

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2024 – 2026



Message from the Executive Director



Shirleen Lewis, Ed.S.
Executive Director
Dillon County First Steps

First I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of community partners who participated in the planning and meeting sessions to prepare this Needs Assessment for Dillon County. It was our goal to ensure we consider all children and truly identify and address the needs of this county. Our hope is to be able to partner with local resources and implement programs that give children all the resources they need to be healthy and fully prepared for school. I would like to personally thank; DCFS Staff, DCFS Partnership Board, Dillon District 4, Dillon District 3, Clemson Cooperative Extension, J'Dae Learning Center, McLeod Health, CareSouth, Fitness By Cory, Shalana Baker, and Dillon County Boys and Girls Youth Center for your participation in this process. I'm looking forward to the future, and our growth in serving our children and community.

Sincerely,

Shirleen D. Lewis

Needs Assessment Process

CONVENE

Held two community convenings with 28 participants and developed a vision for young children and their families

November 2022 – February 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

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

“Sometimes the only safe place our children have are our schools and child care facilities. Our children need our help, and its our job to help them.”

-Joanavice Richardson, Director

“Child abuse and neglect, and bullying are things we need to seriously address in our county to save our children”

-Kinda McInnis, 4-H Coordinator

Asset Map



Priorities: Summary

1. Vacant slots for 4K in the public and private sector.

Dillon County currently has vacant 4K slots both in public and private sector that remain unfilled. There are children in the county who are not performing well on KRA, and other students who are not currently enrolled in any 4K program that meet the requirements to attend. Providers have found it very difficult to get families to come out and register children during open enrollment for Pre-K and Kindergarten. One of the best ways to ensure kids are ready for school is to make sure all slots for quality early childhood programs are filled.

2. Address child obesity and diseases in young children in Dillon County.

SC and our county have one of the poorest health records in regards to the health of young children. Local health providers discussed the raising numbers of children who are obese and being diagnosed with juvenile diabetes at an alarming rate in this county. Children are not getting enough physical activity daily and are eating a poor diet that helps continue to make the numbers increase.

3. Need additional services and resources for children 0-3 with special needs.

The only resources currently in Dillon County to serve children with Special needs from 0-3 that has an actual location in Dillon County is Speech services. Families need more ways to be connected to sources that provide assessments for young children to determine if they have any developmental delays and get early intervention services as soon as possible.

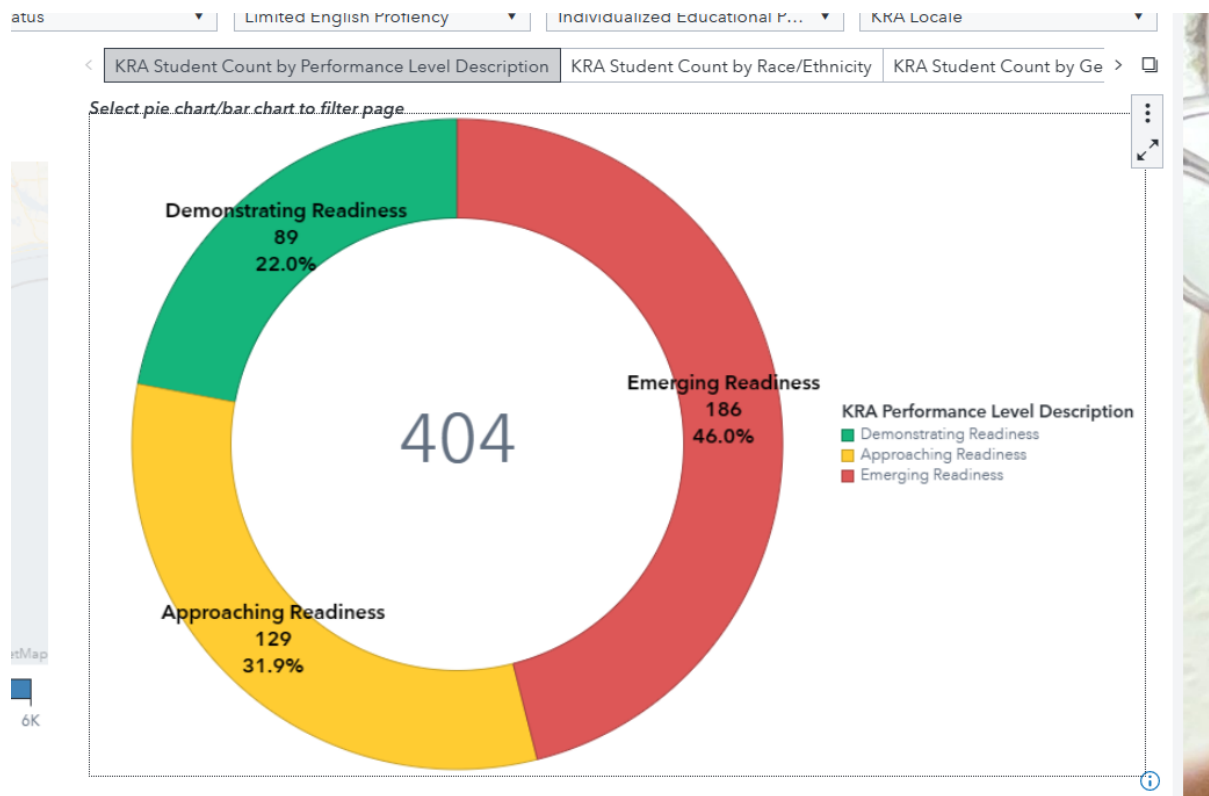
4. Services needed to address child abuse and neglect in homes and child care facilities.

