

SC First Steps to School Readiness FY17 Partnership and Program Accountability Standards

Effective July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

This document outlines the standards, or expectations, of local First Steps Partnerships with regard to all programmatic, operational, financial, and administrative activities of the partnership. This document will be attached to the 2015-16 grant agreement between local partnerships and South Carolina First Steps as a condition for receiving an annual funding allocation from the South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees. It is the responsibility of the local partnership board and staff to comply with all partnership and program accountability standards (Section 19. Section 59-125-160(A)).

1. Partnership Accountability Standards:

Partnership standards are organized into the following sub-sections:

- Governance and Operations**
- Fiscal Accountability**
- Collaboration/Community Engagement**
- Resource Development**

Additionally, partnership standards reference the partnership's annual grant agreement with SC First Steps, the SC First Steps Operations Manual, First Steps legislation, local partnership by-laws and other important documents. It is the responsibility of the local partnership board and staff to be familiar with and comply with the terms and conditions, policies and procedures contained in these documents.

Partnership standards and supporting documents shall be reviewed with board members and staff on at least an annual basis.

2. Program Accountability Standards:

Program standards apply to all local First Steps partnerships that operate the strategy in question, regardless of funding source. All strategies, whether operated by the partnership in-house or by one or more vendors or partners, must adhere to board-approved program standards. Program standards sub-sections include:

- General Program Standards**
- Parents as Teachers (also see Att. 1)**
- Parent-Child Home Program**
- Early Steps to School Success (also see Att. 2)**
- Nurse-Family Partnership**
- Dolly Parton Imagination Library**
- Family Literacy**

- Early Identification and Referral**
- Child Care Quality Enhancement**
- Child Care Training**
- Child Care Scholarships**
- Four-Year Old Kindergarten**
- Countdown to Kindergarten**
- Community Education**
- Other Strategies (for all strategies not listed above)**

Program standards shall be reviewed with board members and staff on at least an annual basis. Partnership staff should also review applicable standards with vendors on an ongoing basis as part of program monitoring.

Monitoring and Compliance:

On behalf of the First Steps Board of Trustees, the State Office of First Steps will monitor local partnerships on an ongoing basis throughout the year for compliance with partnership and program accountability standards (Section 19. Section 59-125-160(A)).

SECTION 10. Section 59-152-50
 (2) review the local partnerships' plans and budgets in order to provide technical assistance and recommendations regarding local grant proposals and improvement in meeting statewide and local goals;
 (3) provide technical assistance, consultation, and support to local partnerships to facilitate their success including, but not limited to, model programs, strategic planning, leadership development, best practice, successful strategies, collaboration, financing, and evaluation;

SECTION 12. Section 59-152-70
 (F) As a condition of receiving state funds, each local partnership must be subject to performance reviews by South Carolina First Steps, including, but not limited to, local board functioning and collaboration and compliance with state standards and fiscal accountability.

SECTION 19. Section 59-125-160
 (A) The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees shall establish internal evaluation policies and procedures for local partnerships for an annual review of the functioning of the partnership, implementation of strategies, and progress toward the interim goals and benchmarks.

During the review of local partnership Renewal Plans, the State Office of First Steps will provide feedback in order for local partnerships to create **Priority Goals and Objectives** for the following program year (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(F)).

Priority Goals and Objectives shall be developed with partnership board members, staff, vendors and other partners, with input from SCFS staff as needed. Partnerships will describe their progress toward achieving their current year's Priority Goals and Objectives as part of their Renewal Plan grant application to SC First Steps, as well as set DRAFT goals and objectives for the next program year for SCFS TA review and feedback.

Partnership boards shall then finalize and approve their partnership's Priority Goals and Objectives, which are due to the partnership's SCFS TA by September 30 each year.

The number and content of partnership goals and objectives is the purview of the partnership board, with the exception of the following:
 Areas for Improvement

Areas for Improvement will include findings of non-compliance with Partnership Accountability Standards or Program Accountability Standards that, while not severe enough to be a Conditional Approval, are issues that need to be addressed by the local partnership.

Should the partnership not become compliant with one or more Areas for Improvement findings by the end of the program year, the finding(s) may become a Conditional Approval for the program or partnership for the subsequent program year.

Partnership Priority Goals and Objectives must address any Areas for Improvement findings issued by SC First Steps.

Conditional Approvals

Conditional Approvals are findings of non-compliance, issued by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees upon recommendation by the State Office of First Steps, that the local partnership **must address by the end of the program year.** Conditional Approvals will also be attached to the partnership's grant agreement for the coming year as a contractual obligation.

Partnership Priority Goals and Objectives must include a Compliance Plan for each Conditional Approval.

Conditional Approvals may be issued due to:

- Areas for Improvement findings for which the partnership has not come into compliance with program or partnership accountability standards by the end of the program year, may result in a Conditional Approval for the subsequent program year.
- Non-compliance issues that are determined to have a significant negative impact on program implementation, partnership governance, or fiscal accountability. These issues include, but are not limited to:

Program Accountability Standards:

- Non-implementation of a program strategy that was included in the partnership's Renewal Plan
- Serving less than 75% of projected clients, as proposed in the partnership's Renewal Plan
- *Not meeting standards for client targeting
- *Not meeting standards for staff qualifications
- *Not meeting standards for intensity of services (i.e., home visits, technical assistance visits, program service delivery)
- *Not meeting standards for screenings and assessments
- *Not meeting standards for data collection and evaluation

**For "Other" strategies, the strategy information provided in the partnership's Renewal Plan pertaining to strategy objectives, client targeting, staff qualifications, service intensity, screenings and assessments, and data collection and evaluation will serve in place of program standards.*

Partnership Accountability Standards:

- Significant governance issues
- Not meeting the matching funds percentage required by First Steps legislation; not submitting appropriate documentation for matching funds to the Regional Finance Manager

- Not complying with deadlines for contractual or legislative requirements, or with fiscal deadlines relating to submitting reallocations, allocating carry-forward, submitting invoices, and providing requested information to partnership auditors

Partnerships failing to correct Conditional Approvals – or receiving Conditional Approvals for the same strategy area or partnership standard in consecutive years – may be subject to penalties up to and including the suspension of grant funds at the discretion of the First Steps Board of Trustees (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(F); Section 19. Section 59-125-160(A-B)).

SECTION 1:

FIRST STEPS PARTNERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS

FIRST STEPS PARTNERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

1. The local partnership board shall exercise leadership with its local and state Early Childhood partners through a functional and effective board. The board as the governing body shall:
 - a. Coordinate a collaborative effort at the county or multicounty level to identify area needs related to the First Steps legislative goals, and develop a strategic long-term plan for meeting those needs (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(A)(2)). The partnership's strategic plan should align with the priorities identified in the state strategic plan adopted by the SC First Steps Board.
 - b. Adhere to local partnership By-Laws and Operating Procedures and the First Steps Legislation.
 - c. Implement program strategies in accordance with SC First Steps Partnership and Program Accountability Standards, exercise due diligence when selecting program strategies and, when establishing new program strategies, commit to allowing sufficient time for successful implementation (min. 2 years recommended).
 - d. Comply with the terms and conditions contained in the local partnership's annual grant agreement with South Carolina First Steps.
 - e. Meet as a full board at least once every fiscal quarter, with one full board meeting each year designated as the Annual Meeting.
 - f. Maintain all current approved policies/procedures/standards for conducting meetings and elections and disclosing records comparable to those provided for in the Freedom of Information Act and IRS disclosure requirements. Additionally, maintain board minutes and records of all full board and board committee meetings (e.g. notices, sign-in-sheets, and documentation of conflict of interest).
 - g. Operate in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws pertaining to non-profit organizations and ensure the partnership board and staff meet all requirements to maintain the partnership's non-profit status with the IRS, including the continuous maintenance of Directors' and Officers' liability insurance.
 - h. Adopt and review annually the Conflict of Interest Policy contained in the partnership's grant agreement with SCFS.
 - i. Adopt and maintain a Whistleblower Policy and procedure for the partnership's board and staff.
2. The local partnership board members shall:
 - a. For new members, receive a board orientation that addresses, at minimum, membership responsibilities; the mission/vision, structure, policies/procedures/standards for operation; and program strategies. Partnership boards shall participate in an annual review of key documents to include, but not limited to, the partnership's grant agreement with SCFS; partnership and program standards; partnership-by-laws; Conflict of Interest Policy; and First Steps legislation.
 - b. Abide by the attendance policy contained in partnership by-laws.
 - c. Participate in ongoing board development.
 - d. Maintain a current term on the board not to exceed 8 years (2 consecutive four-year terms) and regularly attend meetings in accordance with local partnership By-Laws.
 - e. Hold annual elections for partnership board officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary). Officer terms are for one year. Board chair and vice chair terms cannot exceed 4 years (4 consecutive, one-year terms).

- f. Abide by the Conflict of Interest Policy. Prior to every vote taken by the board, members must abstain from voting if the issue being considered would result in a conflict of interest. The abstention must be noted in the minutes of the meeting (Section 11. Section 59-152-60(G)).
3. Board member rosters shall be published in the partnership's annual report, be reported annually to the partnership's legislative delegation and be on file with the Office of First Steps (Section 11. Section 59-152-60(A)).
4. Local partnerships shall submit signed, electronic copies of board minutes for the prior fiscal year to SCFS, on behalf of the state board, by the deadline for submitting partnership Annual Reports (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(A)(7)).
5. The local partnership board and staff shall exercise appropriate stewardship by adhering to the practices and procedures outlined in the SC First Steps Operations Manual (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(6)).
6. Data shall be collected and entered timely in the First Steps Data Collection System for all programs/strategies, according to the First Steps Program Accountability Standards for that strategy. Partnerships must complete program and vendor registration for all funded strategies, enter projected to serve numbers for each strategy, and begin data entry by September 1 of each program year. Partnership and vendor staff are expected to adhere to the standard for timely data submission, which is within 30 days of the date of service. SC First Steps reserves the right to view partnership and vendor data in the system at any time, including but not limited to the following data checkpoints: 30 days after Quarter 1 (Oct. 31); 30 days after Quarter 2 (Jan. 31); on or after the published deadline for submitting partnership Renewal Plans; and the published data deadline for final determination of strategy approvals (June 1). Data will be used to evaluate overall program performance and sustainability.
7. The partnership board, staff and contractors shall participate and cooperate fully in all internal and independent evaluations of the First Steps initiative (Section 19. Section 59-125-160(A-C)).
8. An equitable work environment that is supportive of organizational productivity, diversity, and stability shall be provided by the local partnership board and staff.
 - a. The local partnership board and staff shall not unlawfully discriminate against any person or category of persons for services or employment.
 - b. The local partnership shall comply will all applicable federal and state laws and regulations regarding employee discrimination and workplace policies, as outlined in the partnership's annual grant agreement with SC First Steps.
 - c. The local partnership board and staff shall prohibit preferential treatment and nepotism with regard to hiring, supervision, and promotion.
 - d. Partnership board and staff will receive copies of the board-adopted Whistleblower Policy.
 - e. The partnership shall have human resource policies adopted by the partnership board.
9. Per the partnership's grant agreement with SCFS, the local partnership shall make every effort to participate in scheduled meetings and teleconferences/webinars with SC First Steps. In the event the partnership executive director is unable to attend, a board member or staff member should attend if possible. Partnerships are responsible for the content presented.
10. The local partnership board and staff shall comply with all contractual and legislative deadlines for submitting documents to the State Office of First Steps, including but not limited to: Conduct and submit an Annual Report annually by October 1 (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(A)(8)) and submit a complete Renewal Plan grant application by the published deadline (Section 13. Section 59-152-90(B)).
11. Partnerships shall follow the records retention policy contained in their grant agreement with SCFS, as well as the retention policy for Corporate Records contained in the partnership by-laws.
12. Partnerships and all its employees, agents, contractors and representatives shall safeguard confidential information and comply with all Confidentiality/Safeguarding Information requirements contained in the partnership's grant agreement with SCFS. The partnership shall keep on file a Confidentiality Form for each employee and board member. Per the partnership grant agreement, board members shall sign a Confidentiality Form annually. At minimum, employees shall sign a Confidentiality Form upon starting employment with the partnership, and it is recommended that employees and vendor staff sign a Confidentiality Form annually.

