



Department of Public Health and Human Services

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Steve Bullock, Governor

Sheila Hogan, Director

April 13, 2017

Ann Treece
STEP
644 Grand Avenue, Suite 1
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Re: Letter of Determination
STEP Annual Performance Report for Montana Milestones/Part C Early Intervention Program (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016)

Montana Milestones/Part C Early Intervention Program used two specific implementation drivers to review the overall quality of STEP - Part C Early Intervention program for Federal Year 2015 in addition to STEP's self-assessment. The monitoring mechanisms capture a broad representation of compliance and results indicators.

The data gathered distinguishes practices, policies, and procedures that are well-executed and reveal quality practices and corresponding results. Additionally, particular issues identified require improvement approaches and strategies to meet compliance indicators and/or results indicators. The improvement proposals are generated by STEP staff to address monitoring findings and monitored by the program's Quality Improvement Specialist, Troy Kelly, and the Part C Coordinator, Wendy Studt. The expected outcome is increased compliance and quality measured in terms of results as well as identification of needed technical assistance to achieve improved results for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

(1) Montana's Comprehensive Monitoring Tool reviews a randomized statistically valid sample (based upon FY 2015 Child Count Data) for the following components:

- Program Management
- Multidisciplinary Teams
- Qualified Personnel
- Evaluation and Assessment
- IFSP development
- IFSP implementation
- Outcomes quality and implementation
- Family Interview

(2) Montana's data management system, the Early Intervention (EI) Module, manages the full data lifecycle needs of Montana Milestones/Part C Early Intervention Program. The data identified during the comprehensive monitoring process is conditional upon the validity and reliability of the data as entered by STEP staff. The database is an organized collection of:

- IFSP records;
- Child Outcomes records;
- Transition records;
- Exit records
- Child Outcomes Summary data;
- Child Counts;
- Exiting Reports;
- Child Outcomes Analysis;
- IFSP status;
- Notification reports of potentially eligible children;
- Transition conferences reports;
- Part B service referrals;
- IFSP services;
- Children turning age 3 transition reports; and
- Children turning age 8 transition reports.

STEP Exemplary Practices:

- STEP's managers perform random checks within the data management system to ensure both the baseline and exit Child Outcomes Summaries are completed. Additionally, data management system and Child Outcomes Summary training is provided to Family Support Specialists ensuring they understand expectations.
- STEP's system for obtaining Family Survey data is successful. STEP's Family Survey return rate for FY 2015 was 65%.
- STEP used Family Survey results to enhance program planning:
 - STEP staff used the data to create a spreadsheet to find any norms. The data was reported to the STEP Board of Directors.
 - STEP staff members plan to use the data to help shape future practices.
- STEP's Family Support Specialists held appropriate State of Montana FSS certification (Primary or Comprehensive). This is an area of significant strength for STEP.
- 100% of STEP staff members conducting eligibility evaluations were qualified for the evaluation tools they used.

- 98% of IFSPs reviewed contained measurable outcomes directly related to family priorities, concerns, and resources.

STEP Improvement Plans and timelines:

