

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2024 – 2026



Acknowledgments

Dorchester County First Steps would like to acknowledge the dedication and support from the following people and agencies that made the efficient gathering of information for the Needs Assessment possible:

Hafeezah Yates, Save the Children Action Network

New Jerusalem Triumphant Church

Apostle Charlesetta C. Prioleau

Tiffany Outlaw, FS 4K

Dorchester First Steps Staff

Message from the Executive Director



Dr. Crystal Y. Campbell

Executive Director
Dorchester County First Steps

What an eventful time we have had gathering information from the community about the needs of Dorchester County. We (DCFS Staff and Tiffany Outlaw) distributed surveys in paper form, digitally through a link and face-to-face throughout the county.

The results of the surveys and conversations were somewhat of a surprise, but for the most part very doable and in line with what DCFS feels is valuable to our community.

We look forward to creating the strategic plan and implementing the programs necessary to meet every need. Thank you to everyone involved.

Dr. Crystal Y. Campbell

Message from the Board Chair



Lisa Moseley Hart

Board Chair

Dorchester County First Steps

Greetings from Dorchester County First Steps' Board. As the newly elected Board Chair I must say that this needs assessment process has been very thorough and intense. Although we wanted more participation, we are grateful to those in the community who contributed ideas and needs.

The results will propel us into action for the next three years and we look forward to making significant gains for our families and children. Be on the lookout for great things from Dorchester First Steps.

Lisa Moseley Hart

Needs Assessment Process

CONVENE

Held two community convenings with 10 participants and developed a vision for young children and their families

January 17, 2023, 10:00-12:00 pm & 6:30-8:30 pm



PRIORITIZE

Organized the insight gathered from the convenings and data to prioritize the concerns, needs, and gaps the partnership wants to address and formalized Needs Assessment

January 2023 – March 2023



UNDERSTAND

Reviewed local data and map assets to understand the state of young children, their families, and the early childhood system

October 2022 – March 2023



“More needs to be done to make sure that more childcares have the quality of teachers meet the quantity of kids.”

“I have no family help and I don’t get off work until 8:00pm.”

DCFS Asset Map



Priorities: Summary

1. Parenting Skills & Help for Single Parents

After surveying 80 parents 65% of respondents expressed the need for parenting skills, parenting programs and help for single parents.

2. Affordable Quality Childcare

After surveying 80 parents 37% of respondents expressed the need for more childcare facilities and that those that currently exist need to be more affordable and accessible for varying work hours.

3. Lack of Transportation

After surveying 80 parents 38% indicated the need for transportation within the county especially in the upper part of the county. Even though the percentage for this item was higher than affordable childcare, it is placed third due to the inability of DCFS to effectively meet this need.

4. Lack of Parental/Adult Literacy Skills

After surveying 80 parents, It's interesting that 72 of the respondents collectively, reported that they either could not read, did not finish school and/or wanted better educational opportunities. Additionally, 38 of the respondents wanted better jobs, which connects to the need for literacy skills.

Priority One: Parenting Skills & Support For Single Parents

65% of Parents surveyed expressed a great desire to have parenting skills and help, with the majority of the respondents being single parents.

Needs Assessment Survey 2023

DCFS is poised to address this need with current programming (Parents As Teachers and Nurturing Parenting) and implementing a more robust and intentional family engagement and parenting systemic process. To meet this priority, DCFS may need to hire additional staff and secure additional funding. DCFS will make a stronger concerted effort to bring agencies together to help provide parents with extended familial help.



Priority Two: Affordable Quality Childcare

After surveying 80 parents 37% of respondents expressed the need for more childcare facilities and that those that currently exist need to be more affordable, better quality and accessible for varying work hours. The upper part of the county is woefully lacking in childcare facilities. It is a Childcare Desert, however DCFS cannot individually fix this issue.

Needs Assessment Survey 2023

DCFS is poised and ready to address this priority. Currently we provide twenty certified DSS childcare hours annually. Through our Quality Enhancement and Quality Counts program we provide coaching and mentoring to childcare providers, and we use private funds to purchase childcare scholarships for parents who are working or attending school. Obviously, based on the survey DCFS needs to offer more and increase the number of centers we work with.

DCFS provides 20 hours of training to over 50 childcare providers each year- Source: SCFS Data System FY22

“I have noticed that the ABC qualified centers are more qualified than other childcare providers.” (Parent comment during needs assessment meeting)



Priority Three: Lack of Transportation

After surveying 80 parents 38% indicated the need for transportation within the county, especially in the upper part of the county. Even though the percentage for this item was higher than affordable childcare, it is placed third, due to the possible inability of DCFS to effectively meet this need.

Needs Assessment Survey FY23

DCFS can bring awareness of this need to the county officials and work with them to find a solution that will benefit parents in need. This is a major concern since many of the services that the parents in the upper part of the county need (healthcare, resource agencies, workplaces, cultural events, and childcare) are 40 minutes or more away from where they live. There is no public transportation within the county. The lack of transportation prevents folk from attending school as well.

Since the inception of First Steps in Dorchester County Transportation concerns have been at the top of the list of needs and concerns. (Needs Assessment results 2023)

“When my boys was younger it was really hard trying to work and have them in school. I wanted to have them in the 3- & 4-year-old HeadStart, but the transportation was terrible.” (Parent comment from survey)

Priority Four: Lack of Adult (Parent) Literacy Skills

After surveying 80 parents, It's interesting that 72 of the respondents reported that they either could not read, did not finish school and/or wanted educational opportunities.

Additionally, 38 of the respondents wanted better jobs, which connects to the need for improved literacy skills. This priority is important also because if the parents can't read, they cannot be instrumental in helping their child learn to read. The quality of life for our families can be improved if we support the parents in becoming more literate.

"According to the Literacy 2030: Rewriting the Future Organization-15% of the adults in Dorchester County are illiterate."

The most common racial or ethnic group living below the poverty line in Dorchester County, SC is White, followed by Black and Hispanic.

Source: Data USA-Dorchester County



Dorchester First Steps has 170 Literacy Kits housed in Dorchester Co. Public Libraries. They are theme-based kits which include books, toys and/or activities to enhance literacy.

Next Steps

