

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. **A \$20,000,000 appropriation per year for First Steps funding is included in the House version of the budget bill (HB 1001). INARF is requesting that legislators support the continued inclusion of the appropriation for First Steps funding in the Senate version of the budget bill (HB 1001).**

Talking Points

- In 2017, the state budget included an appropriation of \$8.2 million per year
- 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 are 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

We greatly appreciate the appropriation of \$20,000,000 per year included in the House version of HB 1001. Please support the inclusion of the \$20,000,000 per year appropriation for First Steps within the Senate version of HB 1001.