FIRST STEPS

Getting children ready for school.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Local Partnership Orientation Training

Orientation: What is SC First Steps?

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FIRST STEPS

Training Modules for SC First Steps Local Partnership Orientation

- **Module 1: Orientation - What is SC First Steps?**

- Module 2: Local Partnership Structure & Functions

- Module 3: Local Partnership Systems & Accountability

- Your SC First Steps Partnership

Agenda

- Context – Why is investing in the earliest years important?

- What is SC First Steps?

- History of SC First Steps

- Legislative Goals

- SC First Steps Structure
  - Duties of the SC First Steps Office
  - Duties of Local Partnerships

- SC First Steps Core Areas of Service & Programs

Intended Outcomes

- Participants will have a basic understanding of SC First Steps, including:
  - The context and history of SC First Steps
  - The legislative goals of SC First Steps
  - Local and state SC First Steps structure
  - Core areas of service and programs

Documents Referenced in this Training

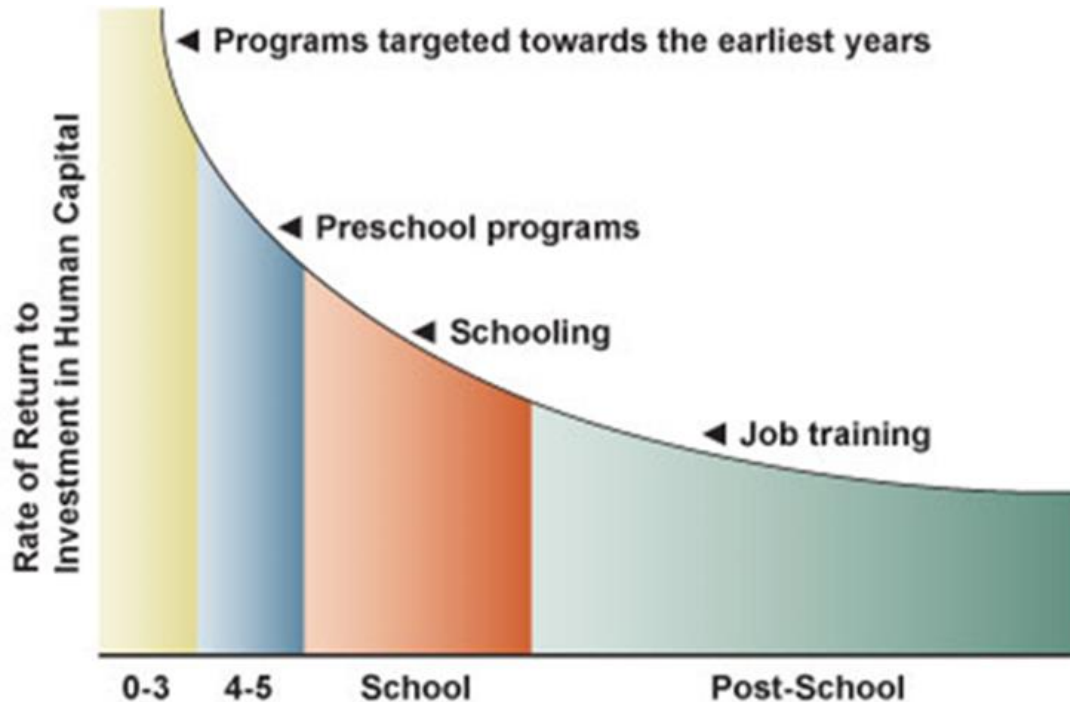Please reference the following document:

- SC First Steps Legislation, located on the SC Legislature website at http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c152.php

Context – Why is investing in the earliest years so important?

- Research has proven that the earliest years of life – prior to school entry – are the most critical years for brain development. In fact, **90% of brain development occurs before age 5.**

- Studies show that positive early experiences for young children help shape their long-term success, while also saving taxpayer dollars in long-term education and social impact costs.

Context – Why is investing in the earliest years so important?

The **graph below** demonstrates the earlier the investment in programs targeted toward the earliest years, the greater the return on investment.

Context – Why is investing in the earliest years so important?

- Every child needs effective early childhood supports—and at-risk children from disadvantaged environments are least likely to get them.

- Approximately **157 children are born every day in South Carolina**. The latest Kids Count data (2014) shows **27% of these children will be born into poverty and 52% born into low income families** (<200% of poverty).

➢ While poverty is a strong predictor of school readiness, it is **not** a determining factor. **Investments in early childhood services** can alter the developmental trajectory for these children.

Context – What is SC First Steps?

What is SC First Steps to School Readiness?

