



First Steps

# **East Central Indiana First Steps Cluster Council By-Laws**

**Blackford, Delaware, Henry, Jay, Madison, Randolph, & Wayne, Counties**

## **Mission**

In collaboration with all stakeholders East Central Indiana First Steps Cluster Council will provide leadership to ensure the delivery of efficient and appropriate Early Intervention services, resolving to support families, providers, referrals sources, local councils, and cluster staff in efforts to enhance their skills and knowledge regarding the First Steps system and resources available in their local communities.

## **Article I – Name, Purpose, and Responsibilities**

### **1. Name**

The name of the organization shall be East Central Indiana First Steps Cluster Council, also known as the Local Planning and Coordinating Council, hereinafter referred to as the “Cluster Council” or the “LPCC”.

### **2. Purpose**

The purpose of the Cluster Council is to carry out the functions of the First Steps program as agreed in the approved Request for Funds, hereinafter referred to as the “RFF”, from the State of Indiana for early intervention for infants and toddlers birth to three years of age.

### **3. Responsibilities**

**A. The Cluster Council** shall be responsible for ensuring the successful completion of all outcomes as written in the RFF. They will provide guidance and leadership to the cluster staff and local councils in order to maintain accountability and quality assurance. These responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Develop, review and approve the RFF, which includes both LPCC and SPOE outcomes
2. Review of progress towards outcomes
3. Provide feedback through annual surveys in regards to Cluster performance and the Evaluation of Cluster Coordinator, SPOE Supervisor, and Fiscal Agent
4. Maintaining communication with Local Councils
5. Assigning outcomes to each sub-committee for monitoring purposes
6. Maintain and regularly review Cluster By-Laws
7. Oversee the functions of all subcommittees.

### **4. Fiscal Accountability**

Fiscal program and service accountability is the responsibility of the designated fiscal agent which contracts to receive grant funds. All cluster expenditures will be in accordance with the annual budget and no expenditures shall be made in excess of budget amounts except with the approval of the council. All amendments to the budget must be approved by the Cluster Council prior to being submitted to the state.

*The Fiscal agent will:*

- Receive & disburse funds
- Provide fiscal oversight of the program
- Provide administrative monitoring of the funds
- Provide updated reports to the Council

### **5. Record keeping**

The Cluster Council shall maintain files, which contain minutes of all council and subcommittee meetings, reports, operating procedures, and procurement policies that document compliance with state and federal laws, regulations, and policies. The Council Coordinator shall be responsible for the maintenance of all Cluster Council records.

## **Article II – Membership**

## **6. Membership**

Membership is open to all parents, referral sources, providers, and community organizations. Membership must include two members from each local council within the cluster fulfilling the following state mandated membership:

- Two (2) parents of a child with special needs\*\*
- One (1) Health Representative
- One (1) Education Representative
- One (1) Social Service Representative
- One (1) Early Intervention Provider
- One (1) Head Start Representative
- One (1) Child Care Representative

\*The Cluster Council will ensure that the State requirements for membership are met and strive to maintain at least one representative from each County in our Cluster.

\*\*Parents who participate will be eligible to receive funding through the Family Involvement Fund – See Cluster Coordinator for details.

### **A. Categories**

1. Voting – Must meet requirements for voting eligibility as outlined in #8
2. Contributing/Non -Active – No requirements, not eligible to vote.
3. Paid Staff – Must attend meetings as outlined in their job descriptions, not eligible to vote

### **B. Eligibility**

Membership shall be granted upon completion of the enrollment packet which consists of the following and must be updated annually:

1. Conflict of Interest Statement
2. Membership Agreement

\*Council members are expected to maintain regular attendance. After two consecutive absences the Cluster Coordinator will notify Chairperson who will contact the member to discuss the situation in order to assure adequate representation.

## **7. Meetings**

Regular meetings will be held at least quarterly, at a time and location determined by the council.

### **A. Notice**

The Coordinator will be responsible for sending 10 day prior notice of each meeting to all members on the membership list. Notice will include agenda for meeting.

### **B. Minutes/Agendas**

The proceedings of the regular meetings will be documented by written minutes. The written minutes will be emailed to all voting members, and posted on the Cluster web site for the general public to view within 3 weeks of the meeting. It is the responsibility of the membership to secure, review, and bring to the Cluster Council meetings the meeting agenda and prior minutes.

