



To: South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees  
From: Julia-Ellen C. Davis, Interim Director  
Date: August 18, 2016  
Re: Director's Report Mid-June to Mid-August, 2016

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It has been a busy summer for First Steps' programs and Partnerships as we prepare for the start of the 2016-2017 school year. From preparing for the 4K Teacher and Leadership Academies, to Early Head Start achieving full enrollment, to BabyNet improving its efficiency and the 2016 Countdown to Kindergarten celebrations, everyone is working very hard. We look forward to sharing more in this report and during the presentations at the August 18 Board of Trustees meeting.

### **Legislative Update**

The General Assembly is adjourned until early January, but we are busily preparing for the 2017 session. September is a month during which several annual reporting requirements are observed. We will be providing the following to the requesting authorities over the coming weeks:

- Executive Budget Office: Annual Agency Accountability Report (September 15, 2016)
- SC Education Oversight Committee: Education Improvement Act Program Report (September 30, 2016)
- Executive Budget Office: Executive Budget Request for FY18 (September 30, 2016)

### **Local Partnerships Update**

First Steps' Local Partnerships are getting programs underway for the new fiscal year that began on July 1<sup>st</sup>. This includes executing vendor contracts, ensuring program staff are in place and confirming proper certifications are obtained, and making sure that all programs are registered in the First Steps on-line data system. During this time, Executive Directors make certain that all vendors and staff know the First Steps Program Accountability Standards and are prepared to enter data into the First Steps on-line data system.

Partnership cash flow at the beginning of the year continues to be a challenge, as the EIA funding appropriated to First Steps is not immediately available at the start of the fiscal year. We have worked in close collaboration with the finance staff at the SC Department of Education and should have all partnership checks distributed by the end of the week. We will continue to raise this as an area of concern for the FY18 budget process.

Partnerships offering Child Care Training will be submitting their training plans by August 30.

The Priority Goals and Objectives for FY 17, as adopted by each local board, are also due into the First Steps State Office by September 30. These goals and objectives assist the Technical Assistance (TA) Team with determining the focus for professional development and TA support during the coming year.

Members of the Executive Directors Council Committees were confirmed and the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee met Wednesday, August 3. The committee accomplished the following tasks:

- Reviewed the Needs and Resources Assessment template that will be released August 22 after obtaining final input from Executive Directors.
- Reviewed the Local Partnership Annual Report Template. Incorporated the changes into a draft template for all partnerships to review, which is to be sent out by August 19. County Annual Reports for 2016 are due to the state office by October 1 as per First Steps Legislation.
- Finance and Administration Committee is meeting Friday, August 19.

A statewide meeting for all Executive Directors is scheduled for Tuesday, August 30 with the following proposed agenda items:

- Nurse Family Partnership Program update from the State Director, Chris Bishop.
- Workshop by Cleo Scott Brown from the History Matters Institute.
- Executive Directors Council committee meetings in the afternoon to:
  - Provide input on the plan to inform and educate the public about the benchmarks of kindergarten readiness, which were developed and adopted by SC First Steps and the SC Board of Education with other partners.
  - Consider changes to the data system.
  - Update on Evidence based programs contract work.
  - Other topics suggested by Executive Directors.

Since the last Board of Trustees meeting in June, three Local Partnerships Executive Directors have been hired by local boards: LaToya Shuler in Barnwell County First Steps, Crystal Campbell in Dorchester County, and Laura Wade in Union County. Each participated in an orientation for new directors and has received one-on-one support from the state office TA team.

### **BabyNet:**

BabyNet's federal grant for FFY 2016 (July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017) has been approved for award by the U.S. Department of Education. The outstanding required documents/activities that are due by December 31, 2016 include,

- Memoranda of Agreement with the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and each Early Head Start grantee to establish dispute resolution procedures and document fiscal certification for payor of last resort regulation under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities of Education Act; and
- Appointments from the Governor's Office for the State Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC).

