

## FIRST STEPS PROVIDERS

Each family in the First Steps system is provided with a team of specialists who work with them. Each team should look a little different, depending upon the needs of the child, and the priorities of the family. As you think about who should be on your team, consider your concerns and priorities for your family and your child. Work with your Intake Coordinator to identify specialists who will be able to address these issues with you.

The following are descriptions about various professionals in early intervention and what their area of specialization is.

### The Service Coordinator

A Service Coordinator is an individual on your early intervention team who will work with and for you and your family. With the assistance of your Service Coordinator through the IFSP Team process, together you will develop outcomes, identify appropriate services and coordinate these with you and other professionals. Together, you and the Service Coordinator work to monitor, review and evaluate your family's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). You and the Service Coordinator plan together as your child approaches transitions to different services, providers or settings.

Your Service Coordinator has experience working with families of children with special needs. Service Coordinators have knowledge of early childhood development, and understand the local early intervention service system. Your Service Coordinator works with you to ensure that you understand your procedural safeguards, and that you are an active participant in all of the planning, review and service selections that occur for your child and family.

One of the key outcomes in service coordination is to ensure that each legal guardian/parent is well informed of their rights, opportunities and responsibilities and that you gradually assume more of these advocacy, planning and coordinating activities on your own. Together, you and your Service Coordinator will define individual needs for service coordination and plan these activities in a way that is family-centered and supportive to your family's schedule and lifestyle. In the First Steps early intervention system, you will initially have an Intake Coordinator who meets the same level of qualifications, background and experience as a Service Coordinator and is responsible to assist you in the eligibility determination. If so, planning will begin for the initial IFSP development activities. The Intake Coordinator will also discuss the importance of ongoing service coordination. You will make a selection of a local Service Coordinator to work with you as you participate in the First Steps system.

*Service coordination is the only one, consistent service that ALL families with a child eligible for early intervention receive.*

*Your service coordinator is responsible for:*

- *Helping you obtain the services you need.*
- *Coordinating early intervention services with other services your family is getting.*
- *Making sure your child and family get all the services in your IFSP.*
- *Making sure services are delivered on time.*
- *Helping you find service providers.*
- *Informing you about advocacy services.*
- *Making sure six month reviews and annual evaluations of your IFSP are completed.*
- *Helping you make any changes to your IFSP that may be needed between the six month reviews and annual evaluations.*

You will select the Service Coordinator once your child is determined eligible for First Steps. This individual works together with you and the Intake Coordinator as the first IFSP is developed. From that point on, the Service Coordinator is the lead team member that you should rely upon for problem solving, assistance and IFSP activities. If you feel that your Service Coordinator or any other early intervention professional isn't meeting your needs, you may request a different provider at any point in time.

Your Service Coordinator will assist you in reviewing and making informed decisions about financing services for your child and family. This includes understanding your private health insurance coverage or Medicaid benefits plan. Your Service Coordinator may also assist you in arranging for various assessments or evaluations for your child. Your Service Coordinator will also work with you to identify and schedule your family's IFSP team. Your Service Coordinator will also have a copy of your county's local Service Matrix that details the providers available to serve you and your child, and to monitor these services through the IFSP with you. They can also help you get linked with other parents or parent support groups, advocacy organizations or other information sources that you identify as important to your family.

Finally, your Service Coordinator works closely with you to identify planning needs for various transitions that may affect services for your child and family. These transitions include consideration of medical or surgical appointments that your child has. It could also include family events such as the birth of new baby or employment changes. Service delivery changes such as moving from home to a center-based program or transition as your child leaves the First Steps system are other times your Service Coordinator can provide you with assistance.

