

South Carolina First Steps e-Spotlight

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Celebrating National Nurses Week 2016: Nurse-Family Partnership Gives SC Children a Healthy Start



The path to school readiness begins with providing children a healthy start to life at the very beginning. Prenatal and infant care is critical in a child's growth and development, and can have a long-term impact on a child's future. However, South Carolina mothers and their babies continue to face serious challenges to their health and well-being. Recent data shows that nearly 36 percent of pregnant women in South Carolina receive less than adequate prenatal care and, statewide, nearly one in 10 infants is born at a low birth weight. With statistics like these, it is

clear that many expectant and parenting mothers need preventative care and continuing support in order to provide a healthy, nurturing environment for their babies and also pave the way for their future life success.

In 2007, First Steps collaborated with key philanthropic and agency partners, including the Duke Endowment, the Children's Trust of South Carolina, and the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHEC), to bring *Nurse-Family Partnership* (NFP) to South Carolina. NFP is an evidence-based home visitation program that matches nurse home visitors with first-time, low-income mothers. The program has three goals: to improve pregnancy outcomes, improve child health and development, and improve economic self-sufficiency for parents. From early pregnancy until the child turns two years old, Nurse-Family Partnership Nurse home visitors form a trusting relationship with the first-time moms, instilling confidence and empowering them to achieve a better life for their children – and themselves.

NFP is one of the oldest and most rigorously tested home-visitation programs in the country. Independent evaluations show NFP can return more than \$5 to the community for each dollar invested. The proven positive impact of this program on new mothers and their babies is in the data. A recent birth-outcome analysis conducted by DHEC's Bureau of Maternal Child Health showed low-income mothers receiving NFP were: 63% less likely to require admission to a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU); half as likely to be born pre-term (less than 37 weeks); and half as likely to be born at a low birth weight.

The first NFP programs in South Carolina began in Anderson, Greenville, Spartanburg, Lexington, and Richland counties, and the success of these programs quickly attracted more funding partners, including the BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation. Since inception, NFP has had a large collaborative impact on mothers and babies in South Carolina, currently reaching mothers in more than 26 counties. As of 2015, South Carolina NFP has served more than 3,200 low-income mothers and their babies, delivered more than 75,000 nurse home visits, and grown from an original client capacity of 600 in 2008 to almost 1,200 slots in 2015. The program is showing promising results in the state, with ninety percent of babies born full term, and 89 percent born at a healthy weight. Currently, 13 local First Steps partnerships support NFP in their counties, including Anderson, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Edgefield, Greenville, Horry, McCormick, Oconee, Richland, Spartanburg, Williamsburg, and York.

In February of 2016, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, Christian Soura, Director of SC DHHS, state officials and leaders from the private sector announced the nation's first Pay for Success project will bring NFP to an additional 3,200 first-time mothers and their babies enrolled across South Carolina over the next four years. In the Pay for Success model, funders will provide upfront capital and governmental entities will pay for all or part of the program only if it measurably improves the lives of participants. Independent evaluators measure the effects of a program based on specific, predetermined metrics that benefit both individuals and society and generate value for taxpayers. This project will mark new chapter in NFP's presence in South Carolina, increasing its reach in an effort to improve the health of children and families in the state.

May 6th - 12th 2016 marked the annual celebration of National Nurses Week 2016. Through the Nurse-Family Partnership, nurses are a key component of First Steps programming in providing first-time mothers personal support and guidance they need in providing for their children's health, nutritional, and developmental needs. As trusted advocates that guide participants through the emotional, social, and physical challenge of becoming a mother, NFP nurses make a long-lasting difference in the lives of their clients and the outcomes of their children.

For more information on SC First Steps' NFP programming, please contact Janice Kilburn at (803) 730-3084 or jkilburn@scfirststeps.org. For information on the national NFP organization, view their website by [clicking here](#).