The Federal-to-State Determinations of Performance were issued in June. South Carolina again received a determination of needs intervention, and for the second consecutive year, missed moving to up a level by less than four percentage points. It is important to note that these annual determinations are based on data that ranges from one to almost two years old. *We are delighted to report that all local BabyNet offices continue to comply with the required 45 day average from referral to IFSP development.* This data will begin to appear in next year's determination. A formal Corrective Action Plan (CAP) was developed with interagency partners to address areas of non-compliance.

In addition:

- *The BabyNet System Point of Entry Offices have, for the fourth consecutive month (March - June, 2016), performed at an average of under 45 days for Indicator 7 (the Initial Individualized Family Service Plan).*
- Referrals for FFY 2015 were approximately 11,000 children. Children newly served during FFY 2015: 3563; The cumulative count of all children served in FFY 2015: 9833. Current enrollment is 4412 children, with 1427 children in the referral/eligibility process.
- BabyNet Interagency Program Managers (BabyNet State Office, SCFSSR/BabyNet System Point of Entry Offices, Team for Early Childhood Solutions, Family Connection of South Carolina (Parent Training and Information Center under Part D of IDEA), South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, and the South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind) continue to meet collaboratively, twice per month.
- A Memorandum of Agreement is in process with SCDHEC's Birth Defects Registry to share referral information for children born with established risk conditions.
- BabyNet State Office positions (new FTEs from General Assembly) recently filled include an administrative assistant and 3 fiscal monitoring staff. The final position, an Assistant Part C Coordinator, will be filled in the coming weeks.
- Existing BabyNet State Office staff (4) have been repurposed to serve as regional Part C Coordinators to

ensure timely identification and correction of non-compliance for State Performance Indicators 1 (timely services), 7 (initial Individualized Family Service Plan process), and 8 (timely transition planning, notification, and conference prior to exit at age 3). Regional Part C Coordinators will work with interagency partners and contracted providers within assigned local early intervention systems.

### **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP)**

We are delighted to share news that we have reached our full Early Head Start enrollment of 254 children. In addition to the EHS policies and Community Assessment considered during the consent agenda, we have been involved in the following EHS activities:

#### Governance

- Met on August 11 with the EHS Governance Council, which approved the 2016 Community Assessment, many EHS Policies, and the EHS-CCP expansion grant application. The Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) Community Needs Assessment is required under Head Start Performance Standards 1305.3 to be conducted within its service area once every three years. During each of the following years the grantee must determine if there are significant changes in the areas as identified. The EHS-CCP Community Needs Assessment report provides collection and analysis of data to build and to guide future program decisions including the development of the program's philosophy and goals, the determination of component services. The 2016 Community Needs Assessment was approved by the Policy Council on August 15.
- Had EHS Policy Council meetings on July 7 in Allendale County, on August 4 as a conference call and on August 15 in Allendale.
- Held a retreat on June 14-15 with the SC First Steps Senior Management team and EHS Management team to write organization and program policies and procedures as required by the Head Start Performance Standards.
- Submitted the 2016-2017 calendar to Danya International, LLC, the Office of Head Start Contractor responsible for scheduling and conducting federal monitoring reviews.

#### Personnel

- Conducted interviews for the remaining unfilled staff positions in July. The hiring of four Family Advocates and a Teacher Mentor for the Columbia area have been approved by the Policy Council. Three of those staff completed orientation and began work; two are scheduled for orientation in mid-August.

#### Child Care Partnerships

- Concluded renovations at sites, including a recently completed exit ramp at a Berkeley County site, which the Fire Marshall determined was necessary during the license renewal process.
- Updated DSS licenses at all sites except for the above mentioned site and a Saluda County site. All work has been completed at both sites and the site administrator is waiting to receive the license update.
- Completed the procurement, delivery, and set up new furniture in all classrooms. Supplemental learning materials for all centers have been procured and the final deliveries are due to arrive around August 22.
- Visits by the EHS-CCP Director to the renovated partner sites in Allendale, Bamberg, Dillon, and Laurens Counties.

