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Florence County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2007 Annual Report*

Summary

Numbers Served:

4,586 children; 203 adults/families; 35 child care facilities, with 711 children total at those facilities; 0 child care centers achieved a higher quality status; 0 higher adult education levels achieved; 44 health assessments and screenings; 7,075 home visits; 15 staff trained; 75 4K slots and 25,662 books distributed.

Total Budget:

\$1,032,031 (includes all funding sources)

Florence County First Steps School Readiness Profile

Population Characteristics	Figure
Population of Young Children (Ages 0-5)	11,404 - 9%
Children Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch (5K)*	61%
Average Per Capita Personal Income	27,359
Children in Poverty (Ages 0-5)***	25%
Children Who Are Over Age in Third Grade**	19%
Children in Third Grade Performing Below Basic on PACT Reading **	16%
Children in Third Grade Performing Below Basic on PACT Math**	22%
Low Birth Weight Infants	14%
Births to Mothers With Less Than High School Education	21%
Less Than Adequate Prenatal Care	28%

*Note: Data is for 2003 except where noted (*2005, **2004, ***1999).*

Profile Comments: *The success of children is strongly influenced by the education of the parent(s). In 2003, 359 babies (18.4% of all babies) were born to mothers who completed less than the 12th grade. Seven hundred-seventy (770) babies were born to single mothers. This was 39.2% of all the babies born in Florence County. In 2003, 366 divorce decrees involving 169 children were filed. These factors contribute to the fact that approximately 2,608 children below age 6 lived in poverty. If a parent has limited educational and financial resources his/her ability to care for a child is jeopardized. Therefore, parents need support from the community. According to parent surveys, parents felt there was a need for scholarships (53%) and parenting skills (43%).*

Florence County has 250 licensed facilities. 26% (64) of those facilities are enhanced and 2% (5) are NAEYC accredited. Many facilities are choosing not to participate in the ABC Enhancement program because of the lack of funding. ABC was establishing higher standard of care at a time when quality, affordable child care facilities are needed. Today, one or both parents are working and children are spending 40 hours per week in childcare. According to surveys, early educators felt the two biggest factors affecting a child's readiness for school is the cost of childcare (81%) and the quality of childcare (68%). According to Clemson's "Creating Supportive Communities for Families with Young Children", to improve quality you must promote professional development and set higher standards. Thus, Florence County First Steps is impacting child readiness by providing comprehensive services for children including the family, the environment, as well as the childcare provider.

Florence County First Steps participated in the 4K Expansion Program. Five Florence County Centers were identified for participation in the program. They were Excellent Learning Preschool, Sunshine House #30, Lake City Head Start, Thelma Brown Head Start, and Zion Canaan Child Development Center. First Steps funded 75 slots in these facilities.

SCHOOL READINESS STRATEGIES

Family Strengthening

Statewide Goal: South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness will work collaboratively with its agency partners, the faith community and private sector to support parents and families in their own efforts to maximize the school readiness, well-being and long-term academic success of the state's young children.

FY 2007 Results

Partnership Goal: To increase the capacity of parents to be their child's first and most important teacher.

- *The **Parent Child Home (PCH-P) Program** was implemented by each of the five school districts.*
- *124 families (with 126 children ages 2-4) were served with bi-weekly home visits.*
- *6,420 thirty-minute visits were made to those 124 families. Educational books and toys were used to model appropriate, positive parent-child verbal interaction.*
- *43 group meetings were conducted with parents to discuss parenting issues.*
- *A waiting list of 27 families was established for the PCHP.*
- *Parents strongly agreed that their children benefited from the VISM and educational book or toy (89%).*
- *Parents strongly agreed that they were overall satisfied with the program (77%).*
- *Parents strongly agreed that their interactions with their children increased as a result of the program (71%).*
- *Parents strongly agreed that they had learned to use more age-appropriate activities with their children (74%).*

Partnership Goal: To increase children's exposure to books and parents' involvement in their child's learning.

- *The **Imagination Library** provides books to all children in Florence County under age 5.*
- *23,524 age appropriate books were given to 3,571 children.*
- *Returned books are distributed to the homeless shelters and childcare facilities.*
- *The Imagination Library is integrated into the Parenting and Health Programs.*

- *The Imagination Library Program was implemented by United Way of Florence.*
- *Parents strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the Imagination Library.*
- *Parents strongly agreed that they have increased the amount of time spent reading to their child(ren) as a result of receiving books from Imagination Library).*

Child Care

Statewide Goal South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness recognizes quality child care as a research-based determinant of school readiness. As such, First Steps will collaborate with parents, the child-care community and its agency and community partners to maximize child care quality throughout the state. Particular emphasis will be placed on assisting parents in their efforts to identify those settings most likely to maximize developmental outcomes, and assisting providers in their own efforts to maximize the learning environments they provide for young children.