Some children will be eligible for other state-sponsored programs that also provide some sort of service coordination or care coordination. Each of these programs has a little different focus and, as a result, their service/care coordinators may have different skills and abilities than a First Steps Service Coordinator. Some of these skills may be more appropriate to your needs. The goal of each program is that you have the support and assistance you need. Several CSHCS and Healthy Families service/care coordinators are also credentialed as First Steps Service Coordinators. This is so they can help you with both programs. Sometimes it is more appropriate to have two Service/Care Coordinators -- one who you identify as the "lead" coordinator who works with support and back-up from the shadowing Service/Care Coordinator. You will discuss these issues with your First Steps Service Coordinator and make sure that these arrangements are spelled out in your child's IFSP.

## The Physician

Children who enroll in First Steps must have a primary care physician. This may be a pediatrician or a family practice physician. The Physician will assess your child's health, growth and development. They will coordinate various medical evaluation services for your child and provide follow-up medical care. Diagnosis and treatment may involve consultation with other medical pediatric specialists. Your child's "medical home" should coordinate these medical consultations and interpret the results to you. The Physician is responsible for guiding you to services that may help you with your child's medical problems. These could include:

- Ophthalmologists - specialists in eye conditions
- Otolaryngologists - ear, nose, and throat specialists
- Orthopedists - bone specialists
- Neurologists - specialists in the functioning of the nervous system
- Geneticists - specialists in hereditary conditions
- Rehabilitation specialists - experts in the medical care of children with chronic health conditions
- Cardiologists - specialists in heart conditions
- Endocrinologists - specialists in glandular functions

The Physician may consult with other service providers and maintain regular contact with you. They will talk with you about your child's condition, explain how your child's medical problems may affect his/her functioning and what these problems might mean for the future. Depending upon your child's individual needs and the medical services available within your community, you may actually use a Family Practice Physician for pediatric care for your child. In either case, the Pediatrician or the Family Practice Physician serves as your child's "medical home" or "primary care physician" and is an important member of your IFSP Team.

**Medical Services** include limited testing and consultations that are required to either determine your child's eligibility or to assist in IFSP development. The First Steps system is not responsible for regular well child care, immunizations or medical services including surgery or prescriptions. Families may access these services through their private health coverage, Hoosier Healthwise, Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS), Maternal and Child Health projects (MCH) or local clinics or health department services.

*First Steps requires that each child enrolled for early intervention services have a primary medical care home. Depending upon your child's individual needs and the medical services available within your community, you may have a Pediatrician or a Family Practice Physician for pediatric care for your child. This individual serves as your child's "medical home" or "primary care physician" and is an important member of your IFSP Team. A major role of the medical home provider is to coordinate all of the specialty care that a child receives, as well as to make sure that routine well child care visits and immunizations happen on schedule.*

## **Assistive Technology Devices and Services**

*Any provider of First Steps early intervention services may assist the IFSP team to recommend and obtain assistive technology devices for your child, based upon his/her needs.*

Assistive technology (AT) includes a variety of items, equipment or materials. AT is used with individual children to increase, maintain or improve their functional capabilities. Assistive technology ranges from orthotics, to specially adapted toothbrushes, to specially designed devices to assist with a child's hearing or vision, eating utensils, specialized feeding chairs and positioning aides such as bolsters and wedges. These needs may be short-term in nature (such as a bathing support), or more long term devices such as wheelchairs or hearing aides. Assistive technology can also include adaptations made to toys and learning materials that permit your child to be more successful in their play and developmental activities.

### **The Audiologist**

The Audiologist is concerned with your child's hearing, and works closely with a Speech/Language Pathologist to find out if there are communication problems and plan for their improvement.

*An Audiologist will test your child's ability to hear different sounds. They can determine through a variety of tests if your child has a hearing loss and what the degree of this loss may be.*

An Audiologist will test your child's ability to hear different sounds. They can determine through a variety of testing approaches if your child has a hearing loss and what the degree of this loss may be. If your child has a hearing disability, the Audiologist will look for reasons for the hearing loss. They may be able to explain how your child's hearing is likely to progress. The Audiologist may recommend special communication aides for your child. You will learn how to operate this equipment and get help to maintain this equipment in good use for your child. This specialist can also talk with you about how to manage your child's hearing problem, and how to communicate with your child.

