



Florida Consortium of Advocates for Infants and Toddlers

Support Adequate Funding for Early Steps

2015 Legislative Advocacy

Florida's Part C/Early Intervention Program

- **Increased enrollment:** Early Steps served over **43,500** infants and toddlers in 2014, a 5% increase over 2013 causing a reduction in the service dollars available to spend per child.
- **Increased referrals:** Increased referrals and the skyrocketing number of children with complex needs, including those with autism, have strained the program's operating capacity.
- **High caseloads:** Coordination of services across early childhood education, child welfare, family support and economic resources is a high priority that is often obstructed due to high caseloads in Early Steps. The national average for Part C caseloads is 1:38 while Florida struggles with caseloads of 1:65 or more. We request an increase in funding in order to lower caseloads to 1:55.
- **Amend Medicaid:** Amend Medicaid to make the Early Steps Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP), early intervention's equivalent to a plan-of-care, the authorizing document for Title 19 services, as it now is for Children's Medical Services Title 21. This change would meaningfully expedite children's access to greatly needed early intervention services.
- **Amend F.S. 1002.87 – Early Learning Priority Regulations:**
Amend 1002.87 priority group (3) to add a clause that working families who are economically disadvantaged with a child eligible for Early Steps be served first in this priority ranking group. Families in the Early Steps Program are currently in priority group (8), behind thousands and thousands of children on the wait list with no hope of placement.
- **Early Steps is a sound investment:** A recent RAND study states that investing in early intervention services has measureable positive outcomes, with a rate of return as high as \$17.00 for every \$1.00 spent!

To ensure the future of Early Steps, legislators are asked to appropriate \$5 million in additional funding to sustain this invaluable program.