

**BEFORE AND AFTER THE TEAM  
APPROACH WAS ADOPTED BY  
EARLY STEPS...**

The EARLY STEPS Family Resource  
Specialist Role

Elli Emmanuel M.A./C.C.C.-SLP

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**Participating Programs**

- Gulf Central Early Steps
- Kim Barger, Provider Liaison & FRS
- Kylee Berry, FRS
  - Treasure Coast Early Steps
- Thea Chimenti, FRS
- Natalie Eno, FRS
  - Southwest Early Steps
- Imperia Torres, FRS

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**Our Mission Today :**

- We wanted to find out how our families are liking the Team Approach with the Primary Service Provider taking the lead in their child's Support Plan and how the FRS role is helping mesh the parent/provider/community pieces.
- We never met face to face, so over a number of electronic based contacts, we created a list of key questions to explore with families

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### Key Questions

- ❖ How was the Team Approach (T.A.) described to you?
- ❖ In what ways has the T.A. supported your family?
- ❖ What do you feel the T.A. looks like?
- ❖ Has it been a positive experience building a relationship with one main provider (P.S.P.) in the home?
- ❖ Do you know the other members of your team?

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### ... Questions Continued...

- ❖ Do you have access and do you know how to contact the other members of your Team?
- ❖ What have you learned from having a Team supporting you?
- ❖ What is a P.S.P. and how would you describe their role to someone else?
- ❖ Did the P.S.P. include you during the session with your child? Please give an example
- ❖ Was your family involved in the development of your I.F.S.P.?

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### ...More Questions...

- ❖ Have the strategies shared by your P.S.P. enriched your family's life? How?
- ❖ What have you found to be the most valuable advantage to having the Team Approach?
- ❖ Do you know the members of your Zone Team?

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## The FRS ..

- ❑ As we started gathering feedback from our families and listing all the resources our FRS identified tracking down answers and problem solving, it became very clear that the story was heavily weighted towards the type of people, the humility, respect, sensitivity and caring that our FRS bring to their work.
- ❑ As you will see, it became impossible to separate the FRS from the Team Approach feedback; here is why:

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## Resources ...

- Updates on local events
- Guidance through the ES process
- Information sharing
- Playgroups
- Workshops with speakers
- Assist with transition to Pre-K
- Sharing web site resources
- Connecting with University programs
- Connecting with doctors
- Connecting with United Way
- Monthly Newsletter
- Organizing Training opportunities
- Attend medical appointments
- Attend transition meetings
- Create support groups

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## Gulf Central ES

- Kim Barger  
Kim has filled the FRS role with Early Steps the last 5 years; she feels privileged to help guide families in their journey through the complexity of agency eligibility and barriers that can be confusing at times and overwhelming.  
Kim considers it an honor to be part of the Gulf Central E.S. that is committed to providing quality services and supports to every family, support that was not available to her family 23 years ago.

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## Gulf Central ES

➤ Kylee Barry

Kylee has been in the FRS role at E S for 2 years. In her words: I got this job BECAUSE I have a child with a disability (not "In Spite Of"); Kylee told me she feels respected and empowered to help families and connect them to resources and supports they would have struggled to access.

Kylee feels honored to be someone families feel safe to talk to about their challenges; be it a newly acquired diagnosis of Autism or a birth diagnosis of Down Syndrome

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## Southwest ES

➤ Imperia Torres

Imperia has been in the FRS position for 1 year. She had been a translator liaison with Spanish speaking families for ES.

In her own words: You know I am very emotional; I developed the job description by going out with evaluation teams, with ITD Specialists and by connecting with families in our ES community outreach projects.

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## Treasure Coast ES

➤ Thea Chimenti

Thea is a new addition to the FRS staff for ES.

Easter Seals in Palm Beach County is Thea's work home. She is Chase's mom, who was an Early Stepper, born at 28 weeks and weighing a little over 2 pounds. Chase received support services since the age of 6 months. At 6 years of age now, Chase attends full day school at JC Elementary and loves outdoor activities.

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## Treasure Coast ES

➤ Natalie Eno

Natalie is a new FRS with the ES family; she brings with her a personal journey in the world of Autism, as at 2 ½ years of age her daughter received the diagnosis. Natalie moved to FL from Western NY with her 3 daughters.

The valuable quality that is clear in Natalie is the fresh optimism she brings to every day with it's gifts and challenges.

As she says: Enjoy every moment with your beautiful children.

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## The Job Description

- As you heard, the job description of our valuable FRS staff is a dynamic relationship between caring professionals and beautiful families who trust ES with their family's journey and their children.
- If there is a need articulated or described by a family, our FRS staff will find a way to get information, find resources and create community connections to help reduce the stress and anxiety for our families.

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## Presentations: Video Interviews

Gulf Central

Waiting for video to add to slide

Treasure Coast

Waiting for video to add to slide

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### Presentation: A Family's Journey in ES

- Imperia Torres, FRS with SW ES will chat with one of our families
- Q&A to follow

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### Closing Thoughts

- Indeed, as our State has expressed in the Family Involvement Plan, the FRS do indeed design and implement a local system of support so our families can network with each other, receive information and participate in training opportunities.
- Through phone calls, personal visits and questionnaire surveys, our FRS strengthen the bond we need to maintain with our ES families.

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### Thank you

Gulf Central Early Steps: (941)487-5400  
Treasure Coast Early Steps: (772)380-9972  
Southwest Florida Early Steps: (239)433-6700

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