#### Family and Community Partnerships/ERSEA

- Achieved our funded enrollment of 254 infants and toddlers on August 16.
- Continued to accept applications in order to maintain active waiting lists as required by the Head Start Program Performance Standards.
- Began the new program year (Year Two) on August 17. We have two children who will soon age out of the program, both of whom have been referred to local Head Start programs. Those enrollment vacancies will be immediately filled from the waiting list.
- Input family service and other information into ChildPlus to prepare the annual Program Information Report (PIR), which is due August 31.

### Education

- Completed four, two-day trainings on Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers, with all EHS Teachers at various locations in the state.
- Rebecca Brown attended a New Directors Training that was sponsored by Region IV Head Start in Nashville, Tennessee.

### Fiscal

- Participated in the Head Start Fiscal Training on June 13-16 in Atlanta with four fiscal staff representing First Steps.
- Received approval of the 18-month Budget Revision application from Region IV for the 2015-2016 fiscal year which was approved by the board on the consent agenda at the June 16 meeting.
- Awarded a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) award of \$673,750 for a 1.8% wage increase for EHS staff and CCP teaching staff. The Board of Trustees also approved the COLA application on June 16.
- Received a Notice of Grant Award for \$3,663,878 for the Continuation Grant's budget period August 1, 2016 through July 31, 2017, which was approved by the board on April 21, 2016.
- Issued new child care partner contracts for the August 1, 2016 through July 31, 2017 fiscal period for renewal.
- Met with representatives from the SC Voucher Program to learn more about the child care subsidies for eligible EHS families.

### Disability, Health and Nutrition

- Identified members for the Health Services Advisory Council in fall 2016.
- Attended SC Department of Social Services Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) training.
- Participated and joined in a state-wide Head Start/Early Head Start Health Network Collaboration meeting.

### Training and Technical Assistance

- Delivered two, four-day Pre-Service Trainings to CCP Directors and teaching staff at the beginning of June and for those starting later at the end of June. This training covered all of the required topics by DSS licensing and the Head Start Performance Standards.
- Held a Fiscal Conference in Columbia on July 19 for EHS-CCP Directors. They received training on non-federal share, the SC Department of Social Services Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) reimbursements, SC Voucher subsidies, and the EHS tuition invoicing process.
- Met with representatives of PASOs of the University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health to plan training for Family Advocates in culturally responsive practices with Latino families.

## **SC First Steps 4K**

The 4K Program will begin the 2016-2017 school term with approximately 201 centers and 224 classes on August 17, 2016. This is an addition of 25 centers and 23 classrooms. Student applications continue to come in and are numbering approximately 2,300 at this time.

Staff are currently entering sites, students, and staff into the ChildPlus data system, which is in its first year of implementation in both EHS and 4K.

The *2016 4K Teacher Academy* was held August 8-12 with 400 lead teachers and instructional assistants going for the "Olympic Gold in Early Childhood Education," our theme. It was a powerful and high-energy week. The themes of this high-quality professional development were based on the power of adult-child interactions, intentionality, and the paths to quality for curriculum, assessment and family connections.

The goal is to continue raising the level of knowledge and professionalism amongst our directors during the *4K Leadership Academy*, August 30–September 1. This training will provide practical strategies for directors in shaping their programs through intentionality and the goal of improving child outcomes.

Six 4K team members participated in NAEYC's Professional Development Institute and two days of coaching/using reports with Teaching Strategies for Early Childhood in June. All Team Members

participated in Apple iPad training and Teachstone's Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) training in July. Continuing professional development with our team will allow us to view our own practice, identify moments of effectiveness, analyze and reinforce them, and figure out how to apply these practices more extensively with greater intention.

