





# First Steps 4K Marketing and Student Recruitment Tools

4K
FIRST STEPS
SOUTH CAROLINA

# Student Enrollment

## *Get the Word Out!*

- **Keep enrollment information visible.** Regularly post who is eligible, how families can apply, important enrollment information, and how to contact your school.
- **Take advantage of the expanded First Steps 4K eligibility!** Families with household incomes up to 300% of the federal poverty level may now qualify. **Families who qualify under the expanded eligibility (185%–300% FPL) do not qualify for 4K+ Sibling Scholarships*.
- **Give families a behind-the-scenes look at your school.** Create a short virtual tour showcasing your entryway, classrooms, learning materials, and outdoor learning environment. Share it on your website and social media. To help protect children's privacy, be sure not to include children in photos or videos posted publicly.
- **Show families what happens in your classroom.** Explain what the students are doing, how it connects to the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner or SC Early Learning Standards, and why the activity is important.
- **Introduce your teachers!** Feature a "Meet the Teachers" series with a picture, short bio, and fun facts about the educators who will teach in your First Steps 4K classroom.
- **Share parent testimonials.** Parents listen to other parents. This can be as simple as a quote accompanied by a picture of the parent and child or a brief video of the parent sharing their experience with First Steps 4K.
- **Parents and staff can be some of your best recruiters!** Encourage staff members and current families to spread the word about your program and share information with families who may be interested in First Steps 4K.

# Community Outreach

## *Make Connections that Count!*

- **Build relationships with your local school district.** Share your information and let them know you are offering First Steps 4K. Do they have a wait list? If so, would they be willing to share with families that they can attend state-funded preschool at your school?
- **Connect with places families already visit.** Distribute flyers and/or brochures at the local libraries, grocery stores, community centers, clinics, food banks, apartment complexes, or places of worship.
- **Partner with organizations serving families.** Consider pediatrician's offices, DSS, and the Department of Public Health (especially WIC). Ask these organizations if they will display your flyer, share your information with families, or help connect you with families who may be eligible for First Steps 4K.
- **Build relationships with local employers.** Share flyers and explain that families can choose a First Steps 4K provider close to their place of employment, not necessarily close to home. Ask employers to post information in break rooms, employee newsletters, or other internal communications.
- **Represent your school at local festivals, fairs, and community events.** Families may be nervous about visiting a school to ask about a free program. Get out there so families can put a face to the school and begin building a relationship with you. South Carolina Calendar of Events and Festivals

# Site and Marketing Appearance

## *Make a Great First Impression*

- **Check your school's appearance and signage.** Is it clean, organized, family-friendly, and safe? Can families easily see that you offer First Steps 4K and know where to go when they arrive? Is your signage up to date? First impressions can make a big difference in building trust with a potential new family.
- **Make families feel welcome during tours.** Greet them by name, introduce yourself, introduce them to the teacher, and give them a chance to see the classroom in action.
- **Keep information available in families' home languages whenever possible.** Consider providing enrollment information, school policies, and other frequently requested materials in the languages spoken by the families you serve.
  - *Need help translating the First Steps 4K Family Handbook? Reach out to First Steps at 4koperations@scfirststeps.org to see how we may be able to help.*
- **Give families something to take home.** Provide enrollment information, contact information, and clear instructions about the next steps.



# Enrollment Outreach and Follow Up

*Turn Interest into Enrollment*

- **Have a process for following up with potential families.** Keep a list of families who call, email, stop by, or take a tour, and record their contact information. Follow up promptly after an inquiry or tour with a phone call, text, or email so no potential family falls through the cracks. We recommend reaching out within 3 business days to keep families engaged and answer any questions they may have.
- **Make the next step clear.** Let families know exactly what they need to do next: schedule a tour, complete a First Steps 4K application, provide documentation, or complete an enrollment packet.

# Strengthen Teacher Recruitment

*Attract, Connect, Recruit!*

- **Utilize SC First Steps Leadership Forums** to learn more about best practices for business development including, recruiting and retaining teachers.
- **Post job openings** where future teachers are looking. Use your website, social media, local job boards, college career centers, and Handshake.
- **Show prospective teachers what makes your school a great place to work.** Highlight staff celebrations, professional development, classroom successes, teamwork, and opportunities for growth – including coaching provided by First Steps!

# Program Support

*Quality Matters*

- **Consider the benefits of participating in ABC Quality.** Families are looking for this when choosing a preschool program.
- **If you are not an A, work with your ABC Quality, CCR&R, or First Steps 4K staff.** Improving quality can help grow your business and attract families.

# Helpful Resources

*Make the Most of Your Resources!*

- **ABC Quality** – Resources to strengthen program quality.
- **CCR&R** – Support, resources, and connections related to professional development and program improvement.
- **SC Endeavors** – Resources and support for South Carolina's early childhood educators, including professional development.
- **SC First Steps** – Resources to strengthen recruitment materials, social media, websites, and other family-facing communications.
  - *Marketing materials requiring First Steps approval should be submitted to 4koperations@scfirststeps.org before printing final versions.*







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