



Countdown to Kindergarten 2019 Proclamation Toolkit

WHY A PROCLAMATION?

Issuing a proclamation on behalf of your city or county is an effective way to raise public awareness about the importance of school readiness. As an official recognition of an initiative, event or achievement, a proclamation is a useful advocacy tool because it carries the full support of a key government official in your community.

FIVE STEPS:

1 Identify the right elected official.

- For a county proclamation, it will be the county commissioners who will sign.
- For a city proclamation, it will be a mayor, city manager or city marshal.

2 Make contact.

Once you've figured out which offices you're reaching out to, check their websites for forms and guidelines on how to submit a proclamation. You can also call their office directly. When you do, be ready to share the following information:

- The purpose of the proclamation (i.e. Expressing Support for School Readiness during the 2019 Countdown to Kindergarten).
- The date when the proclamation is needed. Generally, the proclamation should be made during the summer before the first day of school. If you want the proclamation to coincide with the start of the "Countdown to Kindergarten," aim for the week of July 8-12. Otherwise, be flexible.
- A brief overview of First Steps and the Countdown to Kindergarten program.
- Your name and contact information.

Or, use **the sample outreach email in this toolkit**.

3 Write the proclamation.

Feel free to customize **the sample draft proclamation in this toolkit**. Note that you may need to adapt the data and language to fit your county's context.

4 Promote your proclamation.

Getting a proclamation is a big deal! Invite your board members, staff, teachers, families and supporters to celebrate; just be sure to follow any guidelines as to whom (and how many) individuals you can bring to the proclamation meeting or signing event. Don't forget to take pictures!

Promote your new proclamation through social media by posting or going live on Facebook, Twitter and or Instagram, using the hashtags **#CountdownToKindergarten** and tagging **@SCFirstSteps**, as well as your elected officials. Don't forget traditional media by sending a copy of the proclamation to your local media outlets and offering to talk about the importance of school readiness and the benefits of Countdown to Kindergarten.

5 Tell us about it!

The SC First Steps communications team can help promote your civic leadership through our communications channels. Email your proclamation, announcements, and photos to **bfmoore@scfirststeps.org**.

SAMPLE OUTREACH EMAIL

The following email offers ideas and language you can use as part of your outreach efforts to local officials for Countdown to Kindergarten. Feel free to copy, paste, or adjust as you see fit for your community.

Subject: Join us in celebrating Countdown to Kindergarten 2019

Dear **[NAME OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL]**,

During the summer of 2019, **[NAME OF COUNTY]** County First Steps will partner with **[NAME OF SCHOOL(S) OR SCHOOL DISTRICT(S)]** in preparing future students for school success through the Countdown to Kindergarten program. We invite you show your support for this program and raise awareness about the importance of school readiness by formally proclaiming July 2019 as Countdown to Kindergarten Month.

Developed by South Carolina First Steps and identified as a promising state practice by the National Governor's Association in 2005, Countdown to Kindergarten is a free home visitation program pairing the families of high-risk rising kindergartners with their future teachers in the summer before school entry. Teachers complete six visits with every participating family—the first five visits at the family's home and the final visit at school, where children and families are introduced to their new kindergarten classroom. During their time together, teachers introduce families to kindergarten expectations and share engaging school-readiness activities that families can practice at home.

Our research has shown that Countdown to Kindergarten is a successful strategy for promoting school readiness. Teachers report that parents who participate in the program demonstrate a better understanding of kindergarten expectations, keep in closer touch with them throughout the school year, more fully support their teaching and behavior management practices, and work more effectively with their children in at-home activities that improve academic skills. Parents also report that the program helps both them and their children feel confident and excited about kindergarten.

While the Countdown to Kindergarten program specifically targets high-risk children and families, we recognize that the transition to kindergarten is an important milestone for every child. Your proclamation recognizing July 2019 as the Countdown to Kindergarten Month will help us promote the importance of school readiness and accomplish our mission of preparing all children in **[NAME OF CITY OR COUNTY]**, South Carolina for success in school, work and life.

Thank you for considering our request.

[NAME], [TITLE]

[NAME OF COUNTY] County First Steps

SAMPLE COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Countdown to Kindergarten is a program developed by South Carolina First Steps to support the vision of ensuring a South Carolina where all children start school ready to succeed; and

WHEREAS, **[NAME OF COUNTY]** County First Steps, in partnership with **[NAME OF SCHOOL(S) OR SCHOOL DISTRICT(S)]**, is preparing high-risk children in **[NAME OF COUNTY OR CITY]**, South Carolina for school success through the Countdown to Kindergarten program; and

WHEREAS, these organizations work together with families and community partners to promote the importance of school readiness for all children in **[NAME OF COUNTY OR CITY]**; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper to recognize the importance of high quality early childhood experiences that prepare our youngest citizens for success in school, work and life; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, **[NAME OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL]**, **[TITLE]**, do hereby proclaim July 2019 as

Countdown to Kindergarten Month

in **[COUNTY/CITY NAME]**, South Carolina and urge all citizens to support efforts that increase access to high-quality early childhood experiences for children and families.

[NAME OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL]
[TITLE]