

## North Beaches Early Steps Providers and Early Intervention Focus

### What is Early Steps?

Early Steps is a statewide system of early intervention providers who recognize and honor the important role parents and caregivers play in early child development. Early Steps providers coach families on ways to help their children develop during everyday routines and activities like meal times, playtime, bath time, bedtime, and outings.

- ❖ Services are provided in the home, as well as childcare centers and community settings where children live, play and learn.
- ❖ Early Steps providers help children age birth to 36 months reach their full potential through family-centered early intervention services.
- ❖ Providers become part of a team and participate in consultations, joint visits, and regular team meetings to monitor the child's progress.
  - Source: [http://www.floridahealth.gov/alternatesites/cms-kids/families/early\\_steps/documents/BecomeESprovider.pdf](http://www.floridahealth.gov/alternatesites/cms-kids/families/early_steps/documents/BecomeESprovider.pdf)

### What is the focus of Early Intervention services?

- ❖ **To enhance the development of infants and toddlers:**
  - Physical/motor development
  - Cognitive development
  - Social and emotional development
  - Communication/language development
  - Self-help/adaptive development
  - Source: ES orientation Module 1/Lesson1 - <http://cpeip.fsu.edu/earlysteps/Module1/Lesson1/20.htm>

### North Beaches Early Steps – General Information

- ❖ In Florida, the Department of Health, Children's Medical Services, Early Steps serves as the lead agency. **North Beaches Early Steps is contracted under Easter Seals of Northeast Central Florida.**
- ❖ North Beaches Early Steps covers the following five counties: Flagler, Volusia, Putnam, Sumter and Lake
- ❖ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that supports early intervention, special education and related service programming for child and youth with disabilities.
- ❖ Part C of IDEA provides for early intervention (EI) services for at-risk children from birth to thirty-six (36) months. EI services assist young children with atypical physical, cognitive, communication, adaptive and social or emotional development. IDEA further mandates that EI services must be provided by qualified personnel, in natural environments and at no cost to the families (paid through Medicaid or insurance, then Local Early Steps as payer of last resort).

## North Beaches Early Steps Provider Types

### ❖ **Speech-language Pathologist (SLP – Speech Therapy)**

Speech-language pathologists have a central role in providing services and supports for families and their infants or toddlers with disabilities as members of the early intervention team. Furthermore, the appropriately certified and licensed (as applicable) speech-language pathologist is qualified to address delays and disabilities in communication, language, speech, emergent literacy, and feeding/swallowing. Effective communication is fundamental to all aspects of human functioning, particularly learning and social interaction. The development of communication skills begins at birth.

- Source: <http://www.asha.org/policy/PS2008-00291/>

### ❖ **Physical Therapist (PT)**

Physical therapists use their knowledge and skills specifically related to motor and self-care function, assistive technology, and medical/healthcare science to provide a unique contribution to the team. Physical therapy creates opportunities for the child to develop motor abilities, including: learn to crawl so they can move from place to place, get to their toys or follow their parents around the house; learn to sit so they can play on the floor with their siblings and friends; improve balance so they can walk on the grass or in the sand without falling; get stronger so they can keep up with their friends; be fit so they can be active with their friends; and hold, explore, and play with toys of different sizes, shapes, and weights.

- Source: <https://pediatricapta.org/special-interest-groups/early-intervention/pdfs/Role%20of%20PT%20in%20EI.pdf>

### ❖ **Occupational Therapist, Registered/Licensed (OTR/L)**

Occupational therapy practitioners promote the function and engagement of infants and toddlers and their families in everyday routines by addressing areas of occupation, including activities of daily living (ADLs), rest and sleep, play, education, and social participation. OT/OTAs enhance a family's capacity to care for their child and promote his or her development and participation in natural environments where the child and family live, work, and play.

- Source: [http://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/Practice/Children/Browse/EI/Role-of-OT\\_1/Early%20Intervention%20FAQ%20Final.ashx](http://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/Practice/Children/Browse/EI/Role-of-OT_1/Early%20Intervention%20FAQ%20Final.ashx)

### ❖ **Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA) / Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA)**

A licensed therapy assistant cannot serve as *Primary* Service Provider. The therapy assistant will have to document the Early Steps enrolled and licensed supervising therapist (PT or OT) they are working with as well as that therapist's Medicaid provider number. The therapy assistant must document a Level II FBI background screening prior to approval.

- Source pg. 13: [http://www.floridahealth.gov/alternatesites/cms-kids/providers/early\\_steps/training/documents/training\\_guide.pdf](http://www.floridahealth.gov/alternatesites/cms-kids/providers/early_steps/training/documents/training_guide.pdf)

#### ❖ **Early Intervention Provider**

An Early Intervention provider is a *licensed* provider of Early Intervention Services (EI Services). Early Intervention providers must be licensed in an allied health or educational field. Examples of Licensed EI Providers may include the following: Physician, Physician's assistant, Advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP), Registered nurse, Physical therapist, Occupational therapist, Speech-language pathologist, Audiologist, Respiratory therapist, Clinical psychologist, School psychologist, Clinical social worker, Marriage and family counselor, Mental health counselor, Registered dietitian, Nutrition counselor.