FIRST STEPS PARTNERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

1. The local partnership board and staff shall exercise appropriate fiscal stewardship by adhering to the policies and procedures outlined in the SC First Steps Operations Manual (Section 18. Section 59-152-150(A)).
2. The local partnership board and staff shall monitor on an ongoing basis the financial condition of the partnership, to include but not limited to: revenue, expenditures and balances within all strategy areas, budget codes and funding sources.
3. The local partnership board and staff shall ensure that funds granted to the partnership by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees are spent in a timely manner in service to children pre-birth to school entry within the partnership's service area. Partnerships shall monitor their formula allocated (funds 10 and/or 55) budget and expenditures appropriately so as to be able to estimate the partnership's projected carry-forward and submit a plan for how carry-forward will be used in the next fiscal year as part of the partnership's board-approved Renewal Plan grant application. The SC First Steps Finance Office will certify and notify partnerships of all prior fiscal year available carry forward budgets between October 1st and October 15th. All partnerships must submit budget reallocation requests to OFS before December 31 to add all carry forward to its Budget Spending Plan. Partnerships whose certified carry forward amount is significantly larger (15% or more) than projected, or have changed their use of carry forward funds since their grant application, must submit updated board minutes reflecting these changes. Partnerships whose certified carry forward funds from the prior fiscal year exceed 15% of their current year's (FY 16) formula allocation must also submit written justification to their OFS TA along with a plan to reduce their amount of carry forward to 15% or lower by the coming fiscal year beginning July 1, 2016 (FY 17). Partnerships whose carry forward exceeds 15% for two or more consecutive fiscal years will be subject to conditional approval and potential withholding of grant funds at the discretion of the SC First Steps Board of Trustees.
4. The local partnership staff should process vendor invoices for payments upon receipt, obtain board member signature if applicable and immediately forward to the Regional Finance Manager for payment. Fees and/or penalties due to late payments are unacceptable.
5. The local partnership board and staff shall exercise appropriate stewardship and due care in the selection, implementation, and monitoring of all contractors and the administration of all contracts. It is the partnership's responsibility to ensure contractors comply will all programmatic and financial requirements contained in the partnership and program standards, grant agreement, and Operations Manual.
6. Financial reports should be presented at all local partnership board meetings.
7. The local partnership board and staff should review internal financial controls annually.
8. The local partnership board and staff shall adhere to the fiscal calendar deadlines outlined in the SC First Steps Operations Manual.
9. The local partnership board and staff shall respond in a timely manner to all requests from Regional Finance Managers and partnership auditors.
10. For equipment costing in excess of \$1,000, the partnership shall implement controls and procedures contained in its partnership grant agreement (13: Title to Equipment).

FIRST STEPS PARTNERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS

COLLABORATION/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

- 1) The local partnership board will annually submit its needs and resource assessment as a basis for community-wide planning efforts to support at-risk children. This document shall be made public in the service area of the local partnership and shall be on file with SCFS. Partnerships must update their Needs and Resources Assessment every three years (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(A)(5)).
- 2) The local partnership board shall participate in and document efforts to mobilize communities and other early childhood agencies/organizations to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed (Section 8. Section 59-152-30(5)).
 - a. (Core Function) As a component of community mobilization, starting July 1, 2016 local partnerships shall serve as a community convener around the needs of preschool children and their families (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(4)(b)). This function shall be represented in the partnership's comprehensive plan and Priority Goals and Objectives and include, at minimum:
 - i. The partnership board identifying one or more unmet needs within the partnership's service area impacting preschool children and their families, as a result of the partnership's needs and resource assessment and/or school readiness priorities as determined by the SC First Steps Board's strategic plan.
 - ii. The partnership leading or serving as a collaborating partner in establishing and coordinating a community-wide effort to address the identified need(s), with the active involvement of partnership board members and staff.
 - iii. The partnership board developing goals and objectives for its role as a community convener, and evaluating and reporting on progress to its membership and the public on a regular basis.
 - b. The local partnership board shall develop an annual Community Education and Outreach Plan in order to raise awareness, knowledge, engagement, participation and support for early childhood programs and services, including First Steps. If, based on local needs and resources, the partnership board determines that community education and outreach activities should constitute a significant funding investment, the partnership should establish a Community Education program strategy for the purposes of accurately tracking financial and staff resources. Program standards for Community Education strategies are included in this document.
- 3) (Core Function) Effective July 1, 2016, the local partnership shall serve as a local portal connecting families of preschool children to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(4)(a)). These services shall be represented in the partnership's comprehensive plan and Priority Goals and Objectives and include, at minimum:
 - a. Accessibility and responsiveness to requests for assistance, including but not limited to: publicized hours of operation in a location accessible to the public, and the capability to receive and return messages (phone, text, email, etc.) in a timely manner.
 - b. An up to date inventory of available programs and services for referring families. Partnership staff and volunteers who provide these services shall possess the requisite knowledge of and relationships with providers in order to connect families.
 - c. Participation in local/county/regional coalitions, committees etc. of child-serving agencies and organizations,
 - d. Inclusion of local partnership programs and services in local/regional print or online resource directories (211, etc.).
 - e. Data collection: in cases where the child/family is participating in one or more partnership strategies, the partnership shall enter into the First Steps Data System connections to community-based services and the outcome of those connections.
- 4) Partnerships are strongly encouraged to engage in online and social media.
- 5)

FIRST STEPS PARTNERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

1) The local partnership board shall engage in resource development responsibilities that maximize the use of in-kind (volunteers, goods, services, and facilities) and cash contributions to the partnership. Responsibilities include:

- Develop and submit an updated Resource Development Plan annually as part of the local partnership's Renewal Plan, which includes shared responsibility for resource development by board members and staff.
- Assurance of adequate resources to support the local partnership board's strategies/programs.

2) The local partnership board shall conduct fundraising activities in an ethical and fiscally responsible manner. A written process shall be developed to address the handling and acknowledgement of contributions and respect for donor confidentiality requests.

3) The local partnership board shall:

- Accurately describe the purpose for fundraising activities.
- Expend funds for the purpose they were solicited.
- Maintain accounting segregation for restricted funds.
- Raise funds in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal requirements.

4) The local partnership board will seek opportunities to collaborate with other partnerships and/or agencies/organizations to raise funds to meet the needs of at-risk children.

5) The partnership board and staff shall document in-kind contributions to the partnership in the format specified in the SC First Steps Operations Manual, and provide timely submission of in-kind documentation to the Regional Finance Manager. All in-kind documentation and budget reallocations of in-kind funds must comply with fiscal year-end deadlines (Section 16. Section 59-152-130(B)). Partnerships must document a minimum 15% match (cash and/or in-kind) to state funds appropriated to the partnership in the current fiscal year by SC First Steps (Section 16. Section 59-152-130(A)).

SECTION 2:

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS



FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS GENERAL

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

1. Implement program strategies in accordance with SC First Steps Partnership and Program Accountability Standards, exercise due diligence when selecting program strategies and, when establishing new program strategies, commit to allowing sufficient time for successful implementation (min. 2 years recommended).
2. Program strategies, including those funded by private and non-state funds, must support one or more First Steps goals (Section 13. Section 59-152-90(C)(c); Section 18. Section 59-152-150(C)) and address unmet needs identified in the partnership's needs and resource assessment, and long-range plan. Partnership funds granted by the SC First Steps Board must comply with provisions for use of grant funds contained in the First Steps legislation (Section 14. Section 59-152-100(A)).
3. Program strategies must utilize the SC First Steps to School Readiness benchmarks and objectives (Section 13. Section 59-152-90(C)(b)).
4. At least 75% of state funds appropriated for programs must be used by the local partnership for "evidence-based" programs. Not more than 25% of state funds appropriated for programs to a local partnership may be used for "evidence-informed" programs (Section 14. Section 59-152-100(B)). Per First Steps legislation, this provision is based upon the list of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs adopted by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees, posted to the SC First Steps web site.
5. Program strategies must be adequately resourced (staff, funding).
6. Partnerships must closely monitor program vendors/contractors to ensure compliance with Program Accountability Standards. Partnerships should review contract provisions and the scope of work each year to ensure all program model components and program standards are addressed. Vendor contracts for program strategies shall include as an attachment, the applicable current year's First Steps Program Accountability Standards for that strategy.
7. Partnership executive directors and staff must ensure complete and accurate data is collected to measure program results and client satisfaction, including accurate and complete data entered in the First Steps Data Collection System as required.
8. Program strategies using local district resources within a school district must be conducted only with approval of the district's board of trustees (Section 14. Section 59-152-100(D)).

9. Partnership staff and volunteers who work directly with children shall be subject to SLED checks prior to hiring. Contractors must be able to provide this documentation upon request.
10. Per the partnership's grant agreement with SC First Steps, partnerships are responsible for reporting suspected child abuse, neglect or dependency, as defined and required by applicable law.

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS PARENTS AS TEACHERS (201)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

First Steps' parent home visitation strategies are designed to equip adult clients with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote the school readiness, healthy development and long-term success of their preschool-aged children. Partnerships funding these strategies shall ensure vendor compliance with each of the following:

Partnerships funding Parents as Teachers shall work in collaboration with SC First Steps (in its capacity as South Carolina's State Office for Parents as Teachers) to ensure full compliance with national model guidelines. Fidelity of implementation in SC includes meeting the 17 Essential Requirements of the Evidence Based Model along with a few SC-specific additions. The following standards include a mix of both; however, the expected Measurement Criteria for PAT National Center is attached for clarity.

1) TARGETING:

a) Targeting Clients At-Risk Of Early School Failure

At least 60% of home visitation clients shall be identified on the basis of two (2) or more of the readiness risk factors below (with 100% of client families possessing at least one risk factor at the time of enrollment):

- A preschool-aged child has been abused
- A preschool-aged child has been neglected
- A preschool-aged child has been placed in foster care
- Eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, e.g. Food Stamps) or Free School Lunches (130% of federal poverty level or below – with first priority given to TANF-eligible clients whose annual family income levels fall at 50% of federal poverty level or below)
- Eligibility for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Parts B (Preschool Special Education, ages 3-5) or C (BabyNet, ages 0-3)
- A preschool aged child with a developmental delay as documented by a physician or standardized assessment
- Teenage mother/primary caregiver (at the time of the focus child's birth)
- Low maternal/primary caregiver education (less than high school graduation at the time of focus child's birth)
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to the substance abuse of a caregiver
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver depression
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver mental illness
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver intellectual disability
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to domestic violence within the home
- Low birth weight (under 5.5 lbs.) in association with serious medical complications.
- English is not the primary language spoken in the home, when combined with one or more additional risk factors
- Single parent household and has need of other services
- Transient/numerous family relocations and/or homeless

b) Targeting By Age (Early Intervention)

At least 70% of newly enrolled client households shall contain an expectant mother and/or a child under thirty-six months of age. In the event that unique and/or emergency circumstances warrant, Partnerships may enroll additional clients aged three-years or older with the provision of written justification to SC First Steps.

c) Client Retention

In order for home visitation to be effective, it is critical that client families remain in the program long enough to benefit from the planned intervention. Each partnership will be required to demonstrate its successful, long-term retention of 75% of its home visitation clients across nine or more months of program participation. Pursuant to national model guidelines PAT affiliates must plan to provide at least two full years of service to eligible families.

