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

Summary

Numbers Served:

757 children; 201 adults/families; 15 child care facilities, with 580 children total at those facilities; 432 health assessments and screenings; 46 home visits; 270 staff trained; 60 4-K slots and 2,408 books distributed.

Total Budget:

\$783,940 (includes all funding sources)

Aiken School Readiness Profile

Population Characteristics	Figure
Population of Young Children (Ages 0-5)	11,085 7 %
Children Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch (5K)*	52 %
Average Per Capita Personal Income	27,901
Children in Poverty (Ages 0-5) ***	22 %
Children Who Are Over Age in Third Grade**	18 %
Children in Third Grade Performing Below Basic on PACT Reading **	11 %
Children in Third Grade Performing Below Basic on PACT Math**	15 %
Low Birth Weight Infants	9 %
Births to Mothers With Less Than High School Education	25 %
Less Than Adequate Prenatal Care	34 %

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

Profile Comments: *Problems in early childhood development and insufficient readiness for school often are the beginning to serious challenges lasting into adolescence and young adulthood. Aiken County First Steps focuses on health/physical ability, social competence, emotional well-being, language/communication skills, general knowledge, and thinking processes/skills that define successful early childhood development and school readiness. For two decades, the readiness of 1st graders was assessed through the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery (CSAB). The percentage of students in the county assessed "not ready" went from 40.9% in 1980 to 33.6% in 1995 and then improved to 17.9% in 2001 as a result of full-day kindergarten and other enhancements in learning. During 2003-2004, kindergarten and first grade students were assessed throughout the year by their teacher. The resulting South Carolina Readiness Assessment data show the percentages of kindergarten and first grade students who "consistently demonstrate" essential readiness competencies. Approximately 32% were assessed as less than "consistently demonstrating" readiness.*

Many of the serious difficulties of adolescence have deep roots in issues emerging during the pre-school years of life and during unsuccessful academic careers in kindergarten through grade three. These problems are described statistically through the Kids Count report data on family, economic status, health, readiness, and early school performance. The data presents a troubling picture of children's life circumstances and development during the early years. In Aiken County, the following trends have affected young children: Single parent families have increase; more parents of young children are working; education of parents has improved; infant mortality is down, but low birth weight has not improved due to less than adequate prenatal care. Poverty has not changed much for young children especially among the growing numbers of children in families headed by single mothers.

Aiken County First Steps (ACFS) has been building better futures for children and families for the past seven years by providing programs that assist parents, teachers and others in preparing children for school success. Giving full attention to the multi-dimensional School Readiness model and grasping all factors that surround it, ACFS continues to address the complicated challenge of ensuring children in Aiken County at-risk of failing school enter kindergarten engaged, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed. The growing knowledge of the critical importance of early care and education for lifelong learning and growth has gained momentum in Aiken County. This increasing knowledge has allowed Aiken County First Steps to develop positive, sustaining partnerships with the Aiken County Public School District, Interfaith Community Services, Inc. (Child Care Resource and Referral), Aiken/Barnwell Regional Head Start, Aiken Technical College, United Way of Aiken County/Success by Six, Margaret J. Weston Medical Centers (MJWMC), The Children's Trust Fund of S.C (CTFSC), and Prevent Child Abuse S.C (PCASC).

The idea of serving men as a primary target population is now being positively seen by the community because of the success of the Aiken County **First Steps for Fathers (FSFF)** Fatherhood Program, made possible by a 2006-07 grant from the Children's Trust Fund of South Carolina. Recognizing the fact that fathers matter in the lives of their children, regardless of whether or not they have the ability to support their children financially, ACFS will continue to promote FSFF and increase the involvement of fathers in their children's lives - particularly fathers who are non-custodial, low-income and have additional risk factors, such as court-referred clients and/or teen fathers - by offering them the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive array of support programs, including parenting and life skills development, education/employment assistance, counseling, and referrals to needed services. Our motto "Strong Fathers, Strong Families" continues to drive the First Steps for Fathers program.

