

DDSN has been providing Early Intervention Services to babies and their families since the inception of BabyNet – Now First Steps since ~~1999~~. 1991

Through this collaboration DDSN has been tasked with providing direct/hands on instruction, coordination of specialists/therapists, development of the IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan), delivering the services as outlined in the IFSP, and assuring that appropriate billing is submitted to Medicaid or the payment agency.

Horry County DSN thru SCDDSN has been a consistent provider of services for the last ~~12~~¹⁷ years. We have a proven track record with our families as well as our community. Since First Steps has not been a direct provider of services, they do not have that hands-on, close relationship that has been established over the last several years.

It has taken years to establish relationships with families, therapists, doctors and the local education personnel. First Steps quite honestly does not have that relationship nor direct family contact, nor does it have the experience of the system oversight that is necessary to assure successful implementation.

One recent direct example of this was an OSEP review in which OSEP was requiring data on how First Steps was assuring compliance. One of the ways that Horry County Disabilities and Special Needs has maintained this assurance is thru monthly chart reviews and consumer/family satisfaction surveys. Thru this process, HCDSN and SCDDSN can honestly validate that services are provided according to the First Steps standards. SCDDSN too has contracted with an independent company – DELMARVA Corp. to assure quality and compliance is carried out as intended. Had it not been for the dedication and management of SCDDSN and the other DSN Board providers, First Steps would not have been able to prove compliance and oversight was taking place. Again, DDSN has the direct, on-hands experience to validate and assure compliance. Systems are already in place and will not have to be re-created.

With the vast changes that are happening in the First Steps system, training on these changes continues to be an area of concern at the local level. Time frames and target dates are set, reset and extended, thus creating frustration on those providing direct service. In a system that is already overburdened with change, the desire by First Steps to oversee the direct hands-on, day to day service delivery and operation is inconceivable. The number of staff that would need to be hired for this one component alone is daunting. My mother used to say to me, "Why throw effort after foolishness," I say to you, why throw effort after something that is already in place and working? If it isn't broke, don't fix it!

I do wish to share with you in the last minute some direct excerpts from our consumer and family surveys that convey more than what I can stand here and tell you. We ask families monthly questions like ...

1. Who is your Early Interventionist at HCDSN?
2. Do you feel comfortable speaking with this person?
3. Are you satisfied with the Early Intervention services that you and your child receive through HCDSN?
4. Have you had any problems or concerns with your services? If yes, were the problems/concerns addressed to your satisfaction?
5. Do you think the Early Interventionist listens to you and understand your needs?
6. Are your needs being met by the service you receive?
7. Is the person who receives services treated with dignity and respect?

8. Do you have any suggestions or comments of how we can make your services better?

Responses:

Anna S. "We love Jessica (EI). She has been a big help since Anna's autism diagnosis. She now gets ABA and is doing better."

(EI) by Mother

Catherine G. "Ms Denyse (EIS) has worked with Catherine for a long time. She does very well with Catherine. Catherine always kisses her and sits in her lap."

(EI) by Mother

Caleb P. "I love Latoya (EI). Caleb loves Latoya. She has been part of our family for several years now. I don't know what we would do without her."

(EI)

By Mother

Andrew C. "Everyone has been great and helpful. Andrew just had a diagnosis of PDDNOS and Kelly has been very patient with all of my questions."

(EI)

By Mother

Miller L Jessica (EI) does a great job. "She answers all my questions and always calls me right back when I call her."

(EI)

By Mother:

Trish N. Latoya is always there for us. She takes us to MUSC. Trish's Dr. Appointments can be very confusing. She helps us understand what is going on with Trish.

(EI) By Mother:

Ian D. Ian has made a lot of progress with Ms Denyse and Ms Tammy (EIS/ST). Everyone is so nice. I love the BabyNet services.

(EI) By Mother:

Henry B. Denyse (EIS) is always available. She has assisted in all aspects of Henry's progress. She has provided referrals and support which has led to a diagnosis. She has been so valuable.

(EI) By Mother:

Kristy E. Latoya (EI) has been wonderful working with Kristy and our family. I will miss her and will keep in touch with her. I am very, very happy with EI services.

(EI) By Mother:

Please consider what I have shared and I urge you to "NOT throw effort after a system that IS already working"