**Audiological Services** can identify if your child has a hearing loss, how significant this loss is and what it means for your child's communication and general development. Audiological services also include training your child in specific ways of communication, fitting your child's with aides to help them hear or communicate better, and to maintain the devices in good working order and make sure that you know how to operate and care for this equipment.

*The Developmental Therapist is trained in infant/toddler development and ways to promote learning and development. This area of child development is called "cognition" or cognitive development.*

### **The Developmental Therapist (Special Educator)**

Your child's early learning experiences are critical for his or her future development. The Developmental Therapist is trained in infant/toddler development and ways of promoting learning and development. This area of child development is termed "cognition" or cognitive development. This specialist understands the implications of disability or developmental delay upon the normal progression of development. They are skilled in working with families of children with special needs. They

work closely with other specialists to ensure that comprehensive early intervention services are provided.

This professional will work with your family to help your child develop the skills needed for learning. They can help you monitor your child's developmental milestones. The Developmental Therapist looks at how your child understands the environment. During an assessment, the Developmental Therapist observes your child's learning style, communication, and social skills. This professional will talk with you about activities that you and your child can do together, and will help develop a series of developmental activities that encourage your child to actively explore the environment.

**Developmental Therapy or Special Instruction** includes designing learning environments and activities to meet the individual developmental needs of your child. This service should include working with you to develop activities that will promote development in your child that you and other caregivers can do throughout the day with your child.

## Health Service Providers

Health services are provided to eligible children so that the child will benefit from other IFSP services. They are provided during the time that other EI services are being provided. Health services would include services such as clean intermittent catheterization, tracheostomy care, tube feeding, the changing of dressings or colostomy collection bags, and other health services. Individuals performing these services for your child must be trained and supervised by another health professional, usually a nurse or physician.

**Health services** also include helping your child's physician work with other service providers concerning the special health care needs of your child. These all need to be addressed in the course of providing early intervention services, and in monitoring these services.

## The Nurse

The Nurse is responsible for assessing the health of your child and family. A Nurse may also provide nursing care to prevent and improve health problems related to your child's disability. The Nurse works with you to promote the best possible health for your family and for the development of your child. The Nurse may ask you about your child's general health, medications, eating habits, bowel and bladder functioning, exercise and sleep patterns. The Nurse will assess your child's growth and development from this and other information.

**Nursing services** are individual interventions conducted with the child and/or family that support the other early intervention services. These services ensure that the medical and health needs of your child are

*Health services may be necessary to enable a child to benefit from other early intervention services during the time the child is receiving the other early intervention services.*

*Nursing Services are individual interventions conducted with the child and/or family that support the other early intervention services and ensure that the medical and health needs of your child are included in your child's IFSP as appropriate*

*The Nutritionist is concerned with your child's food and nutritional requirements for good health.*

included in your child's IFSP as appropriate. The nurse may help you to plan and carry out the medical treatments to aid your child's development. A nurse may provide information about child rearing or health issues, or about ways to cope with your child's disabilities. Finally, a nurse may assist you in obtaining any health services you need.

## **The Nutritionist**

Good nourishment will help your child to benefit more from other services in the IFSP. The Nutritionist knows about the content of foods and can help you plan a special diet, if needed. The Nutritionists can make nutritional modifications and recommend foods and textures depending upon your child's special needs and feeding concerns.

The Nutritionist may assess your child's eating habits and feeding skills, to determine how these may affect your child's growth. The Nutritionist can help you to develop a menu plan, and will work with you to use this plan. The Nutritionist can advise you about budgeting and food selection, taking into account your family's financial situation and time limits. The Nutritionist works closely with you, your physician and other members of the IFSP team to coordinate nutritional activities with all other services that your child and/or family may be receiving.

**Nutrition services** under the First Steps system focuses on your child's specific nutritional needs, including the development of a nutrition plan that is individualized according to your child's disability. Nutrition services also help you to access other community services to carry out your nutritional outcomes. Many times, families with children enrolled in First Steps will also be eligible for the Women, Infant and Children's nutritional program, or WIC. The WIC program provides nutrition services that may also address the specific nutrition issues that your child has due to their disability as well as general nutrition and feeding issues.