2) SERVICE DELIVERY:

Fidelity to a published, research-based model

In order to ensure the delivery of high quality services and the validity of agency-wide evaluation efforts, vendors shall ensure that each First Steps-funded parenting/family strengthening strategy is implemented with fidelity to its published, research-based model. "Fidelity" is defined as complying with model specifications relating to:

a) Home Visit Intensity and Delivery:

- Programs shall match the intensity of their service delivery to the specific needs of each family and case load of families per Parent Educator, with no client being offered less than 2 visits monthly. Clients identified as possessing two (2) or more board-approved risk factors shall receive home visitation up to weekly as the needs and availability of the family dictate. (For purposes of grant renewal, conditional approvals may be issued to Partnerships averaging fewer than 2.0 visits per family, per month. For each family served, 1.8 average is considered the minimal threshold for visits per month, 2.0 is the targeted expectation, and 2.5 and above is considered outstanding intensity.)
- First Steps funded PAT programs shall maintain formal affiliate status via the Parents as Teachers National Center. SC First Steps will continue hosting regular Technical Assistant conference calls to assist vendors with tracking and meeting all model requirements.
- All Affiliate Programs should complete a minimum of 24 visits per year, per family, as is required from the National PAT Center.
- In households in which two or more preschool-aged children reside, vendors are permitted – but not required – to conduct separate visits designed to address the development of individual children. Alternately, curriculum information relating to the needs of each child may be combined into a single visit of greater duration.
- While PAT is ideally suited for delivery within the home (and home-based visitation expected as the primary method of service delivery), visits may be approved for delivery at an alternate location (a childcare center, family resource center, etc) as either the documented needs of the family or safety of the visitor dictate. The alternative location must be suitable to delivery of parenting services such that integrity of the session and confidentiality of clients is maintained. Regardless of location, all visits must be one-on-one (First Steps-funded PAT visits may not be delivered in group settings), entail the use of PAT-specific lesson plans and last at least 45 minutes.
- Data on each home visit shall be entered into the FSDC client database system within 14 days of completion. In the event that the Partnership has identified an individual responsible for all client data entry, vendors shall formally submit this information to the Partnership within this same 14 day window for subsequent entry.
- No Parent Educator may carry a caseload of more than twenty (20) active families. Smaller case loads may be necessary based upon the intensity of services provided (ex: weekly home visits) or as determined by individual family needs. **One Full time parent educator should serve no less than 15 families unless specifically discussed and approved by South Carolina First Steps TA Team.**
- No supervisor or lead Parent Educator may be assigned more than 12 Parent Educators, regardless of whether the Parent Educators are full or part time employees.
- Supervisors/Lead Parent Educators who are also serving families should serve 10 families or less, depending on the number of Parent Educators supervised. For example, if a Supervisor/Lead Parent Educator supervises 6 or more Parent Educators then she/he should serve no more than 5 families.

b) Group Connections:

- At least one parent education group meeting will be offered each month (per vendor or area of service if large program) shall be offered, for a total of 12 per program year.

c) Screenings and Referrals:

- Parenting vendors shall document the completion of all model-related health and developmental screenings to include hearing, vision, use of milestone checklists, dental checks, etc.
- Vendors shall seek to ensure that each participating client family is connected with a pediatric medical home and other community services as appropriate.
- Each client child shall be assessed using the age-appropriate developmental screening tools Ages & Stages 3 and Ages and Stages SE. In the event that a developmental screening (conducted in association with any First Steps-funded program) indicates a possible developmental delay, the vendor shall collaborate with parents/guardians to seek the consensual provision of these results to: (a) the child's pediatric care provider, *and* (b) either BabyNet (ages 0-3) or the child's zoned school district and Disabilities and Special Needs Board (ages 3-5) for additional diagnostic evaluation. Vendors shall maintain (within the First Steps Data Collection System) referral records to include information on the outcome/disposition of each First Steps-initiated referral.
- Partnerships and their funded vendors shall ensure active collaboration with other parenting and family support services in their communities, refer families to these services as necessary, and follow up as feasible to ensure that appropriate connections have been established. Active and sustained efforts to connect client families to pediatric medical homes shall be a priority.

d) Family Assessment and Goal Setting:

- First Steps PAT vendors shall adhere to national model requirements pertaining to use of the Life Skills Progression (LSP), an approved family needs assessment tool. It is completed every six months on the focus parent/caregiver and is used for Parent Educator Information only. All LSP items shall be entered into the First Steps Data System.
- All parenting and family strengthening vendors shall develop well-documented Family Goal Plans between the home visitor and families (using the PAT Goal Setting form) within 3 months of the enrollment of each within the program, and subsequently update these plans at least semi-annually to gauge progress and goal attainment.

e) Integrated Service Delivery and Referrals:

- Partnerships shall utilize the Life Skills Progression and/or other formal and informal needs assessments to refer/ link families to additional interventions as necessary and beneficial – either simultaneously or as part of a planned, multi-year service continuum. All referrals to other services shall be entered into the First Steps Data System.
- Each PAT Affiliate shall convene an advisory committee at least twice yearly. These meetings shall incorporate community stakeholders in an effort to identify service gaps, and increase collaborative service referrals. This committee also advises, provides support for and offers input to the affiliate program for planning and evaluation purposes.

f) Staff Qualifications and Training:

- All Parent Educators and Supervisors in SC must possess at least a two-year degree in early childhood education or a closely related field and document successful completion of/initial certification in PAT's *Foundational and Model Implementation Training*. Educators whose caseloads include children aged 3-5 must also maintain the *Foundational 2 (3-5)* certification.
- Each PAT program shall be overseen by one or more individuals certified as PAT Supervisors. Supervisors are expected to be certified in the Foundational Curriculum as well as Model Implementation.
- Each Parent Educator in a First Steps-funded program shall successfully complete (as part of his/her annual recertification and regardless of his/her individual funding source) at least three hours of professional development preferably around early literacy and document the successful completion of all national model requirements

related to ongoing professional development hours.

- Each Parent Educator shall maintain annual re-certification in the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS).
- All annual training and/or recertification (for both program and individual staff members) must be documented on-site by the PAT vendor.

g) Ongoing Program Quality Improvement and Professional Development

- Each PAT vendor shall participate in the PAT affiliate National Quality Endorsement process every 4th year and make ongoing use of the *PAT Parent Evaluation* (annually), *Parent Educator Performance Evaluation* (annually), *Parent Educator and Supervisor Self-Evaluations* (annually), *Program Evaluation by Parent Educators* (annually) and *Peer Mentor Observation* (optional). Each program must submit an Affiliate Performance Report to PAT and South Carolina First Steps by July of each year. All Performance Measurement Reports generated by PAT National and State Offices are to be used to develop Continuous Quality Improvement Plans.
 - Each participating First Steps Partnership PAT program shall convene a monthly staff meeting of all pertinent program/vendor staff (to include those staff members providing both supervision and direct service to families) to review recruitment, standards compliance, programmatic data and other issues related to strategy success. A minimum of 2 hours of staff meetings per month for full-time Parent Educators and a minimum of 1 hour of staff meetings for part-time Parent Educators. Full-time Parent educators shall participate with their supervisor in individualized reflective supervision meetings at a minimum of 2 hours per month. No less than 18 hours of individualized reflective supervision during the program year is expected. Part-time Parent Educators shall participate at a minimum of one hour of reflective supervision per month.

3) ASSESSMENT AND DATA SUBMISSION:

- All First Steps-funded vendors shall complete, at minimum, baseline and post assessments of the *primary adult client* identified within each enrolled case using the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS). The initial KIPS should be completed within 45 days of enrollment if the child is older than 2 months; if less than 2 months old at enrollment, the initial KIPS should be done immediately after (not before) the child's 2-month birthday.
 - Thereafter, KIPS should be done at the following intervals during the first program year of enrollment: A 2nd KIPS should be done before the current year's data deadline if the case was enrolled by December 31 AND the child was age-eligible for KIPS by December 31. If not, then a 2nd KIPS is not required for data compliance, but highly recommended if there is any reason to believe the family may leave the program before the next program year starts.
 - For the 2nd and subsequent years of enrollment, KIPS needs to be scheduled for the beginning and end of the program year (prior to the data deadline), IF the case only received one KIPS during the first year of enrollment. If the case received 2 or more KIPS during the first year of enrollment, only one KIPS is required per year thereafter.
 - Regardless of how long a family has been served, or how long it has been since the family last received a KIPS, it is important to assess the family one final time within 30 days of exiting the program, if possible.
- In addition to the KIPS, each family containing children aged 30 months or older shall have their interactive literacy behaviors assessed by a trained evaluator using the Adult-Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI). Each family educator making use of the ACIRI shall document his/her attendance at a First Steps sponsored training on the instrument. An initial ACIRI shall be performed within 45 days of enrollment if the child is 30 months or older; if less than 30 months old at enrollment, the initial ACIRI should be done immediately after (not before) the child's 30-month birthday.
 - Thereafter, ACIRI should be done at the following intervals during the first program year of enrollment: A 2nd ACIRI should be done before the current year's data deadline if the case was enrolled by December 31 AND the child was age-eligible for ACIRI by December 31. If not, then a 2nd ACIRI is not required for data compliance, but highly recommended if there is any reason to believe the family may leave the program before

- the next program year starts.
- For the 2nd and subsequent years of enrollment, an ACIRI needs to be scheduled for the beginning and end of the program year (prior to the data deadline) IF the case only received one ACIRI during the first year of enrollment. If the case received 2 or more ACIRIs during the first year of enrollment, only one ACIRI is required per year thereafter.
- Regardless of how long a family has been served, or how long it has been since the family last received a ACIRI, it is important to assess the family one final time within 30 days of exiting the program, if possible.
- SC First Steps may conduct randomized KIPS/ACIRI reliability monitoring. Sample client videos may be requested for confidential scoring review and shall be maintained on site for potential review for a period spanning four months from the date of original administration.
- Note that both the KIPS and ACIRI are utilized as assessments of adult behaviors and thus need not be completed with each adult-child pairing in the household. Post assessments should, however, assess the interactions of the same adult-child pairing observed during the baseline assessment.
- Client demographic data, visits and group connections, program referrals, connections to services, screenings, assessments and family needs assessment data shall be collected within the First Steps Data Collection System (FSDC).

SEE ATTACHMENT 1 FOR A TABLE OF PAT ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSOCIATED MEASUREMENT CRITERIA.

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS PARENT-CHILD HOME PROGRAM (206)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

First Steps' parent home visitation strategies are designed to equip adult clients with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote the school readiness, healthy development and long-term success of their preschool-aged children. Partnerships funding these strategies shall ensure vendor compliance with each of the following:

Partnerships funding the Parent-Child Home Program shall work in collaboration with SC First Steps to ensure full compliance with national model guidelines. Fidelity of implementation in SC includes meeting PCHP requirements along with additional SC-specific additions. The following standards include a mix of both; however, the inserted PCHP fidelity requirements are included for clarity.