FY 2007 Results

Partnership Goal: Improve the quality of care at childcare facilities by setting higher standard.

- *The Quality Enhancement Program was implemented by Florence County First Steps. Thirteen (13) facilities, serving 411 children, were provided a Quality Enhancement Grant. Nine of the facilities were ABC Enhanced.*
- *Grants were awarded as follows: 3 Family facilities (23.1%) received \$750, 4 Group facilities (30.7%) received \$1,000, and 6 Centers (46.2%) received \$1,500.*
- *Florence Public Library continued to circulate previously purchased activity kits that focused on subjects such as math, science, social skills, and literacy to providers, parents, and early childhood educators.*
- *All of the facilities purchased items that increased their ECER-S, ITERS, or FDCRS rating by 1 point.*
- *Providers (83.3%) strongly agreed that they would recommend the program to others.*
- *Providers (91.6) strongly agreed that the Quality Enhancement Program enabled them to enhance the quality of services they provided to their children and families.*
- *Providers (66.6%) strongly agreed that they are satisfied with the services provided by the quality enhancement program.*

Partnership Goal – Improve the quality of care at childcare facilities by promoting professional development of childcare practitioners.

- *50 Childcare employees attended at least one of the 4 training sessions.*
- *20 hours of training was provided to childcare providers.*
- *1,367 children were impacted by the services provided by the 50 childcare employees attending trainings.*
- *All trainings and trainers were certified through the Center for Child Care Career Development.*

Partnership Goal - Increase the number of children attending quality childcare facilities by helping parents to make childcare affordable.

- *Thirty-nine (39) childcare slots were established through **Scholarship Initiative**. This initiative was implemented in conjunction with the Department of Social Services – ABC Division.*
- *Thirty-seven (37) children were awarded childcare scholarships.*
- *A waiting list of 110 families was established during the one day application process.*
- *Parents agreed that they were satisfied with the service (4.29 with 5 being strongly agreed).*
- *Parents strongly agreed that the program is needed in their community (4.74 with 5 being strongly agreed).*
- *Most parents commented that the need is far greater than the allocation.*

Healthy Start

Statewide Goal: South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness recognizes the importance of a healthy start in maximizing both school readiness and the long-term wellbeing of the state's children. The initiative will partner with families, the medical community and other stakeholders to leverage resources for – and increase awareness of – the healthcare, nutrition and early developmental needs of the state's young children.

FY 2007 Results

Partnership Goal: Partnership Goal –To ensure that children receive a healthy start in life by offering early intervention and preventative services.

- *The Home Health Visitation Program provided education to 130 families who received 655 home visits; 30 consumers through consumer group meetings; and 806 community participants through other activities such as health fairs, a health conference and back to school events.*
- *Ninety-five percent (95%) of the families with children (200) up to age five received appropriate immunization and well child visits.*
- *Nineteen (19) referrals were made and services provided assistance to families in need of oral health or dental care services.*
- *Home visitors to 130 families administered one hundred ninety-two (192) developmental delay screenings (ASQ). Four (4) families were referred to BabyNet for further screening.*
- *Four hundred seventeen (417) books were distributed.*

School Transition

Statewide Goal: South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness recognizes school entry as a pivotal transition point in each child's educational career. In an effort to ensure strong collaborative relationships between the state's families and schools, the initiative will develop strategies to maximize parents' understandings of state and local expectations and ensure a smooth and beneficial school transition for each child.

Partnership Goal: Ensure an educationally beneficial school transition by serving 30 at-risk children in the Countdown to Kindergarten program.

FY 2007 Results

- *Thirty (30) identified children completed the Countdown to Kindergarten program during summer 2006.*
- *Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the children received five or more home visits.*
- *Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the children were placed in their Countdown home visitor's kindergarten class.*
- *One hundred percent of the children qualified for free and reduced lunch.*
- *Countdown to Kindergarten resulted in improvements in parent-child interactions, including:*
 - *A 10% improvement in verbal interaction between parent and child.*
 - *A 23% improvement in parents reading to and with their children.*
 - *A 36% increase in the number of parents and children visiting the library.*

