

PARENT CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for First Steps Families ❖ Winter 2013

First Steps' goal is the same as yours: To make sure that families have the necessary supports, services, and resources that they need to raise healthy, happy and successful children.

Families of children with disabilities often need information about the disability of their child, early intervention and school services, local policies, funding sources, transportation, medical facilities, and much more. Finding resources in the community is the first step to building family strength and to helping parents become confident in the ability to provide for their child's needs. Here are some suggestions for parents:

- learn as much as you can about your child's disability,
- find programs to help your child,
- talk to other parents of children with disabilities, and
- join a support group.



First Steps families are introduced to more information through contacts with professionals and other families.

The resources below have been identified because they address different support, strategies, and resources parents need to be active participants in their child's growth and development as well as keeping their family strong and healthy.

2-1-1 – United Way's 2-1-1 is available by dialing 2-1-1 on your land line and some cell phones. 2-1-1 offers referrals and information in the following area: basic and emergency needs, work initiatives, physical and mental health resources, support for seniors and those who have disabilities, support for children, youth and families. 2-1-1 is also available by calling toll free 1-800-427-4626 or go to: www.211helps.org

Division of Mental Health / Developmental Disabilities – The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DD) serves a population that has developmental disabilities such as intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, head injuries, autism, epilepsy, and certain learning disabilities. For information on eligibility and services go to: <http://dmh.mo.gov/dd/facilities/eligibility.htm>

Missouri Family to Family Resource Center – The Family to Family Resource Center offers free information and referral services for families of children and adults with disabilities and special health care needs. Resources include Sharing Our Strengths (SOS), Missouri's parent to parent/peer support network, and a Family Volunteer and Leadership System. Additional information is available by calling toll free 1-800-444-0821 or go to: www.mofamilytofamily.org

Governor's Council on Disability Resource Directory – The Council publishes the Directory of Resources for Missourians with Disabilities. The directory lists programs and services of state and local offices, private agencies and other organizations serving people with disabilities. The directory is available at: http://disability.mo.gov/resource_search/

Missouri Assistive Technology – The mission of Missouri Assistive Technology is to increase access to assistive technology for Missourians with all types of disabilities, of all ages. A descriptions of the loan programs and assistance is available at: <http://at.mo.gov/index.html>

Parents As Teachers – The mission of Parents As Teachers is to provide the information, support and encouragement parents need to help their children develop optimally during the crucial early years of life. Additional information is available by calling toll free 1-866-PAT4YOU (1-866-728-4968) or go to: www.ParentsAsTeachers.org

A Missouri Family's Story

By Joye of Laquey, MO

First Steps is the most amazing, informative, and supportive program that we have ever been involved with! Our fourth child Levi was born with several heart conditions and could not suck a bottle. He had several abdominal issues and had to have part of his colon removed, an ostomy put in, and later, a g-tube put into his stomach because he couldn't eat any other way. Levi also has Down Syndrome and issues that co-inside with this. He was in the hospital for so long after he was born; he had not developed any motor skills at all. He just laid there.

Now, thanks to the First Steps program and the providers that they have connected us with, he can now sit up by himself and use his hands to pick things up and hold them. He can roll across the floor to get toys and we are now working on leg strength so that one day he can learn to crawl, and eventually, learn to walk.

Without First Steps, we would have been so lost when Levi was first born! We had no previous knowledge about any of his conditions or what we needed to do to help him. First Steps led us through each and every process with the caring and knowledge we needed to ease our worries, doubts, and concerns. Thank you so much for this wonderful program, and please, do whatever it takes to keep it up and running!

Just for Fun...Color Cards

Materials

- Construction paper
- Black marker
- Scissors
- Clear contact paper (or clear plastic wrap and tape)

Directions

1. Make up two sets of cards from construction paper.
2. Start with only a few colors, working your way up to the nine basic colors (red, green, blue, brown, yellow, orange, purple, black, and white).
3. If you like, write the names of each color on the card.
4. Cover the cards with clear contact paper (or clear plastic wrap and tape and then tape all four sides so that each construction paper card is fully enclosed with the plastic covering)
5. Spread the cards out on a table and begin by picking up one of the cards and saying, "I have a red card. Can you hand me the other red card?"
6. After a while, your child will enjoy matching the cards all by herself.
7. Store the cards in a small Ziploc bag when not in use.



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