



First Steps Family Newsletter – July/August 2020

**Did you know?** Your Kentucky Early Intervention System, First Steps, serves an average of nearly 10,000 Kentucky families each year. Additionally, as of the date of this newsletter, we currently have 24,369 Individual Family Service Plan services in place for families across the Commonwealth. These services include PT, OT, speech, mental health and therapeutic services, as well as evaluations for our Kentucky families. First Steps has 15 different Points of Entry offices across the state, with over 140 service coordinators and almost 1,200 individual providers. Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, we have been forced to make some changes in the way we provide services. However, all First Steps services are still in place as we continue to serve families across the Commonwealth. (Cont'd on Pg. 2)

**Parent and Family Resources**



**What's open in Kentucky and when?** The Governor's [COVID-19 response site](#) has all the details and dates.

**Now that we can venture out, how do we do that and stay safe?** Check out [this info](#) from Zero to Three.

**Here are some [books to share](#) with your kids when your family is going through tough times.**

**Everyone wearing masks can be scary to toddlers and young children:** What should I be teaching about masks? Should I make my child wear a mask? Check out [this resource](#) for help with those questions and more about masks.

**Experiencing more toddler meltdowns since sheltering in place?** Try the [Feel-See-Do](#) method to help your child deal with the stress, new schedule and inconsistency we're currently experiencing. The Feel-See-Do approach focuses on *teaching*, rather than reacting to challenging behaviors.

**[Parenting in a Pandemic](#) has great tips to keep the calm at home.**

**Check out these 11 awesome [summer activities](#) for toddlers and preschoolers.**

**Find out what other services and assistance is available for families in Kentucky during the COVID-19 pandemic by going to the [Team Kentucky website](#).**

**Tips and strategies for overcoming Parental Burnout**

Parental Burnout (PBO) is a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion. It leaves parents feeling chronically fatigued often experiencing sleep and concentration problems. At its most extreme, parents with PBO will feel frustrated, helpless, hopeless and often resentful and believe that no matter how much they do, it will never be enough; that their efforts to be effective are futile. Parents experiencing PBO can have negative thoughts about their family as well as lowered self-esteem. PBO can lead to depression, chronic anxiety, illness, job loss, financial and relationship problems. For more info on PBO, check out the following links: 1-[PBO Barometer](#) 2-[This burnout is real. Give yourself grace.](#) 3-[Self-care musts to prevent PBO](#)



**Parent-to-Parent**

“The funny thing about having kids is that they are the reason we lose it and they are the reason we learn to hold it together.” – Anonymous

“Aaah, you’ve put your toddler to bed, now you can finally...Just kidding, he’s back up again.” – Simon C. Holland

“Perfect parents exist but they do not yet have kids.” – Unknown

“If you had asked me what the hardest part of fighting a global pandemic would be, I would have never guessed “Teaching elementary school math.” – Simon C. Holland

**2020 dates to be aware of:**

**July**

Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month

UV Safety Awareness Month

National Ice Cream Month

4-Independence Day

5-11-Nat'l Therapeutic Rec Week

15-National Hot Dog Day

28-Parent's Day

30-National Cheesecake Day

**August**

Children's Eye & Health Safety Month

National Breast Feeding Month

10-World Lion Day

17-National Non-Profit Day

27-National Aviation Day

25-National Banana Split Day

**Did You Know, Cont'd** –First Steps has worked in conjunction with the Department for Public Health and within the CDC guidelines to put some safeguards in place to help families stay safe throughout the state of emergency. Your First Steps State Lead Agency has worked tirelessly with the Point of Entry Offices to put together as many resources for families as possible. Through the bi-monthly newsletter, regular emails, and information from service coordinators, First Steps has tried to make sure that families know what to expect and stay informed of their rights and responsibilities. Many Providers have stayed up and running by providing tele-intervention sessions via remote or cyber communication (Zoom, Skype and other approved video conferencing programs). While not all providers are able to work within the tele-intervention guidelines, more providers are coming on board every day to help provide these services. Most of the world has had to change the way we approach everyday life, how we communicate and how we care for our families during this pandemic and First Steps is no different. To the best of our collective abilities, we have worked to embrace this new way of life and continue to forge ahead, providing services to the thousands of Kentucky families who so desperately need them. We thank each and every parent, family member, provider and service coordinator for their patience in working with us as we wait for the time when we can once again provide full face-to-face services. In the meantime, if you haven't checked out tele-intervention to see if it may be right for you and your family, we hope you will do so now. Unsure of what tele-intervention is? Check out [this link](#) that shows you step-by-step what it is, what to expect and why it might be the right fit for you and your family.

Many parents have contacted their service coordinators, providers and parent consultant to inquire about tele-intervention. Some have expressed concerns about even trying it. What we want you to remember is that a good early intervention session via remote or digital means should look the same as your typical home visit. To see what a tele-intervention session is like, see this [video link](#) in which a family has graciously allowed their session to be recorded.



**What all parents should know about tele-intervention/remote provider appointments:** Depending on your provider, tele-intervention may include coaching, routine-based intervention or new learning opportunities. Click [this link to see what Coaching](#) looks like. Tele-intervention could be an opportunity for you and your provider to meet your IFSP goals in a safe manner, even in the middle of the pandemic. Please remember the following:

- Early childhood intervention is a partnership between you and your provider. You can learn from one another via open, clear, respectful communication; whether that is in person or temporarily through a virtual connection.
  - Remote visits are new to both families and providers. It's a learning period for all, and you are both in a partnership to work on behalf of your child and create the best way to meet his or her needs during this time.
  - If you have any concerns, communicate them to your provider. Tell the provider what's working, and what's not working for you, your child and your family. Don't forget to respect the experience and opinion of the Provider.
  - You should be comfortable with any decisions you and your provider make about your child and the interventions being delivered. If you are not, do not agree to go forward. Remember you do have a choice.
  - **Most of all:** You can say "no thank you", "not right now" or "we need to go in a different direction."
- If you're unsure, concerned, change your mind or need more information, please contact your service coordinator or Point of Entry Office or the First Steps parent consultant. Your Kentucky Early Intervention System will do their best to meet your family's needs and respond to your questions and concerns in a timely manner as we navigate services in this new format. What you may not know is that many of us have children or close family members who have also needed these same services so we **do** understand your concerns and care about the wellness of all Kentucky families. *(Teleintervention definition content adapted from ecpecta.org)*

**From your First Steps Parent Consultant:** Hi, I'm Karen McCracken, the Parent Consultant with First Steps. I'm pleased to be able to support and advocate for families through Kentucky's Early Intervention System, First Steps. For the past year I've been blessed to be able to serve in this position. Each month I've listed my background, professional and parental experience so you could get to know me but what I want to do from here forward is let you know a little bit more about what makes me tick. Basically, I'm not that different than each of you. I'm a parent who has cried over and cared for my child; struggled, rejoiced, gotten angry, done happy dances in my kitchen, been frustrated and thankful. I've felt like pulling my hair out and pulling other people's hair out when it came to protecting my child. Been there, lived it, happy to talk to you more about it and more importantly, listen to you about what's going on in your world. I love to cook, garden, sing, pray, laugh and make others laugh. I have a passion for helping others who have gone through similar things I have gone through as a parent. If you have a concern and need help with your First Steps kiddo, parenting support, resources or have parent questions about First Steps, please call me at 502-564-4830 Ext. 4397 or send email to: [Karen.McCracken@ky.gov](mailto:Karen.McCracken@ky.gov). ~ Karen