- STEP staff created a form, used by the Enrollment Coordinator, documenting the procedural safeguards video, “Let’s Chat About Early Intervention,” is offered at every enrollment (accepted 1/9/17). A copy of the form will be provided to Troy Kelly, Quality Improvement Specialist, and Wendy Studt, MT Part C Coordinator. This monitoring data will be reviewed during the next cycle of comprehensive monitoring for FY 2016 (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017).
- STEP’s Family Services team members were retrained in January 2016 on necessity and definition of the multidisciplinary team. Additionally, the department has been restructured and includes a Family Coach, a Service Coordinator, the Enrollment Coordinator, and the potential for a therapist to assure a multidisciplinary team’s involvement (accepted 1/9/17). A copy of materials presented as well as a list of participants from the training will be provided to Troy Kelly, Quality Improvement Specialist, and Wendy Studt, MT Part C Coordinator. This monitoring data will be reviewed during the next cycle of comprehensive monitoring for FY 2016 (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017).
- STEP staff has revamped the new hire orientation to identify the necessary trainings and employees who were hired prior to the new format have documented they have been trained (accepted 1/9/17). A copy of the new hire orientation will be provided to Troy Kelly, Quality Improvement Specialist, and Wendy Studt, MT Part C Coordinator. This monitoring data will be reviewed during the next cycle of comprehensive monitoring for FY 2016 (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017).
- STEP staff conducted IFSP training for the Family Services Team three times in April 2016 and twice in May 2016 to ensure documentation was provided for IFSPs missing timelines; requirements for the services page; and writing high-quality child and family outcomes aligning with routines (accepted 1/9/17). A copy of materials presented as well as a list of participants from the training(s) will be provided to Troy Kelly, Quality Improvement Specialist, and Wendy Studt, MT Part C Coordinator. As a further safeguard to assure quality, the department has been restructured assuring two separate positions are able to provide ongoing monitoring quality, timelines, and compliance. This monitoring data will be reviewed during the next cycle of comprehensive monitoring for FY 2016 (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017).
- STEP staff will continue to monitor the timeliness of initial, six month reviews, and annual reviews (accepted 1/9/17). IFSP training conducted in April and May 2016 addressed this topic. A copy of materials presented as well as a list of participants from

the training will be provided to Troy Kelly, Quality Improvement Specialist, and Wendy Studt, MT Part C Coordinator. **Note:** The State's data management system also issues upcoming timeline reminders to both the Family Support Specialist and the agency's identified overseer of the State's data management system. This monitoring data will be reviewed during the next cycle of comprehensive monitoring for FY 2016 (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017).

The Office of Special Education Programs Evaluation Team(s) reviewed Montana's Annual Performance Report for FY 2014 (July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015) and identified the following systems for targeted State-wide Technical Assistance in FY 2016 and 2017:

- **Child Count:** The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) will provide targeted assistance to improve Montana's state-wide efforts to serve infants (birth to one year of age) and toddlers (one year of age to 3 years of age) thus improving Montana's Section 618 Child Count. Additionally, referral sources (Child Protective Services and hospitals, clinics, and medical personnel focusing upon low birth weight babies) and their impact upon Child Count will be analyzed.
 - STEP Point in Time, Birth to 1 year of age: 34 infants
 - STEP Point in Time, Birth to 3 years of age: 116 infants and toddlers
- **Outcome Data:** OSEP will provide targeted assistance to improve the percentage of children exiting Part C that are included in outcome data.
 - The percentage of children exiting STEP who are included in STEP's outcome data: 42%.
- **Performance Indicators:** OSEP will provide targeted assistance to improve performance outcomes for infants and toddlers in the three global outcomes. STEP's outcomes/results data:
 - **SiMR - Outcome A, Summary Statement 1:** Of those children who entered or exited the program below age expectations in Outcome A, 77% substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned three years of age or exited the program.
 - **Outcome A, Summary Statement 2:** 47% of the children were functioning within age expectations in Outcome A by the time they turned three years of age or exited the program.
 - **Outcome B, Summary Statement 1:** Of those children who entered or exited the program below age expectations in Outcome A, 77% substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned three years of age or exited the program.

- Outcome B, Summary Statement 2: 47% of the children were functioning within age expectations in Outcome A by the time they turned three years of age or exited the program.
- Outcome C, Summary Statement 1: Of those children who entered or exited the program below age expectations in Outcome A, 61% substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned three years of age or exited the program.
- Outcome C, Summary Statement 2: 44% of the children were functioning within age expectations in Outcome A by the time they turned three years of age or exited the program.

STEP's contract with the Montana Milestones/Part C Early Intervention Program is essential to the delivery of Part C of IDEA services in Big Horn, Yellowstone, Musselshell, Petroleum, Fergus, Judith Basin, Wheatland, Golden Valley, Sweet Grass, Stillwater, and Carbon counties. Thank you for your commitment to meeting the requirements of Part C of IDEA and increasing the quality of early intervention in Montana.

Sincerely,

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