1) TARGETING:

a) Targeting Clients At-Risk Of Early School Failure

At least 60% of home visitation clients shall be identified on the basis of two (2) or more of the readiness risk factors below (with 100% of client families possessing at least one risk factor at the time of enrollment):

- A preschool-aged child has been abused
- A preschool-aged child has been neglected
- A preschool-aged child has been placed in foster care
- Eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, e.g. Food Stamps) or Free School Lunches (130% of federal poverty level or below – with first priority given to TANF-eligible clients whose annual family income levels fall at 50% of federal poverty level or below)
- Eligibility for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Parts B (Preschool Special Education, ages 3-5) or C (BabyNet, ages 0-3)

- A preschool aged child with a developmental delay as documented by a physician or standardized assessment
- Teenage mother/primary caregiver (at the time of the focus child's birth)
- Low maternal/primary caregiver education (less than high school graduation at the time of focus child's birth)
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to the substance abuse of a caregiver
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver depression
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver mental illness
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver intellectual disability
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to domestic violence within the home
- Low birth weight (under 5.5 lbs.) in association with serious medical complications
- English is not primary language spoken in the home, when combined with one or more additional risk factors
- Single parent household and has need of other services
- Transient/numerous family relocations and/or homeless

b) Targeting By Age (Early Intervention)

PCH is designed for children aged 16-48 months of age. At least 70% of newly enrolled PCH client households shall contain a child between 16-36 months of age. The model is designed for use only once within a family unit. Exceptions to this "one time" rule may be sought by providing a detailed justification to SC First Steps

c) Client Retention

In order for home visitation to be effective, it is critical that client families remain in the program long enough to benefit from the planned intervention. Each partnership will be required to demonstrate its successful, long-term retention of 75% of its home visitation clients across two years of program participation.

2) SERVICE DELIVERY:

Fidelity to a published, research-based model

In order to ensure the delivery of high quality services and the validity of agency-wide evaluation efforts, vendors shall ensure that each First Steps-funded parenting/family strengthening strategy is implemented with fidelity to its published, research-based model. "Fidelity" is defined as complying with model specifications relating to:

a) Home Visit Intensity and Delivery:

- Parent Child Home (PCH) programs shall be designed to incorporate visits twice weekly for a minimum of 23 weeks or 46 home visits annually across a period of two years (46 weeks/92 visits total).
- While home visitation models are ideally suited for delivery within the home (and home-based visitation expected as the primary method of service delivery), PCH visits may be approved for delivery at an alternate location (a childcare center, family resource center, etc.) as either the documented needs of the family or safety of the visitor dictate. The alternative location must be suitable to delivery of parenting services such that integrity of the session and confidentiality of clients is maintained. Regardless of location, all visits must be one-on-one (PCH may not be delivered in group settings), entail the use of PCH-specific lesson plans and last at least 30 minutes apiece
- Data on each home visit shall be entered into the FSDC client database system within 14 days of completion. In the event that the Partnership has identified an individual responsible for all client data entry, vendors shall formally submit this information to the Partnership within this same 14 day window for subsequent entry.
- No PCH home visitor may carry a caseload of more than sixteen (16) active families. Smaller caseloads may be necessary based upon the intensity of services provided (or as determined by individual family needs).

b) Screenings and Referrals:

- Parenting vendors shall document the completion of all developmental screenings.
- Vendors shall seek to ensure that each participating client family is connected with a pediatric medical home and other community services as appropriate.

- Each client child shall be assessed using an age-appropriate developmental screening tool (e.g. Ages & Stages, Brigance, DIAL-3, etc.). In the event that a developmental screening (conducted in association with any First Steps-funded program) indicates a possible developmental delay, the vendor shall collaborate with parents/guardians to seek the consensual provision of these results to: (a) the child's pediatric care provider, and (b) either BabyNet (ages 0-3) or the child's zoned school district and Disabilities and Special Needs Board (ages 3-5) for additional diagnostic evaluation. Vendors shall maintain (within the First Steps Data Collection System) referral records to include information on the outcome/disposition of each First Steps-initiated referral.
- Partnerships and their funded vendors shall ensure active collaboration with other parenting and family support services in their communities, refer families to these services as necessary, and follow up as feasible to ensure that appropriate connections have been established. Active and sustained efforts to connect client families to pediatric medical homes shall be a priority.

c) Staff Qualifications and Training:

- All PCHP Home Visitors must possess at least a two-year degree in early childhood education or a closely related field and document successful completion of 16 hours of training prior to their first home visit.. Each PCHP educator shall meet the minimum education requirements above and be trained and supervised by a site coordinator approved by the PCHP National Center.
- PCHP vendors must each employ at least one Site Coordinator trained by the PCHP National Center or a certified local trainer (with sites serving 60 or more families employing a second Site Coordinator).
- Each home visitor shall successfully complete at least two hours of weekly professional development/training and supervision meetings from the site Coordinator. Each home visitor shall maintain annual re-certification in the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS).

d) Ongoing Program Quality Assessment:

- PCHP vendors shall utilize *Parent and Child Together (PACT) Observations* to guide family goal setting and evaluate changes in parent behavior, as required, report all required data within the national PCHP Management Information System and administer the *Evaluation of Child Behavior Traits (CBT)* as required.
- Each participating PCHP program shall convene a supervisory meeting of all pertinent program/vendor staff (to include those staff members providing both supervision and direct service to families) no less than quarterly to review recruitment, standards compliance, programmatic data and other issues related to strategy success.

e) Family Assessment and Goal Setting:

- Partnerships or PCHP Vendors shall utilize the PCHP family-centered assessment and/or other formal and informal needs assessments to refer/ link families to additional interventions as necessary and beneficial – either simultaneously or as part of a planned, multi-year service continuum.
- All parenting and family strengthening vendors shall develop well-documented Family Goal Plans between the home visitor and families (using the SCFS-issued template if needed) within 3 months of the enrollment of each within the program, and subsequently update these plans at least semi-annually to gauge progress and goal attainment.

f) Integrated Service Delivery:

- Partnerships shall utilize the Life Skills Progression and/or other formal and informal needs assessments to refer/ link families to additional interventions as necessary and beneficial – either simultaneously or as part of a planned, multi-year service continuum.

3. ASSESSMENT AND DATA SUBMISSION:

- All First Steps-funded vendors shall complete, at minimum, baseline and post assessments of the *primary adult client* identified within each enrolled case using the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS). The initial KIPS should be completed within 45 days of enrollment if the child is older than 2 months; if less than 2 months old at enrollment, the initial KIPS should be done immediately after (not before) the child's 2-month birthday.
 - Thereafter, KIPS should be done at the following intervals during the first program year of enrollment: A 2nd KIPS should be done before the current year's data deadline if the case was enrolled by December 31 AND the child was age-eligible for KIPS by December 31. If not, then a 2nd KIPS is not required for data compliance, but highly recommended if there is any reason to believe the family may leave the program before the next program year starts.
 - For the 2nd and subsequent years of enrollment, KIPS needs to be scheduled for the beginning and end of the program year (prior to the data deadline), IF the case only received one KIPS during the first year of enrollment. If the case received 2 or more KIPS during the first year of enrollment, only one KIPS is required per year thereafter.
 - Regardless of how long a family has been served, or how long it has been since the family last received a KIPS, it is important to assess the family one final time within 30 days of exiting the program, if possible.
- In addition to the KIPS, each family containing children aged 30 months or older shall have their interactive literacy behaviors assessed by a trained evaluator using the Adult-Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI). Each family educator making use of the ACIRI shall document his/her attendance at a First Steps sponsored training on the instrument. An initial ACIRI shall be performed within 45 days of enrollment if the child is 30 months or older; if less than 30 months old at enrollment, the initial ACIRI should be done immediately after (not before) the child's 30-month birthday.
 - Thereafter, ACIRI should be done at the following intervals during the first program year of enrollment: A 2nd ACIRI should be done before the current year's data deadline if the case was enrolled by December 31 AND the child was age-eligible for ACIRI by December 31. If not, then a 2nd ACIRI is not required for data compliance, but highly recommended if there is any reason to believe the family may leave the program before the next program year starts.
 - For the 2nd and subsequent years of enrollment, an ACIRI needs to be scheduled for the beginning and end of the program year (prior to the data deadline) IF the case only received one ACIRI during the first year of enrollment. If the case received 2 or more ACIRI during the first year of enrollment, only one ACIRI is required per year thereafter.
 - Regardless of how long a family has been served, or how long it has been since the family last received a ACIRI, it is important to assess the family one final time within 30 days of exiting the program, if possible.
- SC First Steps may conduct randomized KIPS/ACIRI reliability monitoring. Sample client videos may be requested for confidential scoring review and shall be maintained on site for potential review for a period spanning four months from the date of original administration.
- Note that both the KIPS and ACIRI are utilized as assessments of adult behaviors and thus need not be completed with each adult-child pairing in the household. Post assessments should, however, assess the interactions of the same adult-child pairing observed during the baseline assessment.
- Client demographic, program, referrals, connections to services, screening and assessment data shall be collected within the First Steps Data Collection System (FSDC).

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS EARLY STEPS TO SCHOOL SUCCESS (213)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

First Steps' parent home visitation strategies are designed to equip adult clients with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote the school readiness, healthy development and long-term success of their preschool-aged children. Partnerships funding these strategies shall ensure vendor compliance with each of the following:

Partnerships funding Early Steps to School Success shall work in collaboration with SC First Steps to ensure full compliance with national model guidelines. Fidelity of implementation in SC includes meeting ESSS requirements along with a few SC-specific additions. The following standards include a mix of both; however, the inserted ESSS fidelity requirements are included for clarity.

1) TARGETING:

a) Targeting Clients At-Risk Of Early School Failure

At least 60% of home visitation clients shall be identified on the basis of two (2) or more of the readiness risk factors below (with 100% of client families possessing at least one risk factor at the time of enrollment):

- A preschool-aged child has been abused
- A preschool-aged child has been neglected
- A preschool-aged child has been placed in foster care
- Eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, e.g. Food Stamps) or Free School Lunches (130% of federal poverty level or below – with first priority given to TANF-eligible clients whose annual family income levels fall at 50% of federal poverty level or below)
- Eligibility for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Parts B (Preschool Special Education, ages 3-5) or C (BabyNet, ages 0-3)
- A preschool aged child with a developmental delay as documented by a physician or standardized assessment
- Teenage mother/primary caregiver (at the time of the focus child's birth)
- Low maternal/primary caregiver education (less than high school graduation at the time of focus child's birth)
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to the substance abuse of a caregiver
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver depression
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver mental illness
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver intellectual disability
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to domestic violence within the home
- Low birth weight (under 5.5 lbs.) in association with serious medical complications
- English is not primary language spoken in the home, when combined with one or more additional risk factors
- Single parent household and has need of other services
- Transient/numerous family relocations and/or homeless

b) Targeting By Age (Early Intervention)

ESSS home visitation is designed for expectant mothers and/or children under 36 months of age. Supplemental group meetings and transition activities may be incorporated for children older than 36 months.

c) Client Retention

In order for home visitation to be effective, it is critical that client families remain in the program long enough to benefit from the planned intervention. Each partnership will be required to demonstrate its successful, long-term retention of 75% of its home visitation clients across nine or more months of program participation. ESSS vendors shall provide services to families for 12 months in a program year.

