

## INARF First Steps Talking Points

### ***Background on the Issue***

First Steps is the FSSA program that provides early intervention services to children from birth to their third birthday who are experiencing developmental delays. Services include physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and developmental therapy, among others. HEA 1317-2018 required FSSA to complete a fiscal analysis that recommended an average rate increase of 55% for First Steps services. The total amount of State funding needed to implement the recommended rates if the program continues to serve the same number of children is approximately \$26,000,000 per year. Rep. Ed Clere (New Albany) has authored House Bill 1216, which appropriates the money needed to achieve the recommended rates and includes language regarding presumptive eligibility for First Steps families. **INARF supports House Bill 1216 as it was introduced in the House.**

### ***Talking Points***

- In 2017, the state budget included an appropriation of \$8.2 million per year
- The Governor's current proposed budget included a line item for First Steps in the amount of \$11.3 million per year
- **This is not an increase!** The \$11.3 million reflects the program's current spend in State dollars. To accomplish State Budget Agency's directions to flat line spending, the budget reflects the current spend, allowing the program to continue providing services at current levels and to only the same number of children.
- The fiscal analysis found that 70 Indiana counties currently have a personnel shortage and thus cannot provide therapy services to all eligible children
- FSSA has also said they exploring opportunities to reallocate \$8-10 million in state Medicaid funding to pay for First Steps services. That would not, however, cover the entire cost of the recommended rate increases.
- Governor Holcomb has made the reduction of perinatal substance use disorder and Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome one of his priorities. There is a direct link between the opioid epidemic and the increase in referrals (15% in 2018) to the First Steps program.
- Early intervention services can reduce the amount of spending for special education in a school setting if children are able to receive the appropriate interventions prior to the age of 3
- First Steps services are not funded through the Department of Child Services
- Children in the DCS system can be referred to the First Steps program for services, however, no funding is attached to the referral.

### ***Ask***

Please support House Bill 1216 as introduced in the 2019 General Assembly session.