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TASK FORCE RELEASES PRELIMINARY REPORT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD STANDARDS
Initial recommendations sent to the Governor and the General Assembly

Columbia, S.C. – Today, the South Carolina Early Childhood Quality Standards Task Force, headed by S.C. First Steps and the United Way Association of South Carolina, released its preliminary report to the Governor and the General Assembly.

Charged by the 2006 General Assembly (in Proviso 1.80) with developing quality standards for public and private programs serving children from birth to age 4, the Task Force, comprised of public and private early childhood providers, parents, business leaders, and policy makers has been at work since September. The Task Force spent its first several months developing a common understanding of the state's current quality needs and potential through testimony from national and state experts, stakeholder focus groups, public opinion survey, and statewide regional town hall forums. Members have concluded their first research phase and offered a summary of their findings, next steps, and initial public policy recommendations in the report.

“When the 2006 General Assembly directed First Steps to undertake this task, it became clear that we’ve reached consensus on the importance of high quality standards for all programs serving South Carolina’s youngest learners,” said First Steps Executive Director Susan DeVenny.

The initial Task Force recommendations include:

- 1) Create a Quality Based Incentive System (QBIS) for the state’s early care and education providers and the South Carolina families who access their services. The QBIS should include incentives to families, providers, and early childhood educators, beginning with incentives that support participation and advancement within the state’s current three level quality program.
- 2) Provide consumer tools, such as a web-based system, which would allow South Carolina families to locate and access quality early childhood services.
- 3) Integrate existing resources designed to support increased quality in early childhood settings. Increase recruitment and training efforts, and the coordination of technical assistance and monitoring.

“The Task Force is committed to completing its charge, by developing additional quality benchmarks, and the financial incentives which will make high quality early childhood experiences accessible and affordable for all of our children,” said DeVenny.

The task force has appointed a subcommittee to develop its initial recommendations, and to identify additional quality standards for the state’s early childhood programs. The Task Force will present its final report to Governor Sanford and the South Carolina General Assembly by November 1, 2007. The full preliminary report can be found on the S.C. First Steps website at www.scfirststeps.org/standards.htm.

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South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness ('First Steps') is a comprehensive, results-oriented statewide education initiative to help prepare children to reach school healthy and ready to succeed. Public and private support is combined through county partnerships to enable individual communities to address the unmet needs of young children and their families.