2) SERVICE DELIVERY:

Fidelity to a published, research-based model

In order to ensure the delivery of high quality services and the validity of agency-wide evaluation efforts, vendors shall ensure that each First Steps-funded parenting/family strengthening strategy is implemented with fidelity to its published, research-based model. "Fidelity" is defined as complying with model specifications relating to:

a) Home Visit Intensity and Delivery:

- Programs shall match the intensity of their service delivery to the specific needs of each family, with no client offered less than 2 visits monthly. Clients identified as possessing two (2) or more board-approved risk factors shall receive home visitation 2 times per month. (For purposes of grant renewal, conditional approvals may be issued to Partnerships averaging fewer than 2.0 visits per family, per month.) For each family served, 1.8 average is considered the minimal threshold for visits per month, 2.0 is the targeted expectation, and 2.5 and above is considered outstanding service delivery.
- While the ESSS model is ideally suited for delivery within the home (and home-based visitation expected as the primary method of service delivery), visits may be approved for delivery at an alternate location (a childcare center, family resource center, etc.) as either the documented needs of the family or safety of the visitor dictate. The alternative location must be suitable to delivery of parenting services such that integrity of the session and confidentiality of clients is maintained. Regardless of location, all visits must be one-on-one (ESSS visits may not be delivered in group settings), entail the use of model-specific lesson plans, and last at least one hour per visit for 24 hours of home visits per program year.
- Data on each home visit shall be entered into the ESSS data system and the First Steps data system each week by the following Monday, close of business. Every home visitor is required to have 20 children enrolled per model standards. (Up to 30 additional children per home visitor may participate in the model's group meetings and transition activities (book bag exchange) for children older than 36 months.)

b) Group Meetings:

- At least one parent education group meeting shall be offered each month (12 per year, per vendor or area of service if large program) for parents receiving home visits and those participating in the three-year-old book bag exchange.

c) Screenings and Referrals:

- Vendors shall document the completion of the ESSS HOME assessment within 90 days of enrollment and at least annually thereafter
- Vendors shall seek to ensure that each participating client family is connected with a pediatric medical home and other community services as appropriate.
- Each client child shall be assessed using an age-appropriate developmental screening tool (e.g. Ages & Stages, Ages and Stages- SE, Brigance, DIAL-3, etc.). In the event that a developmental screening (conducted in association with any First Steps-funded program) indicates a possible developmental delay, the vendor shall collaborate with parents/guardians to seek the consensual provision of these results to: (a) the child's pediatric care provider, *and* (b) either BabyNet (ages 0-3) or the child's zoned school district and Disabilities and Special Needs Board (ages 3-5) for additional diagnostic evaluation. Vendors shall maintain (within each client file) referral records to include information on the outcome/disposition of each First Steps-initiated referral.
- Partnerships and their funded vendors shall ensure active collaboration with other parenting and family support services in their communities, refer families to these services as necessary, and follow up as feasible to ensure that appropriate connections have been established. Active and sustained efforts to connect client families to pediatric medical homes shall be a priority.

d) Staff Qualifications and Training:

- Each home visitor in a First Steps-funded ESSS program shall successfully complete at least four hours minimum of professional development each month. This shall be documented and approved by Save the Children. Annual training (for both the program and individual staff members) must be documented on-site by each vendor.
- Each Home Visitor shall maintain annual re-certification in the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS).

e) Ongoing Program Quality Assessment:

- ESSS vendors shall utilize the PPVT and HOME Inventory as prescribed by the Early Steps National Model and any other quality assessments as required for evaluation.
- Each ESSS program shall convene a supervisory meeting of all pertinent program/vendor staff (to include those staff members providing both supervision and direct service to families) no less than quarterly to review recruitment, standards compliance, programmatic data and other issues related to strategy success.

f) Family Goal Plans:

- All home visitors shall develop well-documented Family Goal Plans between the home visitor and families within 3 months of the enrollment and subsequently update these plans at least semi-annually to gauge progress and goal attainment.

g) Integrated Service Delivery:

- Partnerships shall utilize the ESSS HOME assessment and Risk and Resource assessment to refer/ link families to additional interventions as necessary and beneficial – either simultaneously or as part of a planned, multi-year service continuum.

3. ASSESSMENT AND DATA SUBMISSION:

- All First Steps-funded vendors shall complete, at minimum, baseline and post assessments of the *primary adult client* identified within each enrolled case using the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS). The initial KIPS should be completed within 45 days of enrollment if the child is older than 2 months; if less than 2 months old at enrollment, the initial KIPS should be done immediately after (not before) the child's 2-month birthday.
 - Thereafter, KIPS should be done at the following intervals during the first program year of enrollment: A 2nd KIPS should be done before the current year's data deadline if the case was enrolled by December 31 AND the child was age-eligible for KIPS by December 31. If not, then a 2nd KIPS is not required for data compliance, but highly recommended if there is any reason to believe the family may leave the program before the next program year starts.
 - For the 2nd and subsequent years of enrollment, KIPS needs to be scheduled for the beginning and end of the program year (prior to the data deadline), IF the case only received one KIPS during the first year of enrollment. If the case received 2 or more KIPS during the first year of enrollment, only one KIPS is required per year thereafter.
 - Regardless of how long a family has been served, or how long it has been since the family last received a KIPS, it is important to assess the family one final time within 30 days of exiting the program, if possible.
- In addition to the KIPS, each family must be assessed with the HOME Inventory per ESSS model requirements.
- SC First Steps may conduct randomized KIPS reliability monitoring. Sample client videos may be requested for confidential scoring review and shall be maintained on site for potential review for a period spanning four months from the date of original administration.
- Note that the KIPS is utilized as an assessment of adult behaviors and thus need not be completed with each adult-child pairing in the household. Post assessments should, however, assess the interactions of the same adult-child pairing observed during the baseline assessment.
- Client demographic information, home visit dates and durations, developmental screening results and KIPS assessment data shall be collected within the First Steps Data Collection System (FSDC).

SEE ATTACHMENT 2 FOR A COPY OF ESSS STANDARDS.

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP (214)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

Partnerships funding Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) strategies shall work in collaboration with SC First Steps (in its capacity as South Carolina's NFP sponsor agency) to ensure full compliance with national model guidelines. Fidelity of implementation includes, but is not limited to:

- 1) **TARGETING:** First time, low-income mothers (Medicaid eligible or a family income not to exceed 185% of the federal poverty definition).
- 2) **DATA COLLECTION:** Full client and visit data will be submitted via the NFP Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) system, per model guidelines.
- 3) **TRAINING/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Nurses and supervisory staff will complete all required training, prior to the provision of service and participate in professional development as required by the NFP National Service Office.
- 4) **CURRICULAR FIDELITY:** Nurse Family Partnership services will be delivered with fidelity to each of the model's 18 model elements as defined by the Nurse Family Partnership National Service Office.

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS DOLLY PARTON IMAGINATION LIBRARY (212)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

1) 92% Books Rule

Partnerships administering an Imagination Library strategy must devote 92% or more of strategy funds to the procurement of books. Programs seeking a waiver of this 8% cap on non-book related spending must petition the State Board of Trustees, providing a detailed accounting of all strategy-related spending.

2) Use DPIL as a Supplement to More Comprehensive Interventions

Because the Imagination Library incorporates a low-intensity, passive service delivery model it should be used to supplement more comprehensive forms of service as possible. For the purposes of meeting the integration requirements established in other standards categories, however, the DPIL will not be considered an intervention to which parenting or scholarships may be linked for credit.

3) Solicitation of Community Support (50% Match Requirement)

A dollar-for-dollar, cash match is required for any state funds committed to the DPIL strategy. (e.g. No more than 50% of the Partnership's total DPIL budget may be derived from state funding.)

4) Data Collection

DPIL strategies shall enter monthly outputs data into the FSDC. Partnerships are expected to keep an electronic record of DPIL families with, at minimum, their contact information and beginning and ending dates of program participation.

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS FAMILY LITERACY MODEL (211)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

Partnerships supporting comprehensive Family Literacy models within public school district settings or other public or private settings shall ensure that each vendor delivers a four component Family Literacy Model, including: 1) Parent Education, 2) Adult Education, 3) Early Childhood Education and 4) Parent/Child Interaction. Qualified families shall participate in all four components.

1) TARGETING:

a) Targeting Clients At-Risk Of Early School Failure (Adult shall have one or more preschool-aged child or is pregnant and expecting a child during the current school year.

At least 80% of FL clients shall be identified on the basis of two (2) or more of the readiness risk factors below (with 100% of client families possessing at least one risk factor at the time of enrollment):

- A preschool-aged child has been abused
- A preschool-aged child has been neglected
- A preschool-aged child has been placed in foster care
- Eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, e.g. Food Stamps) or Free School Lunches (130% of federal poverty level or below – with first priority given to TANF-eligible clients whose annual family income levels fall at 50% of federal poverty level or below)
- Eligibility for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Parts B (Preschool Special Education, ages 3-5) or C (BabyNet, ages 0-3)
- A preschool aged child with a developmental delay as documented by a physician or standardized assessment
- Teenage mother/primary caregiver (at the time of the focus child's birth)
- Low maternal/primary caregiver education (less than high school graduation at the time of focus child's birth)
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to the substance abuse of a caregiver
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver depression
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver mental illness
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver intellectual disability
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to domestic violence within the home
- Low birth weight (under 5.5 lbs.) in association with serious medical complications
- English is not primary language in the home
- Single parent household and has need of other services
- Transient/numerous family relocations and/or homeless

b) Client Retention

In order for a family literacy model to be effective, it is critical that client families remain in the program long enough to benefit from the planned intervention. Each partnership will be required to demonstrate its successful, long-term retention of 75% of its family literacy clients with both parent and child each receiving 120 hours of program participation. If one component is completed, such as the adult GED, in a shorter time span then the family shall continue to participate in the other three components for as long as needed (based on a family needs assessment.)

2) SERVICE DELIVERY:

Fidelity to a published, research-based model for Family Literacy

In order to ensure the delivery of high quality services and the validity of agency-wide evaluation efforts, vendors shall ensure that each First Steps-funded family literacy strategy is implemented with fidelity to a published, research-based model. "Fidelity" is defined as complying with model specifications relating to:

a) Parent Education:

- Programs shall match the intensity of their service delivery to the specific needs of each family with a minimum of 2 contacts per month. This component shall be delivered using an

approved, evidence-based/evidence-informed parent education model. Approved models are EHS, PAT, PCHP, ESSS, Triple P, Incredible Years or other curriculum model. Clients identified as possessing two (2) or more board-approved risk factors shall receive services as the needs and availability of the family dictates with a minimum of 2 contacts per month.

- At least one parent education large group meeting/training shall be offered each month (per vendor or area of service if large program).

b) Adult Education:

- The adult/parent client(s) shall participate in an Adult Education Program recognized by the South Carolina Department of Education.
- Participation is desirable until the GED, High School Diploma or other educational goal is obtained.
- The adult/parent client shall work independently with guidance and support from an Adult Ed Teacher or staff that meets requirements of SCDE, within the classroom setting at an individualized pace.

c) Early Childhood Education:

The preschool child client shall be enrolled in a quality early childhood education program (preferably on location where the adult education class is conducted). A quality early childhood education program is defined as a program that is DSS licensed and exceeds minimum licensing requirements (participating in the ABC quality Program at a level B or higher) or has a DSS waiver of approval. If a DSS waiver is granted then a quality environment rating assessment needs to be done as well by a trained ERS evaluator. The Partnership Board may – upon the provision of written consent from SCFS - waive this requirement in the event that programs meeting this definition are geographically distant or unavailable to individual recipients.

d) Parent/Child Interaction:

- The adult/child client pair shall participate in a planned monthly interactive literacy play session. This shall occur in the child's classroom, home, or family resource center at a regular time designated by early education staff for parents to come and interact with their child.
- Interactive sessions may include "child's choice of play" within the classroom learning centers. This open choice play shall last for approximately 30-45 minutes. The final 15 minutes shall include a planned literacy activity led by early education staff, librarian, community visitor, or parents and shall include such literacy activities as singing songs, finger-plays, stories, literacy games, etc. that is appropriate for the age of the child.

e) Developmental Screenings and Referrals:

- First Steps Partnership funding a Family Literacy Strategy shall ensure the completion of an age-appropriate developmental screening for each preschool child within the client family with results being shared with parents. This screening may be conducted by the partnership, the early education provider, the parent educator or other community partner as local needs and resources dictate. Examples of most commonly used tools for screening are Ages & Stages-3, Brigance, DIAL-3, etc.
- In the event that a developmental screening indicates a possible developmental delay, the vendor shall collaborate with parents/guardians to seek the consensual provision of these results to: (a) the child's pediatric care provider, *and* (b) either BabyNet (ages 0-3) or the child's zoned school district and Disabilities and Special Needs Board (ages 3-5) for additional diagnostic evaluation. Vendors shall maintain (within each client file) referral records to include information on the outcome/disposition of each First Steps-initiated referral.
- Partnerships and their funded vendors shall ensure active collaboration with other parenting and family support services in their communities, refer families to these services as necessary, and follow up as feasible to ensure that appropriate connections have been established. Active and sustained efforts to connect client families to pediatric medical homes shall be a priority.

f) Family Assessment and Goal Setting:

- Family Literacy Vendors shall use a family needs assessment to determine the priority needs of the clients being served. The Life Skills progression is a preferred option; however a tool currently being used by a Family Literacy Program may be used.
- Vendors shall develop family service plans within 3 months of enrollment and subsequently update these plans every 6 to 12 months to gauge progress and goal attainment.