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Aiken County First Steps Partnership to School Readiness continues to improve the odds for its children by promoting health, education, and strong families to help the early development and school readiness of Aiken County's youngest citizens. We understand that families with young children need multiple supports as the earliest relationships and experiences shape early brain development, which in turn affects the skills needed to succeed in school and beyond. Achieving school readiness cannot be accomplished by any single agency or individual. It requires public-private partnerships and strong leadership from its stakeholders and community as a whole to continue to build the foundation for all Aiken County children's bright futures.

SCHOOL READINESS STRATEGIES

Early Education

Statewide Goal: South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness will leverage 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. Particular emphasis will be placed on *fidelity* to research-based instructional models and *targeting* of students at-risk of early school failure.

FY 2007 Results

Partnership Goal: Aiken County First Steps will increase the services for at-risk children to have the opportunity to reach their fullest educational potential.

- *100 % of children enrolled in the 4-K program met the “at risk” criteria.*
- *58 Of 60 participating children were documented to have met all South Carolina Curriculum Standards for 4-K.*
- *All participating students were targeted for participation on the basis of compounded school readiness risk factors (DIAL-3 screening score in the bottom 25%, free and reduced lunch status, mother’s education, etc.)*
- *Each classroom teacher has completed training in both the High/Scope Curriculum and Work Sampling System through the SC Department of Education.*
- *All ACFS funded programs met South Carolina 4K requirements for curriculum, pupil-teacher ratios, materials and class size.*
- *50% of parents participated in all parent conferences and home visits.*

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

Parents as Teachers

Partnership Goal: Provide an intensive parent education program focusing on the parents’ role as their child’s most important teacher and full partner in their child’s education.

- *11 families received Parents As Teachers visits using the program model to differentiate intensity according to need.*
- *6 of these families received weekly or bi-weekly visits, while the remaining 5 families received at least one home visit monthly.*
- *8 families were provided with needed medical and social service referrals.*

FY 2007 Results

Fatherhood Initiative: First Steps for Father’s Fatherhood Program

Partnership Goal: Increase the involvement of non-custodial fathers in their children’s lives - particularly fathers who are low-income and/or teen parents.

- *93% of fathers actively participated in weekly workshops.*
- *39% of fathers were provided with needed medical and social service referrals.*
- *100% of fathers increased community awareness of the importance of fatherhood in Aiken County.*

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: Facility Quality Enhancement/Childcare Training/Childcare Scholarships

Partnership Goal – Improve the quality of child care by offering technical assistance into early care and education settings, increase school readiness knowledge and skills of early care and education providers, increase the number of early care and education programs that obtain a higher level of quality and provide ongoing staff training, development and mentoring to childcare professionals.

- *Quality enhancement funds were offered to 15 child care providers, serving 580 children. Technical assistance and assessments was provided using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) or the Infant/Toddler Environment Scale (ECERS), standardized measures of global process quality. All child care centers were ABC-Enhanced or equivalent.*
- *459 hours of technical assistance and mentoring activities provided direct on-site guidance and support to early care and education providers through various on-site assistance including targeted guidance, consultation, planning, modeling, and support.*
- *15 certified training hours were provided to 278 child care providers and directors in Aiken County.*
- *To address the quality, accessibility, and affordability of child care in Aiken County, 21 partial child care scholarships were awarded.*

FY'07 Results: Child Care Resource and Referral

Partnership Goal – Aiken Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) provides comprehensive, community specific information and education and support services to parents and families, child care providers, child care and early education agencies and the community as a whole to address the growing demand for good affordable child care in Aiken, Edgefield and Saluda Counties.

- 82 referrals were made to new families.
- *Technical assistance and mentoring activities provided direct on-site guidance and support to early care and education providers, and was provided through various on-site assistance including targeted guidance, consultation, planning, modeling, and support.*
- *28 technical assistance hours and 14 mentoring hours were provided to early care and education providers.*
- *11 certified training hours were provided to 323 child care staff during FY06.*
- *CCRR distributed 3,796 books to child care providers, agencies and organizations in Aiken, Edgefield and Saluda counties.*

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: Partner with family physicians and other community health care providers to provide prenatal, medical home, dental and First Smiles ☺ services to children and pregnant women who reside in Aiken County.