*The Occupational Therapist helps your child master basic skills for daily living and independence. These areas are termed "fine motor" and "adaptive" skills.*

## **The Occupational Therapist**

This professional designs activities with you and your child which will develop adaptive skills such as feeding, walking and certain physical movements. The term "adaptive" includes activities such as toilet training, dressing and other self-care activities. The Occupational Therapist will also focus on your child's "fine motor" skills. Fine motor activities include feeding, play with small toys and finger and hand games that lead to pre-writing skills.

An Occupational Therapist will identify your child's strengths while noting the challenges that your child faces in carrying out daily tasks. Another way to look at this is that the occupational therapist will look at three things. First, what specific skills does your child have? Second,

what is the quality of these skills? Third, how much control and intent does your child have of their skills? The therapist may observe your daily routines with your child. You may be asked about your child's responses to various situations and how your child interacts with the family.

The Occupational Therapist may select or design special devices that will help your child develop the skills he or she needs. The therapist may suggest things to prevent or minimize the effects of a disability or developmental delay. The therapist will also suggest activities and tasks for you to do with your child in the normal course of your child's day. They will also work with other professionals or caregivers to share and monitor these activities.

**Occupational therapy** helps to develop adaptive or physical skills that will aid your child in their daily living and improve interactions with your child's physical and social world. Occupational therapy focuses on developing skills related to sensory-motor integration, coordination of movement, fine motor skills, self- help skills (feeding, dressing) and may include various adaptive devices or equipment that help your child in these activities.

## **The Physical Therapist**

The Physical Therapist may assess your child's motor or movement skills by watching your child at play or doing an activity. The Physical Therapist will plan a therapeutic exercise program together with your family that is enjoyable for both you and your child. The therapist may recommend or make special equipment and mobility devices or have these made. You will be provided with advice about adapting toys or play equipment and about other physical aids for your child. He/she may also recommend ways of modifying your home to help you care for your child, and may be able to help you in making these changes if you wish. The Physical Therapist is also able to teach you new techniques for physically handling and positioning your child.

Both the Physical Therapist and the Occupational Therapist are concerned with children's physical abilities. However, the Physical Therapist focuses on your child's gross motor skills or ability to move and effectively use his/her legs, arms and head. The Occupational Therapist usually focuses more on your child's fine motor skills. These are skills that your child uses to respond to what he/she sees, hears, feels, tastes, or smells by using his/her hands, fingers and mouth.

**Physical Therapy services** focus on instructional support and treatment of your child's physical disabilities that helps your child to improve the use of their bones, muscles, joints and nerves.

*The Physical Therapist focuses on your child's gross motor skills or the ability to move and effectively use his/her legs, arms and head.*

## The Psychologist

The Psychologist is concerned with your child's learning and social and emotional development. He/she may assess your child's developmental progress and provide recommendations for treatment or services. If assessing your child, the Psychologist will observe your child's behavior, and may carry out some psychological tests. These may be done with your family present so that you can explain how your child typically behaves.

*The Psychologist is concerned with your child's learning and social/emotional development. Psychological services primarily focus on working with problems in a child and family's living situation, which affect the child's utilization of early intervention services.*

After an assessment, the Psychologist provides information about your child's general functioning and social skills. The Psychologist can help you and others with managing your child's behavior. This professional can recommend games you can play and activities to do with your child to help him/her develop and learn.

The focus of **psychological services** is to work with problems in your living situation, which affect the child's utilization of early intervention services. This service may include the administration of psychological or developmental tests with your child. This may include other assessment procedures and interpreting these assessment results. The Psychologist may also show you how information about your child's behavior relates to learning, mental health and development. This professional can also plan and manage a program of psychological services. These services may include psychological counseling for your child and family, family counseling or consultation on child development, parent training and education programs specific to your child's developmental needs.

