



# We're back!

## Early Steps will be continuing for the next few years!

### Continuing Home Visits!

I know it's hard to believe, but youths in the Early Steps project are turning 14 years old! We were able to obtain funding to continue home visits until your child is 16. We plan to do an age 14 home visit and an age 16 home visit two years later. *Unfortunately, for those of you who were in the feedback group, we are no longer able to continue feedback sessions.* We did not receive funding for this component of Early Steps. We hope you will continue to participate with us during the next four years. We want to learn more about youths in their early teen years, including your child's behavior, how your family gets along, and the role that friends play during this time.

### Thank You for Your Dedication!

We appreciate your continued support, and we thank you for welcoming us into your home for the past several years. We have enjoyed visiting your family and getting to know you. It was wonderful to see your child begin grade school and to talk with you about your family. We look forward to hearing about the strengths and challenges your family experiences as your child goes through adolescence. This newsletter gives you a few tips that many parents of teenagers have found helpful.

### Keep us updated!

If you contact us to give us an updated address or phone number, we will send you a **\$10 payment** as a thank you.

### Communicating with Your Teenager

**Active Listening.** Active listening is a skill you can use when your child is talking with you. Too often we interrupt, give advice, or get angry when children tell us what is happening in their lives. Active listening is a valuable way to get information about your child's activities, thoughts, and feelings. Two important skills of active listening are:

**1. Encouraging.** Show interest in what is being said, and keep your child talking. Three ways to help encourage your child are:

- Look at your child.
- Nod your head yes or say "uh-huh" in a positive tone.
- Don't say anything else.

**2. Paraphrasing.** Repeat what your child has said to show that you're listening.

Active listening can be especially important when discussing "hot-button issues," such as serious misbehavior of friends. If you can practice active listening and allow your child to express feelings without interruption, you may be surprised at what you find out!

### Safeguarding Your Teenager

Safeguarding becomes especially important as your teenager gains more independence and spends more time away from home. Monitoring your child will help you:

- Know what your child is doing
- Set limits
- Offer guidance for problems

### The 4 Cs of Monitoring

**1. Clear Rules.** Have only a few clear rules about your child's activities.

Examples are providing phone numbers of where s/he will be, not having friends over when parents are not home, and calling to check in when they are away from home.

**2. Consistency.** Give praise each time a rule is followed.

**3. Checking Up.** Check to see that your child is at the location s/he gave you. This helps your child be accountable and take your rules seriously.

**4. Communication.** Other parents and teachers can be good resources for information about your child, and knowing the parents of your child's friends can help you supervise your child.

Practicing the 4 Cs of parental monitoring to safeguard your child may not only help keep him/her out of trouble, but may ultimately improve your relationship.

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## Recent Findings

**Positive Parenting Decreases Later Negative Parenting.** Negative parent-child interactions can sometimes have a domino effect and lead to even more negative exchanges. We wondered if positive parent-child interactions could help prevent negative interactions and whether the Family Check-Up could help reduce negative interactions even more. We used the parent-child interactions from the home visit videos to test this question. Results showed that high levels of positive parent-child interactions were linked to less parent-child

negativity the following year. And families who received the Family Check-Up showed more positive interaction when children were ages 3 and 5. These findings show that increasing positive interaction with your child can help reduce negative family interactions in early childhood.

**Child's Behavior Affects Academic Achievement.** Many studies have found that early childhood behaviors are linked to later achievement in school. Some of the behaviors studied include inattention, impulsivity/hyperactivity, opposition, and aggression. We wondered if some

behaviors have a greater effect on achievement than others do. We used parents' answers to questionnaires and the children's answers during academic activities at home visits to test this question. The findings suggest that during the toddler years, aggression has a stronger link to the quality of later academic achievement than the other early disruptive behaviors do. Parents and researchers can use this finding to predict which children may be at more risk for having trouble in school and try to get help for them early on.



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## Resources for Parents and Families

### Charlottesville Local Resources

**United Way**  
434-972-1701

Provides services to help children and youths succeed through engagement, to strengthen and support families, to improve access to health care, and to promote financial stability.

**CharlottesvilleFamily**  
434-984-4713

Provides local resources to make parenting easier and growing up fun in the Charlottesville-Albemarle area.

**Region Ten**  
434-972-1800

Provides mental health, intellectual disability, crisis, and substance use services for adults and children living

in Charlottesville, Albemarle, Greene, Fluvanna, Louisa, and Nelson.

### National Resources

**US Department of Education**  
<http://www2.ed.gov/parents>

This website has links to many resources on numerous topics, from child development and school issues, to help with finding after-school programs. Many printable materials are available, including a booklet titled "Helping Your Child Through Early Adolescence" that may be of interest to you; simply download the PDF or click on the individual topics that are included in the booklet.

### TeensHealth

<http://kidshealth.org/teen>

This website focuses on children's health and development. It includes information for parents with children of all ages, from early childhood through adolescence. There are also tabs with information specifically for kids and teens.

### GreatSchools

<http://www.greatschools.org>

On this website you can search for schools by city, state, and zip code. It includes information to help you choose the best school for your child, including reviews, test scores, student-teacher ratios, ethnicity of student body, programs, extracurricular programs, and more. A key feature is that it helps you compare specific schools.