- A licensed EI provider *does not require* consultation, but if the TEAM agrees it would be best for the EI provider to consult, then it would be recommended on the IFSP.
- *A possible scenario might include:* Child is hard of hearing with speech delay and physical therapy needs, the Service Coordinator and TEAM would discuss what is best for the child and agree to refer to the Licensed Audiologist for EI services and consult with the SLP for speech needs and the PT for physical therapy needs.
- Source: [Florida Medicaid Early Intervention Services Handbook & ESSO Memo - Clarification re: Medicaid Early Intervention \(EI\) Services Guidelines](#)

#### ❖ **Infant Toddler Developmental Specialist (ITDS)**

An ITDS is a *non-licensed* provider of Early Intervention Services (EI Services). Infant Toddler Developmental Specialists must be certified as an ITDS. The ITDS focuses on infant/toddler development and ways to promote development and learning, including designing learning environments and activities to promote development across all domains. The ITDS, in consultation with other licensed EI providers on the child and family's team, assists the family in understanding the special needs of the child and enhancing the child's development. The ITDS is one of many providers who provide Early Intervention Services (EI Services) and is eligible to enroll as an EI provider in Florida Medicaid. A licensed EI professional must “direct and support”, in other words, *guide* the activities of the ITDS, but is not responsible for the actions of the ITDS. Supervision of the ITDS is the responsibility of the employing agency.

- Source: [Florida Medicaid Early Intervention Services Handbook & ESSO Memo - Clarification re: Medicaid Early Intervention \(EI\) Services Guidelines](#)

#### **Distinction between Early Intervention sessions performed by a licensed therapist and sessions billable under the Medicaid Therapy Service program.**

- ❖ **Early Intervention Sessions** – Designed to provide the family or caregiver training and counseling to promote development of the child. EI sessions are intended to educate the parents or other caregivers on how to best encourage healthy growth in the identified child. *Parents or caregivers are expected to participate in the sessions with the child and the EI professional in order to learn these skills.*
- ❖ **Traditional Therapy Services** – centered on the child and are more clinical in nature. While there may be a parental education component to this service type, *the main interaction is generally between the therapist and the child.*
  - Source: [ESSO Memo - Clarification re: Medicaid Early Intervention \(EI\) Services Guidelines](#)
- ❖ **Provider Qualifications - Medicaid may only reimburse early intervention services that are provided by a:**

- Medicaid enrolled early intervention services agency or group who employs staff who are Florida licensed "healing arts" professionals or non-healing arts certified Department of Health, Children's Medical Services (CMS) Early Steps Infant Toddler Developmental Specialists (ITDS).
- Medicaid enrolled early intervention services individual who is a Florida licensed "healing arts" professional or a non-healing arts certified Department of Health, CMS Early Steps Infant Toddler Developmental Specialist (ITDS).
- Source: <http://www.fdhc.state.fl.us/medicaid/childhealthservices/early/index.shtml>

### **PROVIDING SERVICES WITH NORTH BEACHES EARLY STEPS**

To provide services to North Beaches Early Steps children, an *approved* Early Steps provider must a) join a currently contracted provider agency, or b) complete and submit a North Beaches Early Steps Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the current fiscal year.

#### **❖ JOINING A CURRENTLY CONTRACTED PROVIDER AGENCY**

- The Provider Relations Specialist will link provider with current contracted provider agencies to discuss opportunities to join their agency.
- Provider will receive individual billing code and be linked in the Early Steps data system with the chosen agency(ies).

#### **❖ SUBMITTING A NORTH BEACHES EARLY STEPS MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT**

- An independent provider/agency may submit the North Beaches Early Steps Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), provided by the Provider Relations Specialist, along with the following supplemental documents:
  - Exhibit E - Statement of Understanding Part C Procedural Safeguards (initialed/checked as read and signature required)
  - Exhibit I – Provider Information Form
  - IRS Form W9
  - Proof of Service Provider's (Agency or Individual as applicable) Professional Liability Insurance
  - List of all accepted insurance of provider.
  - Medicaid Verification Letter (Therapy and EI if applicable) for Groups and Individuals- this letter is accessible on the Medicaid Provider Portal.
- If an agency, the agency will receive individual billing codes for each approved Early Steps provider and be linked in the Early Steps data system of the providing agency.
- If an individual, the provider will receive an individual billing code.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please don't hesitate to contact the Provider Relations Specialist, Tami Kruger at (386) 873-0365 or [tkruger@esnefl.org](mailto:tkruger@esnefl.org).