



First Steps Family Newsletter – May/June 2020

**What are tele-intervention services?** Tele-intervention services are early intervention services provided through the internet. The provider and family must both be present in real time. These services are temporarily allowed during the COVID-19 pandemic based on a family’s needs, in place of face-to-face sessions and will not be offered once the current state of emergency ends or when it is announced for the general public to no longer social distance from one another, whichever comes first. Families and/or guardians must consent to and agree with all guidance from their Service Coordinators about tele-intervention. These services are voluntary and won’t impact your IFSP if you decide to use them. First Steps does understand that tele-intervention (cont’d on Pg. 2)

**Parent and Family Resources**



**Utilize play to help promote healthy development:** Use this At Home Parent and Child Activity Guide from the early intervention organization called “Zero to Three”: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3264-at-home-activity-guide>

**How do you maintain social distancing for your little ones?** Click this link for tips on how to manage social distancing when family and friends might want to be closer than 6 feet away from your adorable little ones. <https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/first-things/parenting-in-the-time-of-coronavirus/>

“**H is for Handwashing**” is the Sesame Street book on teaching little ones about handwashing. Click the link to download the free Sesame Street Communities online book to read to your kids. They also have links to hand washing songs, videos and games to teach to little ones and kids of all ages. <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/health/?activity=h-is-for-handwashing>

**Free Virtual Online events for children and families:** Check out this blog for a list of numerous free events on TV and online for you and your kids to tune into. They range from book readings, to plays, musical performances, music lessons, arts and crafts classes, to classes on exercise and language building skills. For ages ranging 1 to 99, there’s a little something for everyone. <https://www.commonssensemedia.org/blog/free-online-events-activities-kids-at-home-coronavirus>

**Self-Care Tips and Strategies for Parents and Caregivers**

Self-care is not selfish and certainly not indulgent, especially during times of stress and frequent change. Self-care is how we keep ourselves well enough to ensure we are mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically capable of caring for our young children, elderly adults and entire family. Here are some self-care tips: **#1**-Keep up with physical movement and exercise, indoors and outdoors. **#2**-Even if your home is crowded, find space every day for some time by yourself to breathe, decompress, lay down or just listen to your favorite music and meditate. **#3**-Keep in touch with your support system via chat, online or on the phone. Don’t keep things bottled up. Make time to share your thoughts, fears and feelings. **#4**-Don’t forget to have fun with your family. Games, music, dance and more can help keep your family laughing and help you make the most of your time together!



**Parent-to-Parent**

Cleaning your house when your kids are young and still growing up is like shoveling the sidewalk while you’re in the middle of a snow storm. ~ Phyllis Diller

Sure, sometimes I question my parenting, but to be honest, sometimes I question my child’s chiding. ~ Anonymous Mom

The quickest way for a parent to get a child’s attention is to sit down and look comfortable OR go to the bathroom and close the door. ~ Anonymous Dad



**2020 dates to be aware of:**

**May**

Mental Health Awareness Month

Lupus AwarenessMonth

Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month

National Barbeque Month

5-World Asthma Day

5-World Hand Hygiene Day

12 thru 18-Food Allergy Awareness Week

**June**

Autism Awareness Month

National Fireworks Safety Month

Home Safety Month

7 -National Cancer Survivor’s Day

13-Family Health & Fitness Day

27-PTSD Awareness Day

28 thru July 4-Deaf & Blind Awareness Week

**Tele-intervention cont'd**-is not for everyone. Any visits you miss will be made up once the crisis has passed! There should be no pressure placed upon parents or families to use the tele-intervention services nor any pressure placed on Providers to offer these services during this time. The world is not as it was a few months ago and while First Steps, your POE offices, Service Coordinators and Providers are all working hard to continue to serve our First Steps families, not every service can be provided in every region during the middle of the Covid-19 state of emergency. We ask everyone to be patient as we all face this temporary storm together. IF you are able and desire to choose tele-intervention for you and your family, please make sure this is coordinated through your POE office. Your Service Coordinator will go through the rights, responsibilities, procedures and guidelines with you. Each office has the responsibility to set this service up for you and each office is working hard to help their families. As part of that effort, the First Steps team has put together some tips for those choosing to partake of tele-intervention.

- **Prepare you environment:** 1-Choose a room that works well for the planned activity during tele-intervention. 2-Make sure there isn't a glare on the screen or too much bright light streaming into the room. 3-Have your materials for the session laid out ahead of time for easy access for you and your child. 4-Mute your cell phones, turn off radios, TV's, and eliminate other distractions.
- **Prepare Your Equipment and Connection:** 1-If using a computer, make sure the power strip is on and/or the plug is secure. Turn on the computer. 2-If using a smart phone or tablet, make sure they are adequately charged. 3-Make sure the camera and microphone are connected and working. 4-Log off of any other programs/windows/apps that are open on the computer/smart phone. 5-Log into the program you're using for the session. Don't wait till the last minute to make sure you have your log-in name and password ready. 6-Make sure other devices that use Wi-Fi in the house are turned off as other traffic will slow down your connection. 7-Have a cell phone number for the provider available just in case an internet connection cannot be made and you need to make other arrangements or cancel your scheduled session.
- **Ending the Session:** 1-Discuss and decide what you want to work on before your next tele-intervention session and discuss what activities you would like to target. 2-Discuss any problems with the internet connection or videoconferencing platform, if any. 3-Schedule the date and time of the next tele-intervention session. 4-Be sure to "Hang up" and close down the program site. Occasionally these sites will keep you logged in if you don't make a point of clicking "hang up", "done" or "finished".

Again, this is new territory for the State Lead Agency, First Steps, your POE offices, SC's and Providers, so your patience and cooperation is greatly appreciated as we weather this storm together.



**Are you separated from your child during this time of quarantine and social distancing?**

It's vital during times of stress to make sure your connection with your little ones stays strong. Sheltering in place or self-quarantine frequently means being apart from our family, including our very young children. Those on our "front lines" in this fight, including our medical professionals, first responders, military personnel and even our grocery store employees, are having to make difficult choices of staying away from their close family and friends, rather than taking the risk of infecting their family members. While these days and

weeks are filled with more questions than answers, there are still many ways for parents to keep their family connections strong. Using your cell phones and laptops for face to face conversation can be a great help during this time. Try scheduling regular video chats with your family members. Make sure your child hears your voice on a regular basis and send frequent pictures. If your work hours and distancing doesn't sync well with their waking hours and nap times, make brief videos for your children saying hello, read them a book, sing them their favorite song, do a silly dance and let them watch it later. Live chat and recorded videos can both help keep your family connections strong and keep your child on as normal and consistent schedule as possible during this time. For resources on the best video chat platforms and apps, check out this link: [The Five Best Kid Friendly Video Chat Apps](#)

**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