions.

Why is it important for parents to serve on Interagency Coordinating Councils?

Your opinion is important. Parent members have a wonderful opportunity to support other council members' understandings about the challenges, perceptions, and concerns parents have as they help children learn and grow. The feedback from parents provides a rich and useful source of information for each council.

As a council member, you can help to advise the council on its activities, review policy, and establish goals. You will be in an excellent position to help the council make better decisions about how children learn and how families can be involved.

Remember, your voice needs to be heard and will benefit the growth and development of all children at the regional or state level.

For more information about Missouri's State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC), go to:
<http://dese.mo.gov/se/sicc/>

For more information about a Regional Interagency Coordinating Council (RICC), go to:
<http://dese.mo.gov/se/sicc/RICCContactInformation.html>



A Missouri Family's Story

By Scott of Sikeston, MO

My family has used First Steps for about nine years. When we received our first foster care daughter at seven months old, she weighed 11 pounds. She had failed to thrive because she was left in a car seat. Her only stimulation was to be put on the floor for changing and a bottle propped up for feeding.

We did not have much guidance from the doctors on what to do for her. We contacted First Steps for assistance. The speech therapist who worked with our daughter taught her to speak and helped with the issues she had with textures. She would use simple things like running a spoon down her tongue or balling up a piece of bread into a tight ball to stimulate our foster daughter. These helped her to want to eat more. The speech therapist also taught my wife and me how to work with our foster daughter using different play therapies to help with stimulation so she would thrive.

After First Steps worked with her until she was three, she no longer qualified to go on into early childhood special education. She is a bright little girl who has overcome her rough start in life. I cannot say enough good things about First Steps. We have utilized First Steps for our own children, as well as, the foster children who have come, and will come, to live in our home.

Just for Fun...Tactile Books

Early literacy is important for every child. However, many children face challenges in viewing, focusing on, or manipulating books. There are many easy do-it-yourself book adaptations that can be very useful in developing and supporting these early skills.

Here are two do-it-yourself techniques to try with your child:

Tactile Picture Book:

Use fabric scraps, sandpaper, bubble wrap, yarn, or other tactile materials to heighten a child's engagement with a book. Cut materials to the size and shape of a picture in a board book and attach the materials with hot glue.

This can enrich any child's reading experience, but is particularly useful with children who are blind, have low vision, or who need extra sensory input to focus on a book.



Tactile Word Book:

Underline a word in a board book with a line of colored school glue.

This allows children to locate and follow text with their sense of touch. For many children, adding tactile input makes text easier to track and supports early literacy skills.

If a board book includes large letters, a line of colored school glue on the letters can also be used to help children trace letters with their pointer finger, an important pre-writing skill.

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