### **C. Special Meetings**

Special meetings may be called/requested by:

1. The Council Chair or,
2. A written petition signed by not less than five voting members delivered to the Council Chair. Any special meeting shall be limited to the business for which it was called.

### **D. Revisions to Agenda**

Notice of meetings will include an agenda for that meeting. Members will have the opportunity to request items to be added to the next agenda at the conclusion of each regular meeting or by submitting the proposed addition in writing to the Coordinator at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting date.

## **8. Voting**

Upon completion of the enrollment packet members will be granted voting privileges.

### **A. Maintaining Voting Privileges**

In order to maintain voting status a member must, on a quarterly basis:

1. Attend or participate in meetings regularly (as outlined in the membership agreement) or,
2. Attend any sub-committee meetings regularly that the member serves on, or
3. Participates in a local or Cluster public awareness or child find activity.
4. Participate by means of email if unable to attend in person.

Member must read past meeting minutes and review new agenda. Then they must send email to Cluster Coordinator indicating their upcoming absence along with any questions/suggestions/ or comments at least 2 days prior to the meeting. The Email will be entered into the Council record. Email participation is limited to one Cluster meeting or 2 sub-committee meetings per fiscal year.

### **B. Limitations**

Voting rights will be limited to eligible voting members as outlined in Article II Section six (6), with no more than three (3) votes per County. However, if the cluster is lacking participation in any certain area, Individuals who fulfill the State required membership categories will be allowed to vote regardless of what county is represented within the cluster.

### **C. Parent Voting**

Any parent attending a meeting will be eligible to vote regardless of prior meeting attendance.

### **D. Proxy/Absentee Voting**

Absentee and/or proxy voting will be permitted. A voting member's proxy may be given to an existing member or another person who can attend in their place. If the absent member sends in a written opinion on matters before the Cluster Council, the Chairperson will read it at the appropriate agenda item. Absentee/Proxy Voting assignments must be forwarded in writing to the Cluster Coordinator 24 hours prior to the meeting vote.

### **E. Ineligibility**

Contributing/Non-Active members and paid staff will not be eligible to vote.

### **F. Quorum**

A quorum shall consist of a majority of eligible voting members present.

## **9. Officers**

**A.** The officers will be elected during the fourth quarter, with the term to begin April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**B.** Upon election the officer agrees to two-year term and may serve no more than two consecutive terms.

**C.** The officers of the cluster council shall be:

1. Chair

The Chair shall preside over all meetings of the Cluster Council. The Chair shall be an ex-officio member of all committees. The Chair shall perform other duties as the Council prescribes.

2. Vice Chair

The Vice-Chair shall perform the duties of the Chair during the Chair's absence, resignation, or inability to act. The Vice-Chair shall serve as the facilitator of the Systems Oversight Committee and perform duties that may be assigned by the Chair and the Cluster Council.

### **Article III – Task Forces and Committees**

#### **10. Task Forces/Committees**

##### **A. Systems Oversight Committee**

Oversees the implementation of Council policies manages daily business & ensures the success of activities as outlined in the State's Request for Funds (RFF). They review minutes of all subcommittees and help ensure the Cluster meets its obligations to First Steps families. Meetings will be held immediately prior to the Cluster Council meetings. This committee will be responsible to monitor and ensure cluster meets its obligation as outlined in the RFF

1. LPCC Section III-2- "All issues & concerns will be adequately addressed within 60 days of receipt of concern, utilizing procedures as set forth by the Lead Agency. Formal complaints must be forwarded to the State within 2 business days."
2. LPCC Section V- 1- "LPCC will meet a minimum of quarterly with the required membership"
3. LPCC V-"must comply with RMS (Random Moment Sample) requests within 2 business days & update information including submitting staff information and changes"
4. LPCC V- 3 "By-laws must be approved by State"
5. All SPOE outcomes

##### **B. Child Find & Public Awareness-**

This committee supports the awareness & visibility of the First Steps system throughout the cluster to assist in the increased identification & referral of infants & toddlers. This group helps identify referral sources to target based on Cluster referral data. They select area events to attend and help recruit volunteers to man First Steps booths. This committee will monitor and ensure the following RFF outcomes are met:

