



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2021 – 2023





Mission

Dorchester County First Steps helps families and caregivers in our county prepare children for school success by accessing community resources to deliver, enhance and expand high-quality services.

Vision

Every Child in Dorchester County will have the resources that they need to be prepared for school success.

Values

Children- We believe that all children can learn and have potential for academic, social, emotional and physical greatness.

Families-We believe that family engagement is the glue to helping families grow and achieve.

Community- We believe that collaboration with agencies and other non-profits helps us deliver sustaining care to families and children at-risk for not being successful in school.

State- We believe that maintaining compliance with state standards and guidelines will enable us to obtain funding to provide strategies for children's school success.

Message from the Executive Director



Dr. Crystal Y. Campbell
Executive Director
Dorchester County First Steps

My personal philosophy of early childhood education is that all children can learn and excel, and the emphasis should be more on preparing the environment for the child, rather than preparing the child for the environment. Like Maria Montessori stated, ***“The goal of Early Childhood Education should be to activate the child’s own natural desire to learn”***. Our focus as Dorchester First Steps is to provide an environment that stimulates the child’s desire to learn.

For the next 3 years, we will include quality enhancement in childcare facilities, stronger family engagement, provide trauma-informed care within our home visitation programs, and help families gain access to and receive needed resources. All with the intention of preparing young children for school success.

Dr. Crystal Y. Campbell

Message from the Board Chair



Trimeka Johnson

Board Chair

Dorchester County First Steps

Greetings to the Dorchester County community at large! We have created a plan that will give us direction for the next three years. Our plan helps families access needed resources, support parents with childcare and mentor childcare providers, so our parents can work and/or go to school and our childcare providers can improve the quality of their centers with the mission of preparing children for school success.

Additionally, we will wisely and carefully resume our community visibility. We have forged strong partnerships that benefit our citizens; as such, we will maintain relationship vitality via public events so much as these unprecedented times will allow.

Finally, we have set SMART goals with the hope of exceeding them for the good of those we serve!

Here is to the next three ambitious years!"

Trimeka Johnson

Overarching Measure(s) of Success

1. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HIGH INTENSITY PROGRAMS FUNDED BY FIRST STEPS

By FY23, Dorchester County First Steps, will increase the number of families enrolled in high-intensity programs by 20 families.

2. INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY FIRST STEPS

By increasing donations, fundraisers, and grants, Dorchester First Steps will increase (by three the number of programs and the availability of high-quality early care and education opportunities by FY23.

3. REDUCE THE RACIAL/ETHNIC GAP IN KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Challenging behaviors, of children “at-risk”, impact kindergarten readiness. Dorchester County First Steps will address these racial/ethnic gaps by increasing the following by 10% : training for childcare providers in the Pyramid Model, coaching and mentoring Childcare Providers and Directors, and providing additional support for families with trauma-informed care and social justice initiatives.

Objectives

1. DCFS will increase the number of children served by First Steps programs.

According to the Needs Assessment conducted by DCFS, there are 3900 children at or below 185% of poverty in the county. Currently, DCFS has only impacted 600 of our children who are at-risk. A need for our county partnership is to reach more children. So, each year we will strive to increase our numbers.

2. DCFS will increase the availability of early care and education opportunities. In order to reach more children and families we must have additional funding. In FY 22 the DCFS budget will be cut again. To maintain strategies and programs we must identify donors and receive grant funding.

3. Reduce the racial/ethnic gaps by increasing training, coaching and mentoring for childcare providers.

The number of suspensions and expulsions in childcare is alarming, even though in Dorchester the dismissal of children is covered up. Typically, this dismissal occurs due to teachers and administrators not having the tools to identify and help children with challenging behaviors. In the next three years DCFS will implement strategies to address this need using the Pyramid model.

1. DCFS will increase the number of children served by First Steps Programs.

STRATEGY 1.1

Increase the number of home visitation programs.

SMART GOAL(S)

- By November 2020, grant funds will be obtained to hire a Parent Educator for Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP).
- By November 2020, grant funds will be secured to implement the new home visitation program: Nurturing Parenting Program, serving 20 families each year.
- Grant funds will be secured to maintain NPP in the budget for FY22 and FY23.
- Dorchester County First Steps will continue as a Member subscriber to Parents As Teachers, serving no less than 45 families each year.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- DCFS will strengthen collaboration efforts with the following agencies to help identify new families: DSS, Florence Crittenton, Carolina Teen Center, Halos, and the community at-large.

STRATEGY 1.2

Increase family engagement in all parenting programs.

SMART GOAL(S)

- Implement 2 sixteen-week group connections each year for 3 years. This will be a combined group connection with PAT and NPP.