- *53 prenatal women received services during FY'07. 62% of these women delivered healthy children during the fiscal year.*
- *30% of children served received medical and 41% received dental services.*
- *68 children served received First Smiles ☺ services. 88% of these children have identified a dental home.*
- *95% of women participating in prenatal education classes increased their knowledge of the importance of early prenatal care.*
- *Translation services were provided for non-English speaking families.*

SCHOOL READINESS STRATEGIES FOR 2007-2008

The first years in a child's life provide a window of opportunity with enormous implications for the rest of a child's life. Enabling every child to succeed is the number one priority of Aiken County First Steps. Responsibility for school readiness lies not with children, but with the adults who care for them and the systems that support them. During the 2007-2008 year, ACFS will continue to commit sufficient resources and connect programs and services to all children who need them. Programs will include three public full-day 4-K classes, private 4-K classes made possible by the 4K Expansion Pilot approved in 2006, child care initiatives, child care resource and referral, family literacy, parents as teachers, fatherhood, and healthcare.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

D O L L A R S (budget only)							
State Appropriation	State-Private	In-kind	Local-Private	Lottery Appropriation	Federal	EIA Appropriation	TOTAL
\$487,744	\$13,077	\$80,946	\$25,373	\$52,251	\$52,500	\$72,049	\$783,940

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

READINESS STRATEGIES	EXPENSES
Parents As Teachers	\$13,933
Fatherhood Initiative	\$45,058
Full Day 4K (Public)	\$264,956
Full Day 4K (Private)	\$10,270
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$4,889
Facility Quality Enhancement	\$53,323
Childcare Training and Development	\$16,719
Child Care Resource and Referral	\$55,435
Childcare Scholarships	\$45,905
Healthcare Services	\$93,872
County Programmatic	\$35,087
County Administrative	\$52,898
TOTAL	\$692,345

NOTABLE DONORS

DONOR'S NAME	AMOUNT
Children's Trust Fund of South Carolina	\$22,500
Dollar General Literacy Foundation	\$15,000
Interfaith Community Services of South Carolina	\$30,765
Kaplan Early Learning Company	\$400
Lakeshore Learning Materials	\$100
Select Health of South Carolina	\$100
TOTAL	\$68,865

Local Match Percentage for 2007: 29.32% (at least 15% required)

BOARD INFORMATION

During FY 07, the Aiken County First Steps partnership board members volunteered 100 hours, including participating in fatherhood workshops and community activities.

Value of Volunteer Time¹: \$18.77 X 100 = \$1,877

AIKEN COUNTY FIRST STEPS BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Dr. James Coleman, Jr., Chair, Healthcare Provider

Ms. Gwendolyn Byrd, School District
Mr. Everett Chandler, Business Community
Ms. Shantay Evans, Faith Community
Mr. William Frazier, Jr., Faith Community
Ms. Margaret Ford, Legislative Appointee
Ms. Melanie Gist, Non-profit Organization
Ms. Perijetta S. Hightower, Business Community
Mr. James Holt, DSS
Ms. Geneva Jackson, Family Education, Training, Support Provider
Ms. Rebecca Koelker, Legislative Appointee
Ms. Carmen Landy, Child Care ECE Provider
Ms. Sandra Leysath, Pre-kindergarten
Dr. Shelia McCormick, Early Childhood
Ms. Monika Oliver, DHEC
Ms. Connie Parker, Healthcare provider
Mr. William Price, Early Childhood
Ms. Teresa Patterson, Head Start
Ms. Deanna Risher, Legislative Appointee
Ms. Paula Simmons, Pre-kindergarten-Primary Educator
Mr. Taris Simmons, Transportation
Ms. Tammy Smith, Legislative Appointee
Mr. Michael Swan, Library
Ms. Vernel Taylor, Parent of a First Steps Child
Ms. Nereyda Viteri, Parent of a First Steps Child
Ms. Shirley von Beck, Early Childhood Education
Ms. Cherell Williams, Family Education, Training, Support Provider

SUCCESS STORY

*“Imagine what it must feel like to know that two people were responsible for bringing you into this world, and only one was a part of your life as you grew up. Growing up without a father caused me deep pain during my life, but thanks to the **Aiken County First Steps For Fathers Fatherhood Program**, I am now able to get through the pain and give my three children and wife the attention and love they need from a father”. – Daniel Morris: Father, Husband, Dedicated FSFF Participant*

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