In the last three years, there are so many children in Dillon County who have been seriously hurt or died, because of child abuse and neglect. Our community needs additional funding for parenting programs that help parents be able to effectively address the fears of raising children in an everchanging society and stresses that family living in poverty may face.

Priority One: Filling Vacant 4K Slots

According to KRA Student Count by Performance of the 404 students who were enrolled in 4K programs the largest population of those kids are “Emerging Readiness” but demonstrating readiness to be ready for kindergarten. (South Carolina Education Dashboard)
To have children prepared for school, we have to first ensure these students are enrolled in quality early childhood programs.

“During open enrollment for 4k over the last two years it has been extremely difficult to get parents to come and register their kids for school. We have vacant slots both in the public and private sector, and we need to come up with a way that every slot is filled that has a vacancy” quoted by Jayne Lee, Dillon District 4, 4K Administrator.



Priority Two: Child Obesity and Disease Control in Young Children

Dillon County is currently ranked at 45 of the 46 counties in regards to how healthy their lifestyle is. Meaning we are currently one spot away from having the poorest health in the state. 14.3% of low income preschoolers have been classified as being obese. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, “it is recommended that children and adolescents should do 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily. (www.cdc.gov)

“The number of children who are diagnosed with Juvenile diabetes in this county is at an all time high.” (Cory Wilson, Wellness Coach)



Healthy Lifestyles in Dillon County, South Carolina

This factsheet compares healthy lifestyle indicators in Dillon to those of the entire state of South Carolina and its best-performing counties. This comparison will help highlight any disparities and reveal opportunities for improvement. Health is influenced by both individual health behavior and the systems which produce the environments and choices available to us. This is especially true for children. Overall population health may be indicative of the ability of children to live healthy lifestyles, while socioeconomic factors determine the resources available for health.

Table: Population Risk Factors for Obesity

	Dillon	SC average	Best in SC (of 46 counties)	County name
Overall population health				
% of adults obese	34	29	20	Beaufort
ADULT OBESITY RANK	33		1	Beaufort
% of adults with diabetes	13.1		8	Beaufort
% of low-income preschoolers obese	14.3		8.3	Greenwood
HEALTH OUTCOMES RANK	45		1	Beaufort
Socioeconomic factors				
% of children in poverty	40	21	15	Richland
income inequality: Gini coefficient	43	46	38	Dorchester
% single-parent households	18.5	10.7	6.8	Oconee
SOCIOECONOMIC RANK	44		1	Lexington
Nutrition environment				
% low income & >1 mile to store	33.7		10.5	Charleston
grocery stores per 10,000 people	2.9		4	McCormick
fast-food restaurants per 10,000 people	6.5		1.7	Fairfield
farmers markets per 10,000 people	0.3		1	Allendale
% low-income receiving SNAP*	48		62	Lee
stores accepting SNAP* per 10,000 people	10.4		16.3	Allendale
stores accepting WIC* per 10,000 people	2.6		3.3	Bamberg
% of zip codes with a healthy food outlet	43	46	75	##
Physical activity environment				
# of air pollution-particulate matter days	2	4	1	##
# of air pollution-ozone days	0	3	0	##
recreation & fitness facilities per 10,000	0.3		1.6	Charleston
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT RANK	15		1	Georgetown

* SNAP=Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; * WIC=Women, Infants and Children; Best county; ## denotes a tie for Best county

Priority Three: Resources needed for children with Special needs from Age 0-3

BabyNet is South Carolina’s interagency and early childhood intervention systems for infants and toddlers under three years of age with developmental delays, or who have conditions associated with developmental delays.

Children in our county receive developmental screenings through DCFS for students who participate in our parenting program, but additional resources and services are needed to provide additional screenings for children of concern in this county. According to Kids Count only 38% of the young children living in the state of SC received a developmental screening before attending school.

“We have so many parents in denial, or simply don’t know who to turn to when their young children are not meeting developmental milestones. We need more resources for families and we need to find other ways to educate these families on what’s the best way to help their children.” (Annie Smith, Dillon County Boys and Girls Youth Center)

Location	Data Type	2016 - 2017	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019	2019 - 2020
South Carolina	Number	30,933	51,532	56,563	54,941
	Percent	26%	37%	38%	38%



Priority Four: Child Abuse and Neglect Resources and Services

There are limited resources in Dillon County to address child abuse and neglect. According to Children’s Trust (Health Domain Rank), Dillon County is ranked number 30 out of 46 in the domain to include child deaths, ages 1-14 rate per 100,000, and number 43 out of 46 for the entire SC Well-Being Data Profile. Unfortunately the report shows that the number has worsened since from 2018 to 2020 by the South Carolina Well-Being Data Profile findings giving us a snapshot into children’s life in our state.

“We have so many deaths in our county being investigated for possible child abuse and neglect cases. This is sad, because our county really lacks the resources to provide the support needed for families and prevention of child abuse in child care settings”
quoted by Parent, Shalana Baker.



Next Steps



PLAN

Write the partnership's three-year Strategic Plan using the Needs Assessment

March 2023 – May 2023

APPLY

Utilize the Strategic Plan to inform the partnership's Annual Formula Funding Grant Application

May 2023, May 2024, May 2025



IMPLEMENT

Execute the programs and services outlined in the Strategic Plan

July 2023 – June 2026

MONITOR

Track the partnership's progress on implementing programs to fidelity and on achieving the Strategic Plan

July 2023 – June 2026