1. DCFS will increase the number of children served by First Steps programs.

- Administer parent engagement (pre and post) surveys twice each year, to determine effectiveness of the programs.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- DCFS will collaborate with the following agencies to meet this goal: DSS, Florence Crittenton, Tri-County PLAY Collaborative and Carolina Teen Center

STRATEGY 1.3

DCFS will provide support and create a celebration for participating families involved in group connections.

SMART GOAL(S)

- Each year families will participate in a “Celebration of Completion” once their sessions are over. There will be 2 sessions a year.
- Staff will collect data on the resources shared and connect with each family, quarterly, using the Aunt Bertha portal.
- Staff will be physically visible in the community (outreach opportunities: festivals, Fire Parade, Third Thursdays, etc.) twice a year, once in the Fall and once in the Spring to help identify future families for our programs.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- DSS Support Team, Florence Crittenton ED, Carolina Teen Center ED, Tri-County First Steps EDs

1. DCFS will increase the number of children served by First Steps programs.

STRATEGY 1.4

Provide family engagement activities for home visitation families

SMART GOAL(S)

- Provide *Positive Discipline for Parents* parenting classes for parents weekly for one hour for 8 weeks each year.
- Create a parent led advocacy coalition of parents for parents. This group will start in January 2021 and repeat each year until FY23. As interest grows, we will add groups.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- DD4 School District
- DD2 School District

2. DCFS will increase the availability of early care and education opportunities.

STRATEGY 2.1

Develop a plan to secure funds to implement Countdown to Kindergarten and Family Engagement Summer Group Connections.

SMART GOAL(S)

- Research the local, state and federal grants to find if there is funding for Countdown to Kindergarten, Family Literacy and Group Connections. This is an on-going goal. Once a grant is discovered, the application process will begin immediately.
- Deploy AmeriCorps Outreach staff (and/or Executive Director) to identify potential donors and community members who can support our strategies and organize the LP Board Members to help with the support. This goal will be on-going beginning in July of each fiscal year.
- Create a plan for meeting with potential donors and sharing the data that supports the need for funding, by January 30, of each fiscal year.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- All agencies that have similar missions and work with our targeted populations

STRATEGY 2.2

Secure funds to create additional Literacy Kits for QE childcare facilities, Head Start and 4K programs' use in the schools

2. DCFS will increase the availability of early care and education opportunities cont.

SMART GOAL(S)

- Deploy AmeriCorps Outreach staff (and/or Executive Director) to identify potential donors and community members who can support our strategies and organize the LP Board Members to help with the support by February 2021. This goal is on-going each year.
- Using a thematic approach, create 12 Literacy kits using books and other age-appropriate items. Completion: October 2020.
- Order copies of the 12 books for every child in the QE classrooms. Completion: October of each fiscal year.
- Provide training in the use of Literacy Kits with QE participating childcare providers, once the classes have been identified and kits given. This implementation time will vary based on when classes are identified; but will be initiated within a month of identification.
- Set up procedures for refurbishing the Literacy Kits as needed each August, starting 2020.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- DD4 School District
- Dorchester Library Systems
- DD2 School District

3. Reduce the racial/ethnic gaps by increasing training, coaching and mentoring for childcare providers.

STRATEGY 3.1

Increase training opportunities, coaching/mentoring and reflective skills with childcare providers.

SMART GOAL(S)

- Each year, we will create 20 hours of rosters in Pyramid training (dealing with challenging behaviors and Emotional/Social development) with Endeavors training system.
- Each year, DCFS will create a schedule for providing coaching opportunities in and out (virtual) of the classroom.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Tri-County Pyramid Coalition, Endeavors, and Childcare Cohort.

STRATEGY 3.2

Use appropriate assessments to provide in-depth and targeted insight into childcare classroom practices.

SMART GOAL(S)

- Create 10 hours of reflection/journaling opportunities with Endeavors training system by December 30, of each fiscal year.
- Observe each cohort participant looking specifically for cultural sensitivity, antibias interactions, and racism; reflect in journals and conduct discussions, each month beginning November to June each fiscal year.

3. Reduce the racial/ethnic gaps by increasing training, coaching and mentoring for childcare providers.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Tri-County Pyramid Coalition

STRATEGY 3.3

Using rich literature on social justice for children, create study groups involving parents, childcare providers and community members.

SMART GOAL(S)

- Using ***Don't Look Away: Embracing Anti-bias Classrooms*** as a resource create study groups with 25 (minimum) childcare providers from the Tri-County area, by June 30 of each fiscal year.
- Using the trade book: ***Something Happened In Our Town-A Child's Story about Racial Injustice***, create a 20 parent, 2 to 4-week, book study group with parents from Dorchester County

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Tri-County Pyramid Coalition and community members and parents.