SCHOOL READINESS STRATEGIES FOR 2007-2008

- *Parent Child Home will continue to operate in all five school districts.*
- *Count Down to Kindergarten will be given to the school district(s) that can be responsible for a 50 % cash match.*
- *Florence County First Steps will not be direct participants in the Pee Dee Regional First Steps video conferences. However, providers will be notified of scheduled conferences and will be afforded the opportunity to participate in video conferences. Florence County First Steps will sponsor monthly trainings conducted by trainers certified through the Center for Child Care Career Development.*
- *The Home Health Visitation Program will operate with no changes.*
- *The Facility Quality Enhancement will continue to give grants to child care facilities. The number of grants will be reduced in order to increase the amount of funds awarded to each facility. The focus of the enhancement program will be quality rather than quantity.*
- *The Scholarship Initiative will offer 29 slots, but because of slots rolling over from the 06-07 year, the total slots will be 39.*
- *The 4K Expansion Program will be offered in eleven (11) facilities. Two of these facilities will be Centers of Excellence.*

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

State Appropriation	State-Private	In-kind	Local-Private	EIA Appropriation	4K CDC Initiative	TOTAL
\$520,515	\$53,216	\$115,825	\$17,373	\$40,627	\$284,475	\$1,032,031

NOTE: The above State and EIA appropriation amounts leveraged all state-private, in-kind, local-private, lottery and federal dollars.

READINESS STRATEGIES	EXPENSES
County Administration	\$50,580
County Programmatic	\$76,746
Parent Child Home	\$173,020
Imagination Library	\$84,500
Private 4K	\$128,660
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$14,430
Childcare Quality Enhancement	\$45,327
Childcare Training and Development	\$29,703
Scholarship Initiative	\$87,000
Home-Based Services	\$58,987
TOTAL	\$748,953

NOTABLE DONORS

DONOR'S NAME	AMOUNT
Agapeland Community	\$100
Alicestine Timmons	\$20
Artesia Harrison	\$20
BAC Daycare	\$70
Calandra Johnson	\$30
Childcare Training- Cash	\$170
Doris Baker	\$10
Eaddy's Daycare	\$10
Echols Daycare	\$30
Elizabeth Young	\$10
Erika Howard	\$10
Eva Samuel	\$10
Excellent Learning center	\$34.61
Executive Park Daycare	\$80
Florence School District 3	\$11,640
Florence School District Two	\$1,600
Glory Anderson	\$20
God's Care Daycare	\$140
Gracie McLeod	\$50
Immanuel Baptist Church	\$100
Jannie Dickson	\$20
Joan Wilds	\$20
Joanne Timmons	\$10
Joyce James	\$20
Kare Bear Day Care	\$20
Kiddie Castle	\$80
Kitty Little Lamb	\$50
Lashaun Scott	\$10
LaShic McCain	\$30
Latausha McNeil	\$50
Linda Hoverman-O'Neal	\$100
Lorena Blue	\$10
Mary Hanna	\$20
Mattie Eaddy	\$10
May Hanna	\$10
Michelle McFadden	\$10
Mildred Brown	\$60
Nesmith Daycare	\$70
Patricia Lytch	\$10
Pee Dee Electric	\$2,500
Percilla Wilson	\$50
Precious Moments Daycare	\$10
R. Hampton Andrews	\$20
Rhonda Williams	\$60
Shelley Benthall	\$50
Shirley Lockett	\$10

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St. Anthony School	\$20
Stepping Out on Faith	\$40
Stepping Stones	\$90
Terwanda York	\$10
Thompson Daycare	\$10
Tina Chassereau	\$80
Toddlers Inn Daycare	\$20
Tosha's Tiny Tots	\$20
Tracy McKnight	\$10
Troy-Johnson Learning	\$30
US Toy Co., Inc.	\$24
Various Daycares	\$960
Williams Daycare	\$40
Yachtsman Resort Hotel	\$50
Zion Safe Haven	\$60
TOTAL	\$18,928.61

Local Match Percentage for 2007: 31.28% (at least 15% required)

BOARD INFORMATION

During FY 07, the Florence County First Steps partnership board members volunteered 78 hours.

Value of Volunteer Time¹: $\$18.77 \times 78 = \$1,464.06$

FLORENCE COUNTY FIRST STEPS BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Mrs. Ivey Staley, Chair, Florence School District
Ms. Maebelle Alston, Head Start
Ms. Wendy Bird, Parent of Pre-School Children
Dr. Eric Brown, Transportation Provider
Ms. Michelline Cooper, DHEC
Mr. David Eaddy, House Appointment
Ms. Ticey Fleming, Parent of Pre-School Children
Mr. Monroe Friday, House Appointment
Dr. Dorothy Harris, Early Childhood Education
Ms. Shondra Johnson, Florence School District 4
Ms. Nadine Livingston, Florence County DSS
Ms. Kendra McQueen, Senate Appointment
Ms. Hattie Myers, Child Care Provider
Ms. Debbie Quesada, Florence County Library
Ms. Linda Rakin, Pre-K thru Primary Teacher
Ms. Tracey Stanton, Health Care Provider
Ms. Patricia Stewart, Pre-K thru Primary Teacher

