



Families play an integral role in the development of children. The First Steps system provides families the tools they need to help their children be successful.

Contact your local First Steps System Point of Entry (SPOE) office for more information by calling toll free:

866-583-2392

Missouri First Steps Program

The goal of First Steps is to make sure that the family has the necessary supports, services and resources needed to raise a healthy, happy and successful child. Family members know their needs best and have the greatest influence on the child's development. They know the child's **likes, dislikes, family activities and routines**. They know which daily routines flow smoothly and which are more difficult, and they can prioritize their needs.

The First Steps system is responsive to these priorities and helps the family:

- Understand the child's needs.
- Increase the child's participation in family and community life.
- Obtain the assistance needed to deal with situations related to the child's development.
- Provide the best conditions for the child to learn.



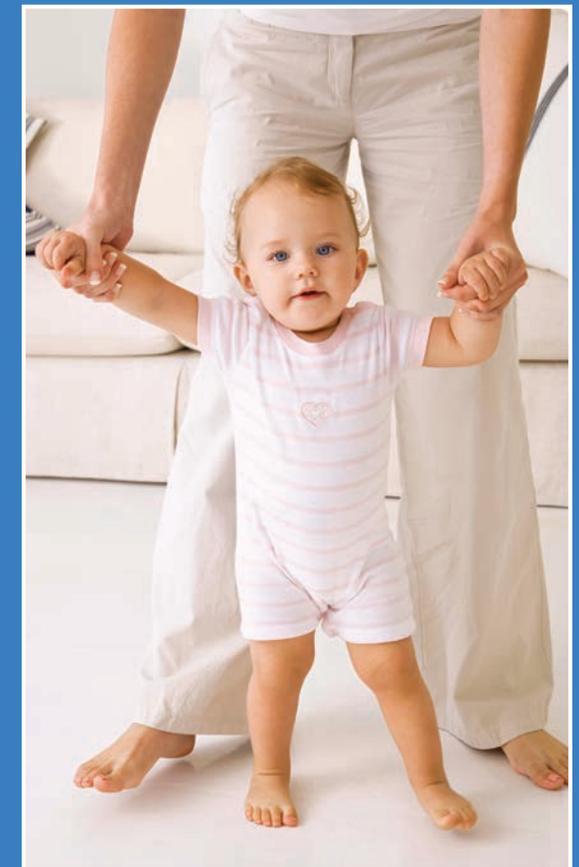
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Missouri First Steps Early Intervention

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

How Do Families Find Out About First Steps?

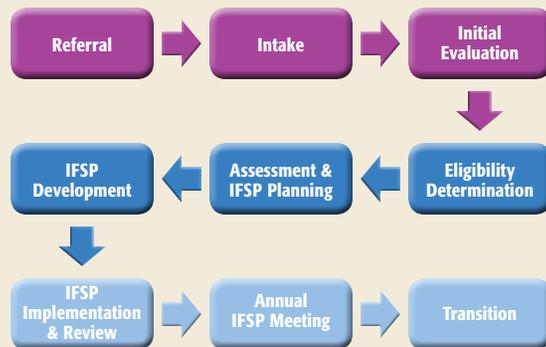
Parents may be referred to First Steps by their child's doctors, hospital staff, social-service agency caseworkers, the Parents as Teachers program or other public health entities. Parents may also contact First Steps directly if they are concerned about their child's development.

When a referral is received by the **System Point of Entry (SPOE)**, a **service coordinator** is assigned. The service coordinator contacts the family within two business days and schedules an appointment to discuss concerns and family priorities.

The service coordinator is responsible for:

- Meeting with the family to explain the First Steps program.
- Coordinating with various professionals to conduct any initial evaluations or assessments.
- Gathering all pertinent information in order to determine eligibility.
- Scheduling the initial meeting (if the child is eligible) to develop a plan within 45 days of the referral.

The Early Intervention Process



Who Is Eligible for Services?

Children between the ages of **birth and 36 months** who either 1) have a diagnosed physical or mental condition associated with developmental disabilities (such as Down syndrome, spina bifida or cerebral palsy), or 2) have a condition with a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay or disability (such as a very low birth weight child who has experienced intracranial bleeding or ventilator dependency), or 3) are functioning at half the developmental level expected for a child of equal age in one or more of the following areas: communication, adaptive, physical (including vision and hearing), cognitive or social/emotional.

Eligibility is determined through an **initial evaluation and assessment**. This includes the

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service coordinator collecting information about the child's birth, medical and developmental history and/or an evaluator administering a test to determine the child's current abilities. The evaluation is typically conducted in the family's home or another natural environment.

Once a child is determined eligible for First Steps, the service coordinator will schedule an **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)** team meeting to determine the family's priorities, develop outcomes and identify needed services. Each eligible child is also assigned to a group of professionals called an **Early Intervention Team (EIT)** that will provide the services and supports outlined in the IFSP.



How Are Services Provided?

First Steps is a **family focused program** designed not only to serve the needs of the child but also the family as a whole. Caregiver participation is essential for effective services and is the primary focus of those who serve the family. First Step professionals meet the child and the family in their natural environment where the child typically lives, learns and plays. The number and types of professionals involved with each family depend on the needs and outcomes identified in the IFSP. Some examples of professionals include occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, special instructors and audiologists.

When Is the Plan Reviewed?

At a minimum, the IFSP will be reviewed every **six months** and updated annually. Other meetings might occur as the needs of the child and family change. As the child approaches age 2, a meeting will be held to prepare the child and the family for transitioning out of First Steps when the child turns 3 years old.