



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****

South Carolina First Steps to provide tips on preparing rising kindergartners for school

Columbia, S.C. – It's a milestone that will bring tears to many parents' eyes: the first day of kindergarten. And it's right around the corner.

To help parents ensure their children's smooth transition to kindergarten, South Carolina First Steps will release school readiness and registration tips leading up to the first day of school. Topics will include preparation "to-do" lists, how to pack healthy lunches and what children should know before starting school.

These tips are designed to help parents smoothly guide their children's transition to the school system by promoting proper registration, encouraging parent involvement and linking the importance of school readiness to children's long-term academic success.

This public awareness campaign is conducted in conjunction with First Steps' nationally-recognized Countdown to Kindergarten program, which helps South Carolina's most at-risk children make successful transitions to kindergarten. This year, 130 trained kindergarten teachers across 31 counties are conducting eight weekly home visits to help a total of 1,255 at-risk 5-year-olds and their families prepare for school this fall.

At the end of the summer, participating children and their families will be invited to a learning celebration at EdVenture Children's Museum. First Steps' weekly tips can also be found on First Steps' Web site (www.scfirststeps.org).

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SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS TIP #1 FOR PARENTS: SCHOOL REGISTRATION

REGISTER EARLY! If you haven't already registered your child for kindergarten, do so now! Early registrations help schools determine the number of teachers needed and the amount of materials they need to order. Also, early registration allows students to attend any classroom orientations or "Back to School Days" that introduce children and parents to the school ahead of time.

Children who will be 5 years old on or before Sept. 1 must enroll in a public or private kindergarten program, unless parents or legal guardians sign waivers or home school their children instead. Waiver forms are available at the school your child would normally attend. State law requires students to attend school from ages 5 to 17.

When registering your child, go to the local school your child will attend and bring with you:

- **Proof of child's birth date** (birth certificate, 1-94 form or child's passport);
- **Health information.** When children enter school for the first time, they must have a physical examination and show proof of necessary immunizations. Contact your physician, county health department or military clinic to complete a medical form for your child;
- **Social security number** (check with your district to determine whether a copy of a social security card will be required);
- **Proof of address** (ex: a utility bill, valid S.C. driver's license or apartment lease);
- **Transcripts from other schools, if available.**

To find out specifically what your district requires, call your local school district office. To find contact information for your local school district, call the S.C. Department of Education Office of Public Information at (803) 734-8500 or go to the department's Web site, www.ed.sc.gov;

Source: South Carolina State Department of Education Parent Handbook
For more information on school registration, www.ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/ece/ and click on SC Parent Handbook

As part of the nationally recognized Countdown to Kindergarten program, First Steps is distributing school readiness tips to help transition our youngest learners into the K-12 school system. These tips are designed to help parents smoothly guide their children's transition to the school system by promoting proper registration, encouraging parent involvement and linking the importance of school readiness to children's long-term academic success.

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South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness is a comprehensive, results-oriented statewide education initiative to help prepare children to reach school healthy and ready to succeed. Public and private support are combined through county partnerships to enable individual communities to address the unmet needs of young children and their families. Along with partner EdVenture Children's Museum, First Steps designed the Countdown to Kindergarten program to leverage local resources to help prepare S.C.'s most at-risk children for starting school and to open the relationship with the child's family.

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