



First Steps Family Newsletter – Nov./Dec. 2020

**Up-to-date Contact Information:** First Steps families, we want to make sure we are able to contact you with updated information on changes to services as well as with any changes in office contact information. As we've come to realize the past few months, things can change unexpectedly and being able to reach our First Steps families is important. Additionally, each year we participate in a federally mandated family survey that we send out via email or traditional mail. We find that our emails are sometimes undeliverable and/or receive returned mail from USPS. Often, the State Lead Agency receives phone calls and emails from families who forget to leave a direct contact number and we later find out that their contact information in our TOTs database system is out of date resulting in being (cont'd on Pg. 2)

**Family-Friendly Holiday Events in Kentucky**



Due to COVID-19, it can be a confusing time for families planning holiday events to attend. Follow the guidance set out by the venues and [kycovid19.ky.gov](http://kycovid19.ky.gov) to ensure safe holiday activities. We do our best to provide accurate information but please check out the links and contact the event sponsor for updates on their opening/closing status.

**Light Up Louisville** will be celebrating the holiday season this year with some traditional and non-traditional events the day after Thanksgiving. There's free family fun for all ages. For updated times, dates and changes in the events, be sure to check out their [website](#).

Scuba Santa will be at the **Newport Aquarium** for their Water Winter Wonderland holiday season. Be sure to go to their website to check out the dates, times, fees and updated schedules before you plan your trip.

**Southern Lights** at the **Kentucky Horse Park** will be holding their holiday light show beginning November 22<sup>nd</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>. While their indoor festival is canceled, their traditional drive-thru light display will be open and ready for carloads of families!

**Santa's Lookout** drive-thru Christmas Light festival opens in November, (date yet to be announced). If you're in or near the Bowling Green area, check it out. People drive from all over to see their amazing holiday lights. Be sure to check [their site](#) regularly for updated dates and times.



**Parent and Family Education Resources**

**Virtual Family, Youth and Professional Conference** February 5-6. Sponsored by UP in KY. Sessions are available on Healthy Family Relationships, Telehealth, Special Education, Internet Safety, Self-esteem & Identity and more! Register for this free event at [KYSPIN.com](http://KYSPIN.com)

**Childcare Aware of Kentucky** has valuable resources and support for families in need of childcare assistance, updated info regarding **Covid-19 guidelines for childcare agencies** and referral specialists to assist you in your search for the right childcare setting for your children.



**Parent-to-Parent**

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” ~ Aristotle

“Early intervention programs enrich adverse family environments. The largest effects of the early intervention programs are on noncognitive traits. Now, what do I mean by that? I mean perseverance, motivation, self-esteem, and hard work.” ~ James Heckman

“If the schools are going to be closed much longer the parents are going to find a vaccine before the scientists!” ~ Anonymous

**2020 dates to be aware of:**

**November**

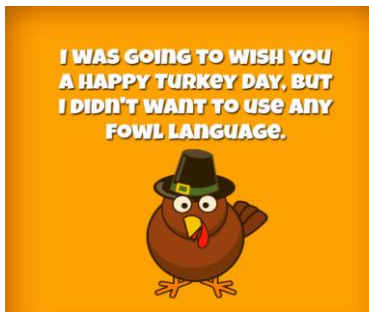
- Epilepsy Awareness Month
- Military Family Month
- National Adoption Month
- 4-Nat'l Stress Awareness Day also appropriately, Nat'l Candy Day!
- 8- Nat'l Parents as Teachers Day
- 11-Veteran's Day
- 14-Nat'l Family PJ Day
- 28-Nat'l French Toast Day

**December**

- AIDS Awareness Month
- Nat'l Human Rights Month
- 2-Nat'l Special Education Day
- 6-12-National Hand Washing Awareness Week
- 9-National Pastry Day
- 18-Nat'l Ugly Sweater Day

**How May We Contact You?** Cont'd – unable to return their call or reach them to assist with their needs. In order to better help serve all our families, we're asking you to please make sure your information with us is up-to-date. If you've had a change in any of your important contact information, please let us know before the end of this calendar year. Remember to communicate regularly with your Service Coordinator as well as your providers. Thank you for helping us to serve you better. If you have additional questions please contact the State Lead Agency [chfs.firststeps@ky.gov](mailto:chfs.firststeps@ky.gov)

**How to beat the holiday blues for One's and Two's:** As parents and caregivers, we sometimes forget that what we feel our kiddos feel too. When it comes to holiday stress, worry and depression, we're not only helping ourselves when we do everything in our power to ward off the blues but we also help our little ones. Even our one and two- year-olds can pick up on our anxious and overwhelmed parental moods and emotions. Here are some tips to help keep your spirits light and your family time just right during this holiday season:



- Keep active! It's easy to stay inside under a warm blanket on a cold day and cover our heads. While cuddling under a blanket with the family and watching a movie together could be a nice family night, hibernating for too long can add to your blues. Make sure you're being physically active for a portion of every day. Whether inside or in the great outdoors, set up a fun exercise routine. Create a mini-challenge course for you and the kids or crank up some tunes and dance with each other. Exercise releases endorphins (the happy hormones) and will boost your energy levels.
- Use positive self-talk. When we're stressed and anxious we tend to use negative words to describe ourselves and our situations. Pay attention to your words. Unsure if you're being negative? Ask a family or friend to help keep you accountable and gently call you out when you start to go down the negative road. The more positive you act, the more positive you will feel.
- Choose Your "Family Time." Family time may sound relaxing and joyful, but not all holiday visits are filled with warmth and affection. Time spent with our families can reactivate old dynamics and stir up old emotional reactions. While we currently have restrictions related to Covid-19 in place, family dynamics could still come into play during the holiday season. Take advantage of the opportunity to use various online ways to meet with family over the holidays to stay safe. Stay in control of who you spend time with and be sure to take difficult family members in small doses. You and your kids deserve to have a holiday season that's filled with joy and peace instead of stress and anxiety so be sure to guard your calendar and your emotions as needed.

**Virtual Family Forum on Teleintervention:** Did you miss the recent First Steps Family Forum? If so, you missed a lot of quality information on what teleintervention is, how it works, the dos and don'ts of it and how to make the best of it. But no worries, you can check out that Family Forum event any time. We recorded the session and it's available on the Coaching in Early Intervention Training YouTube channel under [Teleintervention Caregiver Forum](#).



**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. While I have a fancy title, 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 email: [Karen.McCracken@ky.gov](mailto:Karen.McCracken@ky.gov). ~ *Karen* ☺