¹ http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html

Mrs. Merrinell Taylor, Florence School District 2
Mr. Esau Nesmith, Florence School District 5
Ms. Ernestine Weisner, Early Childhood Education
Ms. Mary Wisner, Non-Profit Organization

SUCCESS STORIES

Client is the 25 year-old mother of two children, ages seven and two. She graduated from high school with honors (third in her class), but did not go immediately to college. She chose to work and take care of her baby girl. She worked for a few years but decided, with encouragement from family and friends, to go to college. She got pregnant again her junior year, but did not let this stop her. Client, with the help of family who cared for her children, continued her education and graduated magna cum laude in May, 2007 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from Morris College.

Client is not working yet because she had difficulties finding work due to a lack of transportation. Also, her 2 year-old has to see a lung specialist in Columbia due to asthma and lung problems. Her mother and the aunt she lives with are also in poor health and disabled.

Pee Dee Healthy Start informed the home visitor that an agency, the National Action Network, had a car that was donated to give away. Client was encouraged by home visitor to submit a letter stating why she needed the car. Client was chosen as a recipient of the car. The National Action Network also paid the deposit on her insurance so she was able to get insurance on the car. Now Client has the means to look for and is diligently seeking employment. The car has already proved to be a blessing as her mother recently had to be rushed to the hospital with complications from diabetes. She is very thankful to First Steps for the services provided and she is truly a success story.

---Patricia Allen, Pee Dee Healthy Start

The Parent-Child Home Program is a research-based early childhood literacy and school readiness program. The Program successfully strengthens families and prepares children for academic success through home visiting. The program emphasizes the importance of quality parent-child verbal interaction to promote the cognitive and social-emotional development that children need in order to enter school with the tools they need to become successful students.

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Funding through Florence County First Steps has enabled Florence County School District Four to increase the number of families served from 20 to 32. The program is having a positive impact on family involvement in school and overall student achievement.

----Gloria Bracey, Florence 4 Family and Community Coordinator

I am a former PCHP participant. I now serve as a part-time home visitor in Timmonsville. I work with families of Hispanic background. The program was beneficial to me and my children. The books helped them to speak better English and do well in school. The PCHP is helping the families I work with to improve their language skills and become more involved in the school system. It is also helping the children to like reading. The parent meetings help families learn ways to help their children be successful.

----Eufroncina Cruz, Former PCHP and Current Home Visitor

I am the mother of four children. I work two part-time jobs. Quality childcare is expensive and has limited availability. The ABC scholarship afforded me the opportunity to further my education at Florence Darlington Technical College as a full-time radiology student. Once I complete my degree at FDTC, I will be in a position to better meet my children's needs and give back to the community.

---- Betty Wallace, ABC Scholarship Recipient

The PCH program is a very helpful program. It helps the child and the parent bond as a whole. This also helps the child get ready for school and/or day-care. My children would get excited when they saw their "teacher" coming down the driveway. These kids are really getting the best of both worlds as they say. My four year old comes home and tells me that they did something in class today that she did at home when her "teacher" came to the house to visit her. She may see a book in the store and say, "Mommy I already have that book don't I". Once we get home she goes to find that book so that we can read it again. I've heard that once you learn something you never forget what it is you learned. This program is proof. My daughter knew her colors, shapes, and could count to 20 by the time she was three. I feel as though that because of this program my child was able to start school with an advantage. She already knows a lot of the things that she is being taught in 4k. It came from the dedication of the "Teachers" that came out to my home. If it was possible to recommend this program

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to other schools I would. To all the "Teachers" Thank You! With out you guys and this program our children wouldn't be where they are today!!!

--- Tina Cruz, PCH Mother of Marisela and Alma

The ABC scholarship was a blessing to me. As parents, we want the best for our children. In order to ensure that we can give our children the best, sometimes it necessitates that we go back to school to improve ourselves. I am a full-time working mom who has taken that step because I want the best for my child and I want to be able to give back to the community.

Deciding to go back to school was a difficult decision for me to make. It was certainly difficult from a financial standpoint, but even more from an emotional point because my child would need to be in child care. It is very difficult to find affordable, quality child care. The ABC scholarship enabled me to put my child in facility where she is well taken care of. This has enabled me to continue working and pursue a degree as a full-time student.

I am thankful to First Steps for affording me the opportunity to get this scholarship. I just wish that more funding was available because there are so many more parents like me who are not looking for a hand out, but just need a helping hand. First Steps and the ABC scholarship have been my "helping hand".

----- Kelly Tanner, Childcare Scholarship Recipient