3) ASSESSMENT AND DATA SUBMISSION:

- a) All First Steps-funded vendors shall complete, at minimum, baseline and post assessments of the *primary adult client* identified within each enrolled case using the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) and/or the BEST Plus (Basic English Skills Test). The testing schedule should align with adult education assessment policy as set by SCDE.
- b) In addition to the TABE and/or the BEST plus each family shall be assessed using a nationally recognized parenting assessment within 45 days of enrollment. This should be conducted again after 6 to 9 months. Or, the program may opt to use the KIPS (Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale) to measure parenting behaviors.
- c) Each focus child shall have their emerging literacy skills assessed (pre- and post-, with the PPVT (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test). The assessment shall be conducted by a trained assessor. This is initially done when the child reaches 36 months old and then yearly thereafter. Or, the program may opt to use the ACIRI (beginning at 30 months) to assess the parent/child interactive literacy skills.
- d) Client demographic and all assessment and screening data shall be collected within the First Steps Data Collection System (FSDC).
- e) Adult Outcomes for graduation with a GED, HS diploma or other educational achievement shall be documented within the FSDC as well.

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL (909)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

First Steps' early identification and referral (EI&R) strategies serve families with young children with suspected delays in development as a local portal connecting them to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children.

1) SERVICE POPULATION:

- a. Service Population for Early Identification and Referral: Any child ages birth to five years with suspected delays in development, including:
 - children residing on a reservation
 - children who are homeless
 - children who are born prematurely
 - children with prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol
 - children with substantiated child maltreatment
 - children who are in foster care or who are wards of the state
- b. Services shall be provided to any family regardless of their county of residence.

2) SERVICE DELIVERY:

- a. Public Awareness for a) the importance of early detection via health and developmental screenings and b) BabyNet Services (for children ages birth to 36 months only):
 - i. With guidance from the state BabyNet office,
 1. Coordinate dissemination of BabyNet brochures and posters directly to families
 2. Coordinate dissemination of BabyNet brochures and posters for families through local primary referral sources
 - ii. Primary Referral Sources
 1. Parents of infants and toddlers
 2. Boards of Disabilities and Special Needs
 3. Child care and early learning programs
 4. Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services and Foster Care
 5. Domestic violence shelters and agencies
 6. Early Head Start
 7. Family Practice physicians
 8. Health Departments
 9. Homeless shelters
 10. Hospitals
 11. Local Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and consortia
 12. Local school districts
 13. Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program
 14. Neonatal Intensive Care Units
 15. Nurse-Family Partnerships
 16. Pediatricians
 - iii. Public awareness and child find materials regarding BabyNet must be those developed by the BabyNet Division of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness. The partnership is encouraged to publicize and disseminate additional information and materials regarding community resources for early detection, early intervention, etc.
 - iv. Partnership programs and services (including EI&R) shall be current within the BabyNet Central Directory. The partnership's EI&R strategy should be referenced within the directory's Developmental/Medical Screenings section.
 - v. Data: Monthly records regarding the number and nature of public awareness contacts, visits and consultations with early care and education providers, and BabyNet materials disseminated shall be entered in the outputs section of the First Steps Data Collection System.

b. Screenings:

- i. Any child ages birth to 5 years with suspected delays in development shall be screened using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, 3rd Edition. Additional screening tools (e.g. Ages and Stages SE, Parent Evaluation of Developmental Status, Battelle Developmental Inventory -2 Screener) may also be used. Additionally, children shall be screened using the MCHAT at 18 and 24 months. Partnerships recognize that parents have the right to determine which provider of developmental screenings will conduct the screening for their child, including the BabyNet System Point of Entry (SPOE) Office.
- ii. Any additional but not required physical and developmental screenings, including functional hearing and vision assessments and/or use of milestone checklists, shall be documented.
- iii. Data: Client demographic, health, and developmental screening results will be entered into the Cases Data section of the First Steps Data Collection System (FSDC).

c. Referrals:

i. Children aged 0 to 34.5 months:

1. In the event that a developmental screening (conducted in association with any First Steps-funded program) indicates a possible developmental delay, the Partnership shall refer the family to the local BabyNet System Point of Entry Office. No consent is required to make the referral.
2. Partnerships are encouraged to refer children and families to other services, as appropriate regardless of BabyNet eligibility determination.
3. Following determination of eligibility for BabyNet, the local BabyNet System Point of Entry Office, with parental consent, will notify the Partnership of each child's BabyNet eligibility status.
 - a. Children eligible for BabyNet: with the family's consent, Partnership staff who conducted the developmental screening will be included in development of the initial Individualized Family Service Plan as a representative of local early learning resources.
 - b. Children ineligible for BabyNet: Partnership staff shall contact the family to facilitate referral to appropriate local early learning resources, including but not limited to:
 - i. First Steps County Partnership
 - ii. Help Me Grow
 - iii. Early Head Start
 - iv. Use BabyNet Central Directory to identify service providers as resources to family and child

ii. Children 34.5 to 60 months:

1. In the event that a developmental screening (conducted in association with any First Steps-funded program) indicates a possible developmental delay, the Partnership shall refer the family to the local school district to determine eligibility for IDEA Part B services. No consent is required to make the referral.
2. Partnerships are encouraged to refer children and families to other services, as appropriate regardless of BabyNet eligibility determination.
3. Following determination of eligibility for IDEA Part B services, the local school district, with parental consent, will notify the Partnership of each child's IDEA Part B eligibility status.
 - a. Children eligible for IDEA Part B services: With the family's consent, Partnership staff who conducted the developmental screening will be included in development of the initial Individualized Education Plan as a representative of local early learning resources.
 - b. Children ineligible for IDEA Part B services: Partnership staff shall contact the family to facilitate referral to appropriate local early learning resources, including but not limited to:
 - i. First Steps County Partnership
 - ii. Help Me Grow
 - iii. Head Start
 - iv. Independent service providers (for example, speech therapists), notifying parents that the child may not qualify to receive such services as a part of IDEA Part B eligibility
 - v. Use BabyNet Central Directory and other resources to identify

- service providers as resources to family and child
- iii. Partnerships are encouraged to arrange with the local BabyNet SPOE Office to receive information on ALL children found ineligible for BabyNet within the partnership's service area, if the family provides consent. Similarly, partnerships are encouraged to arrange with the local school district to receive information on ALL children found ineligible for IDEA Part B services and younger than five years of age within the partnership's service area, if the family provides consent.
 - iv. Data: Client referrals to BabyNet and other community resources will be entered into the First Steps Data Collection System (FSDC).

3) **STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING:**

All Partnership staff involved in provision of developmental screening, referrals to BabyNet and the local school district, and participation in development of initial Individualized Family Service Plans and, for children three to five years of age, Individual Education Plans shall:

- i. Possess the minimum qualifications of an Associate Degree and 3 years' experience (course work contributions i.e. psychology, sociology, data management, etc.)
- ii. Successfully participate in training in use of developmental screening tool(s) through either South Carolina First Steps, the Team for Early Childhood Solutions (TECS) at the USC School of Medicine, or other qualified personnel.
- iii. Successfully complete "BabyNet Basics", the online training course offered by TECS 2.0 of the University of South Carolina's Team for Early Childhood Solutions. Work cooperatively with local SPOE offices, including attending regional coordination team meetings when available.

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS CHILD CARE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT (601)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

First Steps' Child Care Quality Enhancement (QE) strategies are intended to produce measurable improvements in the quality of care provided young children, as measured by a program's advancement within South Carolina's existing quality infrastructure (the ABC system) and/or its improvement on an approved program quality measure.

1) TARGETING:

Each participating provider shall be identified via competitive application (the minimum components of which will be specified by SCFS) with priority to providers:

- Participating in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program and documenting that at least 30% of enrolled students qualify for free meals/snacks (130% of federal poverty), - OR -
- Located within the school attendance zone of (and/or enrolling primarily children attending) an individual elementary school rated "Below Average" or "At Risk" (Unsatisfactory) during the preceding three-year period, - OR -
- In which 10% or more of enrolled students are ABC voucher recipients.
- Participating in a publicly-funding early care and education program (such as First Steps 4K)

Family and Group Child Care Homes may qualify under the criteria above or through their documentation that at least 30% of enrolled students have a family income of 130% of poverty or below.

Centers participating in First Steps-funded quality enhancement projects must permit the on-site delivery of "natural environment" services/therapies to children eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Additionally, participant providers will be required to document the completion (or pending/planned completion within two semesters) of ECD 101 (or comparable coursework) by the director and 100% of lead classroom staff as

a condition of participation. Documentation of staff education levels and certifications are to be entered in the FSDC.

2) SERVICE DELIVERY:

a) On-Site Technical Assistance (TA)

Technical Assistance (TA) is defined as “the provision of targeted and customized support by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skill to develop and strengthen processes, knowledge application, or implementation of service by recipients.” This includes **consultation/ coaching** and **mentoring**. The goals of technical assistance are to provide the following: 1) individualized information and 2) personalized skill building opportunities in order to enhance child care providers’ abilities to support the growth and development of young children.

Technical assistance includes mentoring and consultation/coaching which are described below:

Consultation is defined as a collaborative, problem-solving process between an external consultant with specific expertise and adult learning knowledge and skills and an individual or group from one program or organization. Consultation facilitates the assessment and resolution of an issue-specific concern—a program-/organizational-, staff-, or child-/family-related issue—or addresses a specific topic. **Coaching** is defined as a relationship-based process led by an expert in early care and education and adult learning knowledge and skills, who often serves in a different professional role than the recipient(s). Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal-setting and achievement for an individual or group. QE strategies are **required** to provide consultation/coaching at least twice monthly as part of their technical assistance services, via employee or contracted staff who are certified as technical assistance providers with the Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD).

Mentoring pairs a new or less experienced EC professional with a peer in the same role, but who has a great deal more experience. The ideal match between a mentor and mentee is one that is agreed upon by both parties since establishing and maintaining a positive, trusting, and respectful relationship is one of the most important features of the mentoring process. The process is enhanced by establishing role clarity, setting goals, and having both planned contacts and unplanned contacts when needed by the mentee. The duration of this process is ongoing and should build on previous learning. Mentoring programs offer new EC professionals a practical and supportive way to learn and grow on the job. For experienced professionals, mentoring programs create an opportunity to advance their own skills, knowledge and career goals. QE strategies are **encouraged** to incorporate mentoring into their program services.

Partnerships implementing or contracting to fund QE strategies will develop a detailed Quality Improvement Plan in partnership with each participating provider - the minimum requirements of which shall be specified by SCFS and which must include on-site technical assistance (TA) as a central component. In all cases, technical assistance shall entail the incorporation of reflective practice principles and a best-practice curriculum model. Partnerships working with providers that are participants in First Steps 4K (formerly CDEPP) must develop the provider’s Quality Improvement Plan and provide services in close coordination with the assigned SCFS 4K Technical Assistant.

Registered family home providers receiving SC First Steps QE funds shall document their voluntary completion of 15 hours of professional development annually, mirroring the DSS requirements for licensed, center-based providers.

