



First Steps Timelines

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), as the lead agency responsible for carrying out the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), has developed a statewide system of early intervention called First Steps. The First Steps program serves children, birth to age three, who have delayed development or diagnosed conditions that are associated with developmental disabilities.

45-Day Timeline

First Steps is a family-driven program that evaluates all areas of development to determine if a child qualifies for services, identifies the needs of each qualified child and their family and develops an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) that supports the child's development. Regional agencies, called System Point of Entries (SPOEs), contract with DESE to provide First Steps services. First Steps SPOEs and service providers work together to meet the requirements of Part C of the IDEA.

Once the SPOE receives a referral, an intake coordinator is assigned as soon as possible. Within **45 calendar days** after receiving a referral, a SPOE must:

- Provide the parent with Prior Written Notice of the intent to conduct an evaluation (see *Prior Written Notice* [Fact Sheet](#))
- Obtain informed, written parental consent to proceed with an evaluation of the child;
- Collect and review information to determine eligibility; and,
- For each eligible child, schedule and facilitate an initial IFSP meeting. IDEA §303.310 and 303.342(a)

In the event of exceptional circumstances that make it impossible to complete the evaluation and assessment within 45 days (e.g., if the child is ill or there is some other family initiated situation that causes delay) the SPOE will document those circumstances. An Interim IFSP may be developed and put into action to the extent appropriate.

IDEA §303.310(b)

Periodic Review

The SPOE ensures the IFSP for a child and the child's family is reviewed **every six months**, or more frequently if needed, or if the family requests a review. The purpose of the periodic review is to determine the degree to which progress is being made toward achieving the outcomes, and whether modification or revision of the outcomes or services is necessary.

IDEA §303.342(b)

Annual Review

A meeting must be conducted **at least annually** to review and revise the child's current IFSP. The annual review of the IFSP includes a review of any current evaluations or other information available from the assessment of the child and family, to determine if changes to early intervention services are needed.

IDEA §303.342(c)

The IFSP meetings shall be conducted in places and at times that are convenient to the family. The native language of the family or other mode of communication used by the family must be used unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. Meeting arrangements must be made and written notification provided to the family and other participants early enough before the meeting date to ensure that they will be able to attend.

Additional information about First Steps is available at <https://dese.mo.gov/special-education/first-steps>.