- SC First Steps is the state's comprehensive **school readiness initiative**, helping parents prepare their young children for school and life success**.**

What is "school readiness"?

- **Section 59-152-25 (G)** '**School readiness**' means the level of child development necessary to ensure early school success as measured in the following domains: physical health and motor skills; emotional and social competence; language and literacy development; and mathematical thinking and cognitive skills. School readiness is supported by the knowledge and practices of families, caregivers, healthcare providers, educators, and communities.

Profile of the Ready Kindergartner

The Ready Five-Year-Old…

has developed the skills and abilities necessary to achieve at age-appropriate levels. He/she is physically, socially, & emotionally prepared to benefit from a quality kindergarten experience.

Ready Families/Caregivers…

provide safe, loving, and stimulating environments in which children can grow and develop optimally, while ensuring that pediatric health and dental needs are regularly addressed.

Ready Communities…

provide the resources necessary to ensure optimal development. They create environments in which young children can grow and learn in the absence of fear, stress, danger and hunger.

Ready Schools and Educators…

understand that each child develops on a unique timeline and are prepared to meet the individual needs of all students through high-quality, developmentally appropriate instruction.

To view the full profile, visit http://ican.sc

History of SC First Steps

- Created in 1999 by the South Carolina General Assembly, as leaders recognized an alarming gap in SC students' preparedness for school success.

- South Carolina was the third state in the nation to create a statewide public-private partnership to increase school readiness outcomes for children.

- SC First Steps is the state's **only** entity solely focused on the **school readiness** needs of the state's children.

Purpose of SC First Steps

Section 59-152-20. "The purpose of SC First Steps initiative is to **develop, promote, and assist** efforts of agencies, private providers, and public and private organizations and entities at the state level and the community level, to **collaborate and cooperate** in order to focus and intensify services, assure the **most efficient use of all available resources**, and **eliminate duplication of efforts** to serve the needs of young children and their families."

- SC First Steps funds must **not be used to "supplant or replace"** any other funds being spent on services but must be used to "expand, extend, improve, or increase access to services."

- Funds CAN be used to enable a community to begin to offer new or previously unavailable services.

SC First Steps Legislative Goals

Section 59-152-30.

(1) **provide parents with access** to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;

(2) **increase comprehensive services** so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;

(3) **promote high quality preschool programs** that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;

(4) **provide services** so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and

(5) **mobilize communities** to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children

SC First Steps Structure

- In each of South Carolina's 46 counties, SC First Steps expands early learning services available for young children, their families, and caregivers.

- All counties are served **by a local SC First Steps partnership** responsible for *meeting local needs and identifying collaborative opportunities* to help the state's youngest learners.

- **State level board and staff** *support statewide priorities, programs, and assist local partnerships* in meeting the needs of families statewide.

SC First Steps Structure

State Board of Trustees

SC First Steps Legislation, Section 59-152-40. "The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees established in Section 63-11-1720 shall oversee and be accountable for the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative."

- 5 appointed by Governor, 4 by House Speaker, 4 by President Pro Tempore to represent categories (parents, early childhood, business, medical)
- 4 legislative members (Chair Senate Education, Chair House Education and Public Works, 2 gubernatorial appointees)
- Governor or designee (Chair)
- Superintendent of Education or designee
- Agency/Organization Directors: DSS, DHEC, DHHS, DDSN, Head Start Collaboration Office, Children's Trust

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SC First Steps Structure

State Office of First Steps (SCFS)

- Autonomous unit of state government within SC Dept. of Education

SCFS State Office Responsibilities:

- Support 46 local non-profit partnerships by technical assistance, monitoring and accountability, managing finance and data system, and external evaluation

- BabyNet lead agency (IDEA, Part C, 2010)

- SC First Steps 4K Program in private settings statewide (2006)

- Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantee (2015)

- State office: Parents as Teachers

- State coordinating office: Nurse-Family Partnership

SC First Steps State Office Duties

Section 59-152-50: "Under supervision of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, there is created an Office of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness. The office shall:

- **Provide to the board information** on best practice, successful strategies, model programs, and financing mechanisms;

- **Review the local partnerships' plans and budgets** in order to provide technical assistance and recommendations regarding local grant proposals and improvement in meeting statewide and local goals;

- **Provide technical assistance, consultation, and support to local partnerships** to facilitate their success including, but not limited to, model programs, strategic planning, leadership development, best practice, successful strategies, collaboration, financing, and evaluation;

SC First Steps State Office Duties

- **Evaluate each program** funded by the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees on a regular cycle to **determine its effectiveness and whether it should continue to receive funding**;

- **Recommend to the board the applicants meeting the criteria for SC First Steps partnerships and the grants to be awarded**;

- Submit an **annual report** to the board by December first;

- **Provide for ongoing data collection** (including external evaluation); and

- **Coordinate** the SC First Steps to School Readiness initiative with all other state, federal, and local public and private efforts.