TA needs shall be determined by the providers’ self-identified needs, regulatory deficiencies (if any) and/or the results of an approved environment and/or administrative assessment. First Steps-funded QE strategies shall incorporate on-site consultation/coaching at least bi-weekly (twice a month) to all participating centers. Partnerships unable to provide at least bi-weekly consultation/coaching due to staffing limitations shall reduce the number of QE-funded centers to ensure this level of support to each participating center.

Technical assistance visits (consultation, coaching and mentoring) shall be planned, purposeful, and logged within the First Steps Data Collection (FSDC) System no less than monthly. These visits, which may span several hours in duration and entail multiple individual classroom visits, may be supplemented (but not replaced) by additional phone consultation and/or shorter drop-in visits. Two or more visits to the same site on a single day shall be considered a single visit of increased duration. In the event that topical, on-site consultation may be appropriately considered for provider training credit through the CCCCCD, TA staff shall take responsibility for the advanced submission of all appropriate training outlines.

SC First Steps Partnerships offering QE strategies may choose to provide limited, periodic TA to non-QE centers provided: 1) these services are supplemental to the standard QE programming described herein; 2) the consultation provided addresses the attainment of specific goals (such as NAEYC accreditation, maintenance of previous QE gains, etc.); 3) these services support First Steps 4K or other publicly-funded early care and education programs; and 4) no QE grant funds are provided to these centers.

b) Equipment and Materials Funds

Equipment/materials funding to centers, if provided, may not exceed \$5,000 annually without the approval of SC First Steps. In all cases equipment/materials purchases must be aligned with classroom needs as indicated by the environment assessment and/or the center's current Quality Improvement Plan. Equipment/materials funds shall not be awarded independent of training and/or qualified technical assistance. Equipment/materials funding may not be used to support classrooms funded by the First Steps 4K program without approval by the First Steps 4K Administrator.

c) Coordination with Community Partners/ Integration with Child Care Training

In developing the Partnership's quality enhancement efforts, each will be required to explicitly coordinate their efforts with other state/community-level entities offering similar services in the county (e.g., Child Care Resource and Referral, Success by Six, etc.) including attending regional Technical Assistance Coordination Team meetings. Formal, county-wide (and/or regional) quality enhancement and training plans will be developed (and filed with SCFS) in an effort to ensure the maximization of resources and avoid duplication of effort.

Partnerships will plan and offer training for participating child care providers based on needs identified within each center's Quality Improvement Plan. As a condition of participation, the center director must participate regularly in the center's on-site visits and in at least 50% of staff training provided. Child care staff from QE centers shall be required to attend relevant training as a condition of their centers' participation. SCFS TA staff shall make every effort to register content-specific consultation as provider training as appropriate. Trainings offered to client providers shall be attended by the partnership's technical assistance provider(s).

Partnerships shall provide at least eight (8) hours of high-quality, certified training (stemming directly from the provider's Quality Improvement Plan) to each 601 center staffer. At least half of this training shall relate to a best-practice curriculum model (e.g., Creative Curriculum, High Scope, Montessori or other First Steps-approved curriculum).

d) Workforce Development

Each First Steps-funded QE plan shall incorporate a workforce development component. All participating staff shall be provided with information about the state's T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) scholarship program and provided (and/or connected with) case management designed to assist each in his/her advancement along South Carolina's Early Childhood Career Lattice.

e) Certification of Technical Assistance Providers Via CCCCD

Each First Steps-funded technical assistance provider must demonstrate his/her professional competence through:

- Certification as a South Carolina Technical Assistance Provider through the Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCD). TA shall be limited to the provision of types/categories of service for which they maintain current certification.
- Participation in ongoing professional development with a total of 30 clock hours of training every 3 years. Half of this training shall be in early education and half in technical assistance, i.e., reflective practice, Quality Improvement Plans, and Environment Rating Scales.

Additionally, each SC First Steps funded TA provider must document the completion of orientation to: 1) SC Childcare Licensing, 2) the ABC Quality Program, and 3) the South Carolina Child Care Inclusion Collaborative within the past two years. Each FS-funded TA provider's credentials and certifications must be current in the FSDC.

3) ASSESSMENT AND DATA SUBMISSION:

Timely submission of technical assistance visits and assessments into the FSDC is expected of all QE strategies. Partnerships shall ensure the submission of complete center data for each focus provider within 30 days of program initiation, and maintain current center, enrollment, and staff information within the FSDC.

Each focus classroom (i.e., classrooms visited regularly by the TA provider) and/or home-based provider benefiting from SC First Steps QE funding shall receive a baseline assessment with the appropriate Environment Rating Scale (ERS) within 90 days of the initiation of technical assistance, with a post assessment conducted 6-9 months later (prior to the end of the program year), and annually thereafter in the event that a single classroom or home-based provider is served across fiscal multiple fiscal years. In the event that technical assistance is provided on a center-wide basis (entailing three or more focus classrooms), at least 1/3 of all classrooms shall be assessed according to the timeline above.

Environment assessments must be conducted by assessors who have:

- 1) Completed at least 3 days of training from the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI, Chapel Hill, NC) in the appropriate ER scale.
- 2) Participated as required in any ERS reliability measures established by SC First Steps.
- 3) Participated in bi-annual online ERS Refresher training or additional ERS training through the ERSI within the past three years.

Partnerships whose QE strategies entail assistance and/or coaching in the administrative arena shall likewise incorporate pre- and post- assessments using the Program Administration Scale (PAS).

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS CHILD CARE TRAINING (605)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

1) TARGETING:

First Steps-funded Child Care Training strategies shall, in all instances, be considered part of a larger quality enhancement effort and support providers in one or more of the following:

- a. Advancement along the the Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD) career lattice,
- b. Advancement within the ABC quality system,
- c. Improvement on an approved measure of program quality, and/or
- d. A topic-specific focus based on Regional TA Coordination meetings.

2) STRATEGY INTEGRATION:

Accordingly, each Partnership training strategy shall be explicitly integrated with either (or some combination of):

a) The Partnership's own Quality Enhancement Strategy

Partnerships operating a 605 (training) strategy in conjunction with a 601 (Quality Enhancement) strategy shall explicitly integrate the two in order to maximize service intensity and affect demonstrable quality improvements. In this event, Partnerships shall provide at least eight (8) hours of high-quality, certified training (stemming directly from the provider's Quality Improvement Plan) to each 601 center staffer. At least half of this training shall relate to a best-practice curriculum model (Creative Curriculum, High Scope, Montessori or other First Steps-approved curriculum).

- AND/OR -

b) A regional/community-based quality enhancement effort.

Partnerships offering 605 (training) strategies in the absence of a 601 (quality enhancement) strategy shall be required to demonstrate their explicit integration of this strategy with the training and/or technical assistance offerings of a community partner organization, one or more neighboring SC First Steps Partnerships, or in consultation with publicly-funded early care and education programs such as First Steps

4K. Formal integration plans shall be developed for submission to SCFS that demonstrate the parties' efforts to ensure maximization of resources and avoid duplication of effort.

- AND/OR –

c) A Training/Coaching Plan centered around a research-based curriculum or model, with SCFS approval.

- Trainer and coaches must be certified in proposed curriculum/model
- Reflective practice principles must be employed
- A training and coaching plan shall include pre- and post-assessments, individual goal setting and periodic reviews with all staff and centers participating in this training/coaching program.

3) SERVICE DELIVERY:

a) In all cases, Partnerships shall:

- Base training upon a local needs assessment process to include input derived from a local directors' network or - if none exists - a called, countywide directors meeting to assess need.
- Actively coordinate any funded training with other state and local entities providing training
- Emphasize multi-session trainings (as opposed to isolated, stand-alone workshops)
- Incorporate measurable training objectives and at least one form of follow-up. At minimum, partnerships shall conduct a follow-up post assessment questionnaire to each training participant within one month following training, using a format obtained from the certified trainer or curriculum model. Other recommendations for training follow-up include:
 - Director-guided technical assistance supported by the partnership
 - Learning community of staff designed to discuss and support work in classroom
 - On-site visits by original training provider
 - Completion of interim assignments between meetings of multi-session trainings
 - Visit to a model center exemplifying training principles

Partnerships should share information from training follow-up activities with the original trainer(s) to improve practice, arrange for additional training opportunities or refer to CCR&R for follow-up TA.

- Prioritize trainings linked to infant-toddler care and staff-child interactions
- Post all publicly available training opportunities on the CCCCDD website and other widely accessible training calendars.

b) Certification by the Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD)

All training shall be, with the exception of health/safety topics, certified with the Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD).

c) Charging Participants for Training

If utilized, participant fees proposed in association with state-funded training opportunities shall be nominal and must be either: a) detailed in the partnership's renewal application, or b) approved in advance by SC First Steps.

d) Random Evaluation

In partnership with the SC Center for Child Care Career Development, SC First Steps may – on a randomized basis - distribute follow-up training evaluations to selected training participants.

4) DATA COLLECTION:

Child Care Training strategies are not required to submit participant data within the First Steps Data Collection system (FSDC). . However, partnerships will use the FSDC's child care module to track follow-up visits and other consultation activities with child care providers. Partnerships will also enter monthly outputs data for child care training in the FSDC.

Partnerships are expected to keep an electronic record of training attendees, their participation in training sessions and follow-up, and the child care providers and children served, and submit all required information to CCCCDD for participants to receive DSS credit hours.

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS (703)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

Unlike federal child care vouchers designed to enable low-income parents to seek and maintain employment, First Steps-funded child care scholarships are granted in an effort to promote the healthy development and school readiness of participating children.

1) TARGETING:

a) Targeting Clients At-Risk Of Early School Failure

Each SC First Steps-funded scholarship client shall possess two or more Board-identified risk factors:

- A preschool-aged child has been abused
- A preschool-aged child has been neglected
- A preschool-aged child has been placed in foster care
- Eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, e.g. Food Stamps) or Free School Lunches (130% of federal poverty level or below – with first priority given to TANF-eligible clients whose annual family income levels fall at 50% of federal poverty level or below)
- Eligibility for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Parts B (Preschool Special Education, ages 3-5) or C (BabyNet, ages 0-3)
- A preschool aged child with a developmental delay as documented by a physician or standardized assessment
- Teenage mother/primary caregiver (at the time of the focus child's birth)
- Low maternal/primary caregiver education (less than high school graduation at the time of focus child's birth)
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to the substance abuse of a caregiver
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver depression
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver mental illness
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver intellectual disability
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to domestic violence within the home
- Low birth weight (under 5.5 lbs.) in association with serious medical complications
- English is not primary language spoken in the home, when combined with one or more additional risk factors
- Single parent household and has need of other services
- Transient/numerous family relocations and/or homeless

b) Clients participating in the Nurse Family Partnership strategy (in which participating mothers are selected during pregnancy) may be considered presumptively eligible for scholarship support with priority to clients with the lowest family incomes.

c) In the event that unique and/or emergency circumstances warrant, Partnerships may offer scholarships to children who do not meet the risk definition above, given prior written authorization from SC First Steps.

2) SERVICE DELIVERY:

a) Administration and Use

SC First Steps funded scholarships may be administered "in-house" by the Partnership or via DSS.

b) Non-Supplantation

SC First Steps funds shall not be used to supplant – or in place of – other forms of public funding available to clients' families for the provision of child care tuition. Current or transitional TANF clients must be referred to

the SC Department of Social Services for enrollment in the SC Voucher Program. Age- and income-eligible clients shall be made aware of their service delivery options via Head Start, preschool programs available through the local school district, and the First Steps 4K program.

c) Developmental Screening

SC First Steps partnerships funding child care scholarships shall ensure the completion of the age-appropriate developmental screening Ages and Stages Questionnaire – 3rd Edition for each scholarship recipient – with results to be shared with parents. Additional screenings, such as health screenings and the ASQ:SE, are encouraged. Screenings may be conducted by the partnership, the child care provider, or another community partner as local needs and resources dictate. Children with suspected delays will be referred (as appropriate) to either BabyNet or their local school district for additional evaluation.

d) Monitoring

Partnerships operating in-house scholarships must:

- Collect daily attendance data from each center receiving scholarships, at least monthly, to determine if scholarship funds are being used appropriately;
- Conduct unannounced monitoring visits to each center to verify child enrollment and family eligibility at least monthly; and
- Set scholarship reimbursement rates consistent with the local market, not to exceed the maximum reimbursement rates of the SC Voucher Program (unless authorization by SC First Steps is on file).