Deborah DePaoli, the newest 4K Regional Coordinator, began during the week of August 8, which made a 4K team of eight. She brings particular strengths of family engagement and Conscious Discipline skills. Deborah will serve Sumter County and part of Lexington County.

### **e-Spotlight**

In February 2016, First Steps launched the e-Spotlight, a regular publication highlighting the programs and successes of local First Steps partnerships.

Recently, the e-Spotlight featured Spartanburg County First Steps' Quality Counts Program, a community-based quality enhancement initiative designed to build and sustain high quality in early care and education programs. Entering its fifth year, Quality Counts is seeing success, growth, and replication, as two new First Steps partnerships, Kershaw and Dorchester, have recently begun implementing the program.

We also featured Orangeburg County First Steps (OCFS) and their efforts to bring the community together to meet the needs of children and families. OCFS has exemplified the role of a "community convener", launching successful partnerships with the SC Regional Housing Authority, the Orangeburg County Department of Public Safety, and the Sheriff's Department. OCFS has also created an Early Childhood Community Engagement Network for the county.

To access the archive of all partnership e-Spotlights, visit the First Steps website at: <http://scfirststeps.com/first-steps-e-spotlight-2>

### **Parents as Teachers (PAT)**

As you know, South Carolina First Steps is the proud state sponsor agency for Parents as Teachers, a nationally recognized, evidence-based home visitation model widely implemented by local partnerships.

SC First Steps' PAT Director has been planning and preparing for three major Professional Development Training events coming to South Carolina in August and September. In addition, a new PAT Associate has been temporarily hired to help review the 43 PAT Affiliate Annual Performance Reports to be submitted to the National office by the end of September.

A PAT National Foundational & Model Implementation Training (prenatal to 3 years) is being hosted by SC First Steps in Columbia during the week of August 15-19 with 43 participants coming from South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, West Virginia, and Arkansas.

South Carolina First Steps is sponsoring a National Trainer from SC to go through the intensive process to become a Trainer for Parents as Teachers National. She has begun that process by observing and debriefing with national trainers at the SC training the week of August 15-19th in Columbia

On August 29-30 there will be a National PAT Foundational 2 training (3 years through Kindergarten) in Aiken, South Carolina that will be hosted by our Aiken County First Steps Partnership. Currently 37 participants are registered to attend from South Carolina and other surrounding states.

On September 12th&13th SC First Steps' PAT State office will be hosting the 4th Annual *Strengthening Families through Collaboration Parenting Conference* at Brookland Baptist Conference Center. This conference will feature four keynotes and fourteen professional development sessions to ensure providers and supervisors receive in-depth quality training around working with high needs families and children. The goal is to ensure that all Home Visiting Programs in SC are able to achieve positive outcomes for children and families.

This collaborative conference is being sponsored by South Carolina First Steps, Children's Trust of SC, SAVE the Children, the Head Start Collaboration Office, and the following First Steps County Partnerships (Aiken, Beaufort, Darlington, Horry, Lexington, Newberry, Richland, Spartanburg, and York). The list of national and local trainers who will be in the state for this event is impressive. Please see the list of Professional Development Sessions attached that will be provided at this conference.

All of SC PAT Annual Performance Reports are due by August 15 and are being reviewed through August and September. The 2016 state PAT report should be ready to send out and post by mid-October.

### **State Office and Other Facilities**

The first floor of the First Steps state office building has been recently painted, with most of the staffing moves now complete. All remaining staffing moves will be completed by the end of August. With the recent addition of BabyNet and Early Head Start staff, the new cubical areas are in full use. The second floor will be painted by August 31. As soon as the final moves are completed, the carpets will be cleaned and the locking systems for the offices will be updated.

In other facility updates, a lease has been signed for the Rock Hill BabyNet office, work has been completed in an expanded Florence office, and the need in Orangeburg is being evaluated. The Georgetown locations are being finalized with discussions taking place. The additional capacity and improved quality of the locations appears to be having a very positive impact on productivity and performance in the BabyNet Program.