Structure of Local Partnerships

46 county partnerships

- Local board and staff

- State funding via annual grant from SC First Steps, also leveraged by other public and private dollars

- Program selection determined by local partnership board, approved by SC First Steps

SC First Steps Local Partnerships

How do Local Partnerships deliver services?

Each partnership identifies the community's greatest school readiness needs and addresses them by:

- Supporting or expanding existing services, such as funding a local school district's early childhood program.

- Contracting for added services, such as children's health screenings.

- Directly providing services, such as parent education.

SC First Steps Core Areas of Service

- In each county, SC First Steps expands early learning services available for young children, their families, and caregivers. Each of the six color blocks of the SC First Steps logo represents a core area of service, outlining a comprehensive strategy to prepare children for long-term school success.

SC First Steps Core Areas of Service

Heathy Start

Healthy Start programs are strategies with health outcomes as a primary focus. These include health services such as includes prenatal and post-partum services for both mother and baby.

- Nurse-Family Partnership

SC First Steps Core Areas of Service

Family Strengthening

Family Strengthening programs support parents and other adult family members as their child's first teacher. SC First Steps partnerships fund several types of family strengthening programs:

- Home Visitation
- Family Literacy
- Dolly Parton Imagination Library
- Parent Training and Other Family Literacy and Supports
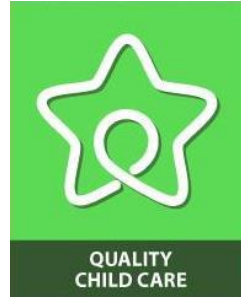
SC First Steps Core Areas of Service

Early Intervention

Finding and serving children with developmental delays as early as possible can reduce later remediation and can help children prepare for school success along with their typically developing peers.

– Early Identification and Referral

SC First Steps Core Areas of Service

Quality Child Care

SC First Steps recognizes quality child care as a research-based determinant of school readiness. As such, SC First Steps collaborates with parents, the child care community and its agency and community partners to maximize child care quality throughout the state. Child care quality strategies fall into three major areas:

- Quality Enhancement
- Staff Training and Development
- Child Care Scholarships

SC First Steps Core Areas of Service

EARLY EDUCATION

Early Education

SC First Steps leverages state, local and private resources to increase the quality of, and number of children participating in, developmentally appropriate pre-kindergarten programs in both the public and private sectors. Early education strategies fall into the following types:

- Expanding 4K in public schools: adding additional full-day 4K classrooms, extending half-day programs to full-day, or providing preschool to children under 4 (i.e. 3K).

- Early Head Start

SC First Steps Core Areas of Service

School Transition

These services help children and families make the important transition into public school.

- **Countdown to Kindergarten** is a home visitation program pairing the families of high-risk rising kindergartners with their future teachers during the summer before school entry. Teachers complete six visits with each family, centered upon classroom and content expectations.

SC First Steps State-Level Programs

BabyNet

- South Carolina's early intervention system for children birth-36 months with developmental delays or disabilities

- Matches the special needs of infants and toddlers who have developmental delays with the professional resources available within the community

- Funded by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C, state, Medicaid, private insurance

- SC First Steps became lead agency in 2010 and system point of entry (SPOE) agency in 2011

Early Head Start

- In 2015, SC First Steps was awarded a federal Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships grant to expand Early Head Start services within infant-toddler (0-36 months) child care settings.

- Beginning in 2016, SC First Steps will contract with a limited number of providers within a defined twelve county service area, including the counties of *Allendale, Anderson, Bamberg, Berkeley, Dillon, Georgetown, Laurens, Lexington, Newberry, Orangeburg, Saluda, and York*

First Steps 4K
(formerly CDEPP)

- Permanently established by the SC Read to Succeed Act in 2014, the SC Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP) provides full-day four-year-old-kindergarten programs in 64 South Carolina school districts.

- SC First Steps 4K offers parents the opportunity to enroll their eligible children in more than 150 private, faith- and community-based preschool providers statewide at no cost to families.

Parents as Teachers (PAT)

- PAT is a national, evidence-based home visitation model designed to ensure young children are healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

- SC First Steps has served as the lead agency for PAT in South Carolina since 2011.

- SC First Steps provides technical assistance, training and support to each of the state's 43 affiliate PAT programs.

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