1. LPCC Section I-1-" 1.4% of children served with an IFSP will be under the age of 1 year"
2. LPCC Section I-2 " the population served will be comparable to the demographics of the cluster"
3. LPCC Section I-3 "Appropriate and timely referrals are to be made to the SPOE from a variety of community partners"
4. LPCC Section I-4 " 3.3% of the cluster's infants & toddlers will be served"

##### **C. Provider Relations-**

This committee brings together area providers, families in First Steps and SPOE staff to discuss provider issues including the recruitment & retention of service providers so that families have adequate choices for quality services. They also work with Eligibility Teams (ED Teams) for the cluster. This committee will monitor and ensure the following RFF outcomes are met:

1. LPCC Section II-1 " Families in all areas of the cluster will have available providers for needed services"
2. LPCC Section II-2 "After initial data entry, all providers must login to the provider matrix & review/update the information monthly or more often if needed"
3. LPCC Section III-1 "Ensure services are provided in the natural environment to the most extent possible & are also monitored to ensure that IFSP teams make individualized decisions regarding the settings in which infants & toddlers receive EI services"

##### **D. Transition-**

This committee brings together Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Head Start, Child Care Resource & Referral resources during all transitions into, within and out of First Steps. They will monitor and review

the agency Memorandum of Agreement (MOAs), develop family resource guide, & develop family transition events throughout the Cluster. This committee will monitor and ensure the following RFF outcomes are met:

1. LPCC Section IV -1 “ Have current, signed agreements with all special education planning districts, Head Start, and Early head Start, that are actively evaluated & shared with the community”
2. LPCC Section IV -2” conduct planned transition activities such as transition trainings with staff & meetings trainings with community partners and parents to address transition issues or topics with each special education planning districts within the cluster on a semi-annual basis”

## **Article IV – Authority, Amendments, and Review**

### **11. Parliamentary Authority**

Except as otherwise provided in these By-Laws, the revised Robert’s Rules of Order shall govern all parliamentary questions at the meetings of the Cluster Council.

### **12. Amendments to By-Laws**

These By-Laws may be amended by a majority vote of the voting representatives present at a Cluster Council meeting, provided the submission of such amendment is given in writing by mail/email at least seven (7) days in advance of the date of the meeting when action is to be taken.

### **13. By-Law Review**

The By-Laws shall be reviewed annually prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Cluster Council meeting.

## **Article V – Conflict Resolution**

### **14. Conflict Resolution/Conflict of Interest**

Conflict Resolution shall occur in accordance to the East Central First Steps Conflict Resolution policy (see attached). This policy also outlines conflict of interest procedures for council members.

## **Glossary of Terms**

**Cluster-** Refers to a group of counties that share the same fiscal agent and contract with the state for all First Steps services.

**ED Teams-** (Eligibility Determination Teams) consist of at least two different therapists that are responsible for evaluating all children referred to First Steps for the purpose of determining the child’s eligibility into the program.

**IFSP-** (Individualized Family Service Plan) this is the document created for each child in the First Steps program. Every plan lists specific outcomes, strategies for success along with detailed info regarding who is responsible and where services will take place. These plans are reviewed quarterly and modified as needed.

**LPCC -** (Local Planning and Coordinating Council) refers to the Council that oversees First Steps services in each area or Cluster. The LPCC is a group of volunteers who all are interested in helping young children reach their potential through the provision of quality early intervention services. Through the collaboration of families, service providers, administrators, & other community partners the LPCC strives to improve family experiences in the First Steps system by monitoring State outcomes as outlined in the RFF

**MOA-** (Memorandum of Agreement) is a document used to outline expected outcomes and procedures between 2 agencies that share common interests and serve the same population.

**RFF-** (Request for Funds)-This is the grant that funds all First Steps cluster Coordination and Public Awareness/Child find operations. This grant outlines the outcomes that must be met along with a list of minimum requirements that each Cluster must include.

**RMS-** (Random Moment Sampling) is a tool used by the State to monitor activities provided by each Cluster. Cluster. Employees are randomly selected to respond via email and tell what activity they were performing at the time of the Sample.

**Systems Point of Entry-** (S.P.O.E.): Central location of county or group of counties that provide contact point for determination of eligibility for children residing in that county area.

By-Laws adopted:

Revised:

Due to be reviewed winter/spring 2011