Partnerships contracting scholarships through DSS must:

- Review monthly scholarship reports from DSS to ensure all scholarship funds are being used and that qualified applicants are connected to a provider and receiving services in a timely manner (i.e., no “pending” scholarships);
- Conduct unannounced monitoring visits to each center to verify child enrollment and family eligibility at least monthly.

e) Eligible Providers

Given First Steps’ readiness mission Partnership-funding scholarships shall be limited to use within high quality settings (independent of their chosen method of administration). These programs – to be selected via competitive process – are defined as meeting any one of the following criteria:

- Active participation in a SC First Steps Quality Enhancement strategy;
- Exceeding minimum licensing requirements (participation in the ABC Quality Program at Level B or higher); or
- An aggregate Environment Rating Scale rating of 4.0 or higher.

The Partnership Board may – upon the provision of written consent from SCFS - waive this requirement in the event that programs meeting this definition are geographically distant or unavailable to individual recipients.

f) Integration with Other Readiness Interventions

Partnerships are strongly encouraged to integrate the provision of scholarships with additional First Steps (or partner organization) evidence-based strategies and may require participation in these additional services as a condition of funding at the discretion of the Partnership Board.

g) Parent Training

Child care scholarship parents/guardians shall receive at least one hour of training on the benefits of high quality child care.

3) DATA COLLECTION:

Regardless of whether partnerships operate child care scholarships in-house or through DSS, partnerships must enter client demographic data, scholarship and provider information, service dates, screenings, training attendance, and connections to other partnership or community services within the First Steps Data Collection system (FSDC). Additionally, partnerships may choose to enter monitoring visits to providers within the child care module of the FSDC.



**FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS
FOUR YEAR OLD KINDERGARTEN**
Full Day 4K (314), Half Day 4K (316), and Extended Day/Half to Full Day 4K (317)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

Independent of vendor, SC First Steps funded 4K classrooms shall adhere to the following student enrollment criteria during FY17 (2016-17 school year):

- Each student must be four-years-old on or before September 1, 2016.
- Each student must qualify for enrollment on the basis of at least one of the following factors:
 - Eligibility for free- or reduced-price school lunches;
 - Eligibility for Medicaid;
 - Qualification for services under IDEA Part B as the result of a documented disability or developmental delay

In the event that more students seek to enroll than available space permits, students qualifying for service on the basis of income (free- or reduced price lunch or Medicaid) shall be prioritized (at the time of acceptance) on the basis of family income as expressed as a percentage of the federal poverty guidelines, with the lowest family incomes given highest priority.

Public four-year-old kindergarten programs receiving SC First Steps funding shall be responsible for the entry of complete student data within the PowerSchool data system. Client data entry into the First Steps Data Collection system (FSDC) is not required.

**FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS
COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN (406)**

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

Countdown to Kindergarten is a summer home visitation strategy designed to link incoming kindergartners and their families with the individual who serve as their kindergarten teacher during the coming year.

1) TARGETING:

Targeting Clients At-Risk Of Early School Failure

Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) shall be targeted toward families of children most likely to experience early school failure. Given the program's unique role in supporting school transition, several additional risk factors are associated with eligibility for this service. (CTK-specific transition risk factors are noted in italic text in the list below, and do not extend to other First Steps-funded strategies.)

At least 60% of CTK clients shall be identified on the basis of two (2) or more of the readiness risk factors below (with 100% of client families possessing at least one risk factor at the time of enrollment):

- A preschool-aged child has been abused
- A preschool-aged child has been neglected
- A preschool-aged child has been placed in foster care
- Eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, e.g. Food Stamps) or Free School Lunches (130% of federal poverty level or below – with first

priority given to TANF-eligible clients whose annual family income levels fall at 50% of federal poverty level or below)

- Eligibility for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Parts B (Preschool Special Education, ages 3-5) or C (BabyNet, ages 0-3)
- A preschool aged child with a developmental delay as documented by a physician or standardized assessment
- Teenage mother/primary caregiver (at the time of the focus child's birth)
- Low maternal/primary caregiver education (less than high school graduation at the time of focus child's birth)
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to the substance abuse of a caregiver
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver depression
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver mental illness
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to parental/caregiver intellectual disability
- A preschool-aged child has been exposed to domestic violence within the home
- Low birth weight (under 5.5 lbs.) in association with serious medical complications
- English is not primary language spoken in the home, when combined with one or more additional risk factors
- Single parent household and has need of other services
- Transient/numerous family relocations and/or homeless

Additional CTK Transition Risk Factors:

- *An incoming kindergartner who has had an older sibling retained in/before the 3rd grade*
- *An incoming kindergartner who has been recommended for service on the basis of significant social/emotional and/or behavioral difficulties – or those of an older sibling.*
- *An incoming kindergartner who has never been served within a full-time preschool program out of his/her home. (Note that this final factor may be considered in conjunction with one or more additional risks but may not be used to determine eligibility in isolation.)*

2) SERVICE DELIVERY:

a) Adherence to the Countdown to Kindergarten Curriculum

While the CTK curriculum offers substantial opportunity for personalization by individual teachers, each must adhere to its general format and ensure the delivery of each published lesson.

Per the CTK curriculum model, no family should receive less than five (5) visits. The partnership shall make every effort to secure transportation services so that families can attend the final CTK visit to the child's school.

b) Placement within the Classroom of the Home Visitor

Countdown to Kindergarten is explicitly designed to connect children and families to the teachers with whom they will be working during the coming year. Accordingly, Partnerships must take steps to ensure the placement of CTK client children in the classrooms of their home visitors.

The CTK curriculum must – without exception – include a meeting with the child's teacher at the school where the child will be attending kindergarten.

Partnerships shall ensure that, in the event the CTK home visitor is not the 5K teacher, the CTK home visitor communicates with each 5K teacher about their students' participation in the CTK program and the follow-up teacher survey they will receive.

c) Curriculum Training

Any teacher who has not attended training on the updated Countdown Curriculum (initially utilized during Summer 2009) must do so prior to the beginning of the program.

3) DATA SUBMISSION AND FISCAL ADMINISTRATION:

a) Outcomes and Data Requirements

The Partnership will be responsible for meeting all data requirements of SCFS within 30 days of receiving data from the teachers. CTK client and program information must be entered into the First Steps Data Collection system (FSDC) within the program year that begins July 1, regardless of whether program activities (home visits) occurred prior to July 1. Partnership staff are responsible for obtaining complete pre- and post-surveys from CTK parents. Partnerships are also responsible for sending and obtaining complete teacher surveys from 5K teachers who have one or more CTK children enrolled in their classroom. Partnerships will use the CTK surveys provided by SC First Steps.

b) Partnership Match Requirement

Partnerships agree to meet the SCFS match requirements for CTK.

c) Fiscal Administration and Teacher Payment

The Partnership will be responsible for ensuring that each CTK teacher adheres (in all regards) to his/her CTK Memorandum of Agreement.

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS Other Strategies

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

In the event that a partnership wishes to propose a strategy not detailed herein, the following standards apply:

1. Strategy Approval:

- a) The partnership will submit, as part of its annual Renewal Plan submission to SCFS, a detailed explanation of the proposed strategy, chosen curriculum or program model, its rationale (why is the strategy is being proposed), research basis (as appropriate), projected per-client cost and proposed evaluation methodology. Strategies will be expected to follow chosen curriculum and program models with fidelity.
- b) The partnership shall be provided individualized technical assistance upon request in an effort to support and strengthen the proposal, if needed.
- c) If a new strategy, the Program and Grants Committee of the Board of Trustees shall conduct a programmatic review the proposal, and either: a) recommend the proposal for approval by the state board, or b) return the proposal to the partnership with recommendations for improvement.
- d) Upon approval by the Program and Grants Committee, the strategy will be presented to the full Board for final approval.

2. Strategy Implementation:

Partnership strategies will be expected to meet the strategy's goals and objectives as stated in the partnership's Renewal Plan, using output and outcome data as specified in its board-approved Renewal Plan as evidence of achievement.

Additionally, partnerships shall ensure non-prevalent strategies meet the following criteria:

- a) Target children most in need of services, using board-approved risk factors in absence of specific targeting criteria within the chosen program model
- b) Deliver services with fidelity to the chosen curriculum or program model
- c) Use qualified staff that meet the minimum education and training requirements of the chosen curriculum or program model
- d) Maintain detailed data collection records, and enter timely data in the First Steps Data Collection System (FSDC), if required. The State Office of First Steps will notify partnerships

what data needs to be entered in the FSDC.

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS Community Education (802)

REQUIREMENTS FOR FY17:

This is **NOT** a required strategy.

However, all partnerships shall meet partnership standards for Collaboration/Community Engagement.

1. **General:**

- a. The purpose of the Community Education program strategy is to enable local partnerships that, based on their local needs and resources assessment, have determined a significant need in the community for such a strategy; that the partnership has, or can secure, sufficient funding and organizational capacity to operate a standalone Community Education strategy in addition to its other program services and collaborations; and that the local partnership is the organization best positioned in the community to implement this strategy.
- b. A Community Education strategy must support the First Steps legislative goals, in particular Goal 5:

SECTION 8. Section 59-152-30(5): mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed.
- c. In addition to the program standards outlined below, partnerships are responsible for adhering to First Steps standards for Collaboration/Community Engagement, included in the Partnership Accountability Standards section of this document.

2. **Strategy Approval:**

- a. To be approved for a Community Education strategy, the partnership must describe in its Renewal Plan the rationale for the strategy (see 1.a. above) and the target audience(s), and submit goals, measurable objectives, proposed activities, and data to be collected to measure progress and outcomes. Each proposed activity within the strategy must be in support of one or more strategy objectives.
- b. Potential strategy areas include:
 - i. Increasing awareness and engagement of target audiences in supporting early childhood programs and the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner (i.e., [I CAN] campaign)
 - ii. Supporting the partnership's core function as a local portal
 - iii. Supporting the partnership's core function as a community convener
 - iv. Supporting the partnership's core function to address one or more state-level school readiness priorities
 - v. Increasing the knowledge and skills, and/or changing behaviors of target audiences in one or more areas of school readiness, child development best practices, etc.
 - vi. Outreach to target audiences to increase their participation in programs and services supporting children 0-5 and their families
 - vii. Increasing financial and other support for early childhood programs and services
 - viii. Engaging target audiences in working to improve community performance on school readiness benchmarks (Profile of the Ready Kindergartner) and/or the state's readiness assessment
- c. Within the Renewal Plan and Budget Spending Plan, the partnership must provide specific information regarding the activities to be funded by this strategy, in particular the cost (per unit and total) of goods and services to be paid for using state funds.

3. **Strategy Implementation:**

- a. Partnership strategies will be expected to meet the strategy's goals and objectives as stated in the partnership's Renewal Plan, using output and outcome data as specified in its board-approved Renewal Plan as evidence of achievement.
- b. Maintain detailed data collection records, and enter timely monthly outputs data in the First

Steps Data Collection System (FSDC). Cases Data entry may be required if strategy activities are to include ongoing services to children and families.