## The Social Worker

Social workers help with those concerns that relate to the developmental or special needs of your young child, and your family's ability to meet the needs of your child given these circumstances. A Social Worker is concerned with supporting your family and helping you to resolve any difficulties or concerns that are preventing or interfering with the ability of your child and/or family to participate in early intervention services. Social Workers provide family counseling, work with parent groups, coordinate services and can help link you with other community resources and services.

The Social Worker will want to hear about what you see as your child's strengths and needs and your goals for your child. The Social Worker may talk with you about your child and any difficulties that you may be having in relation to your child. He/she may suggest changes that might improve your family's situation, as well as how each family member can help in the care of your child. Together you and the Social Worker will identify family members, friends, and community resources that are available to assist and support you in caring for your child.

*Social Workers provide family counseling, work with parent groups, coordinate services, and help to link families to other community resources and services.*



The Social Worker may also help your family locate community services to meet your basic needs. The Social Worker may also provide counseling services related to your child's ability to utilize early intervention services. This professional may be able to link you with support groups for parents and support services such as respite care or child care.

**Social work services** support your family so that you can provide an optimum environment for your child.

## The Speech/Language Pathologist

The Speech/Language Pathologist is concerned with promoting your child's communication skills, focusing on difficulties with speech or language. This professional looks for early signs of communication problems. Communication development occurs in two primary ways -- receptive and expressive skills. "Receptive" skills are related to what your child can understand. "Expressive" skills are your child's way of communicating with you -- quieting to familiar voice sounds, smiling, babbling, eye contact, pointing, simple phrases or sentences. If you or someone else is concerned about your child's speech and/or language, the Speech/Language Pathologist can assess your child's language development and his/her ability to communicate. These findings will be shared with you and should be considered as your team develops IFSP outcomes. You should be involved with your child's therapy plan in an active way. The Speech/Language Pathologist will reassess your child's level of communication from time to time. This professional will consult with you and the other team members to help your child continue to develop his/her own communications skills. This may include the use of alternative communication approaches, such as American Sign Language, total communication or oral communication approaches. It might also include assistive technology such as hearing aides and other adaptive equipment devices.

**Speech and language therapy services** for your infant or toddler primarily focus on instructional support for your child, your family and other caregivers to enhance your child to communicate including all of the developmental skills that happen before your child actually "talks". If your child has a hearing loss, these services can include helping you to obtain and use various devices to help your child hear and communicate.

## Transportation

Transportation services make it possible for your child and family to participate in activities related to early intervention services. Transportation services may be used for assessment and evaluation services for eligibility determination and/or IFSP development. It also includes transportation necessary for your child to receive early intervention services addressed in the IFSP.

Communication development occurs in two primary ways: **receptive skills**- what your child understands- and **expressive skills** – your child's ability to communicate with you in a variety of ways.

Transportation services may include reimbursement for mileage and related costs to the family member OR to a private or public source of transportation selected by the family.

**Transportation services** include the cost of travel (mileage, parking fees, taxi or bus) and other supports that are necessary for your child and family to receive early intervention services.

## **Vision Services**

Vision Services include the evaluation and assessment of visual functioning as well as diagnosis of visual disorders, delays and abilities. Vision services also include referral for professional treatment, communication skills training and mobility training, including independent living skills. A licensed physician called an Ophthalmologist may provide these diagnostic services. For children with visual impairments, professionals specially trained in mobility (getting around safely and independently) may work with your child. These professionals are called "Orientation and Mobility Specialists". Often these specialists work with you in your home or other locations where your child spends time. This specialist makes certain that the environment is structured appropriately for your child and that he/she is learning to use any assistive technology devices that have been obtained for them. The mobility specialist will coordinate these activities with other professionals serving your child as well as your child's primary care physician.

**Vision services** focus primarily upon the identification of specific vision impairments, delays or abilities that affect your child's overall development. It does not include routine eye examinations or glasses that are for the sole purpose of correcting your child's vision.

*For children with visual impairments, professionals specially trained in mobility (getting around safely and independently) may work with your child.*