



To: South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees
From: Julia-Ellen C. Davis, Interim Director
Date: October 21, 2016

RE: Interim Director's Report September - October 2016

As SC First Steps recovers from school/office closures and some damage to 4K sites due to Hurricane Matthew, our managers are preparing to conduct annual appraisals of all staff as part of the Employee Personnel Management System. Managers met to review the process on October 18, with all staff to participate in training before October 28. While we complete this important process, we are also in the final stages of planning the 2016 Chairmen's Summit on Early Childhood, which will be held on December 7 at the Doubletree Hotel in Columbia (2100 Bush River Rd). We are thrilled to announce that our morning keynote speaker is Dr. Dana Suskind, author of *The 30 Million Word Gap* and the afternoon speaker is Dr. Julie Washington of Georgia State University who will speak on "The Early Learning Trifecta: Language, Literacy and Executive Function." Registration will begin next week. As we did last year, we plan to involve trustees as session moderators. A reminder that the Board's Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 6, with dinner to follow at The Inn at USC. Lodging will be available for trustees requiring accommodations.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Senior staff met with the Governor's staff to present the agency's FY18 Executive Budget request on Wednesday, October 12, 2016.

Additionally, First Steps has recently provided the following to the requesting authorities:

- 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 PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

On August 30, First Steps Executive Directors met for a statewide meeting in Columbia. They received a presentation regarding the expansion of the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) Program as part of "Pay for Success," a state pilot project. In addition, they learned how First Steps Partnerships can assist with recruitment and connection of participating NFP mothers to other services. EDs also engaged in a discussion led by guest speaker, Cleo Scott Brown, regarding stereotypes and how these can impact our work with families. The committees of the newly formed Executive Directors Leadership Council (which mirror those of the state board) were convened to address key issues. The Finance and Administration Committee took up the topic of developing a communications protocol for working across county lines. The Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee discussed changes to the on-line data system related to documenting parent group meetings. The Program and Grants Committee reviewed both a new brochure regarding the "Profile of the Ready Kindergartener" (August 30) and the University of South Carolina's report on evidence-based and evidence-informed programs (October 17).

The Local Partnerships funding Child Care Training have submitted their 2017 training plans, which are currently being reviewed by our Technical Assistance Team. Partnerships have also transmitted their final Key Priorities and Goals for FY 17 as approved by their boards. The Technical Assistance Team has begun compiling and summarizing these goals to arrive at key themes and topics that will be the basis for our support and professional development to local partnerships during the fiscal year.

As required by our legislation, partnerships have submitted their County Annual Reports for FY 2016. These will be posted to the First Steps Website after final review. The numbers served for all local programs as reported in these annual reports will be compiled to arrive at statewide totals, which will then be incorporated into the State First Steps Annual Report that is due to the State Board on December 1.

The First Steps Technical Assistance (TA) Team is continuing to expand its capacity with two new staff members, Mr. Jon Artz and Dr. Kim Archung, both brought on in August. Expertise in the area of non-profit management has been strengthened by the addition of Sharon Thomas. Ms. Thomas is using her experience from working with the South Carolina Association of Non-profits to advise and support our TA Team. Interviews are being scheduled for two additional TA staff positions with one based in the Columbia office and one in the Pee Dee area.

BABYNET

On September 14, Governor Haley issued an Executive Order naming the SC Department of Health and Human Services the lead agency for BabyNet, effective July 1, 2017. First Steps is very proud of the improvement to the BabyNet system implemented under the agency's leadership and will work with Director Soura and his staff to ensure a smooth transition of lead agency responsibilities. SCFS notified the US Department of Education of Governor Haley's action on the date of its execution and has since provided two documents to assist DHHS with the transfer process.

- The grant application for FY 2017 (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018) must be reviewed by the State Interagency Coordinating Council, then posted for public comment no later than February 15, 2017.
- On September 21, 2016, Mr. Soura announced that the Governor's Office has made 11 appointments to the State Interagency Coordinating Council, with seven to nine additional new appointments pending. Upon receipt of membership, national technical assistance resources will be leveraged to provide orientation and training to the ICC regarding federal responsibilities.
- State staff have begun their analysis of data for the FFY 2015 grant year in advance of the Annual Performance Report due February 1, 2017.
- BabyNet Program Managers continue to update the information that was requested regarding the April, 2016 submission of Phase II of the State Systemic Improvement Plan. The report for Phase III, Year 1, is due April 1, 2017.
- Work continues on the deliverables for the FFY 2016 Grant Application, including Memoranda of Agreements with SCDHHS, and Early Head Start grantees regarding fiscal certification for payor of last resort. The recently released revisions to the Head Start Performance Standards require states to use a federally developed template for development of the local MOA.
- Together with BabyNet Program Managers and with input from SC DHHS, the BabyNet State Office held interviews for the Assistant Part C Coordinator position. A second round of interviews for top candidates is in the process of being scheduled
- Following statewide data cleanup for missing data by all BabyNet Service Coordination Agencies, the data for the 45-day process for the period July 1, 2015-August 31, 2016 has been revised. All BabyNet Service Coordination Agencies now have access to missing data reports for all State Performance Plan compliance indicators; additionally, the Regional Part C Coordinators with BabyNet State Office run the same reports and follow-up with any agency or vendor with missing, incomplete, or incorrect data on a monthly basis.
- The BabyNet Interagency Directors' workgroup met August 26, 2016 with SC DHHS to present BabyNet budget recommendations for SFY 2018. The workgroup will meet quarterly during FFY 2016.

BabyNet Enrollment data for FFY 2015: Referrals: 10,397.

Children newly served during FFY 2015: 3557.

Cumulative count of all children served in FFY 2015: 9833.

Enrollment data for FFY 2016: Referrals through September 30, 2016: 3387.

Current enrollment is 4446 children, with 1416 children in the referral/eligibility process.

New children determined eligible through September 30, 2016: 1035.

EARLY HEAD START(EHS)-CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Early Head Start program is fully operational in 15 sites in 12 SC counties. Recent program highlights are included below:

Governance

- Held EHS Policy Council meetings on August 4 (conference call) and August 15 (Allendale County).
- Conducted center-level parent committee meetings in September at all partner sites and elected Policy Council representatives.
- Rescheduled Policy Council meeting and training from October 8 to the new date, October 21, due to Hurricane Matthew.

Personnel

- Conducted interviews for Family Advocates and a Teacher Mentor in September. Two Family Advocates were approved by the Policy Council and two more will be recommended to the Policy Council on October 21.
- Hosted Federal Monitoring Training for all EHS staff and the EHS Governance Council for October 19.

Child Care Partnerships

- Improved ABC Quality rating from B to B+ at Progressive Family Life CDC in Denmark, SC, a Bamberg County child care partner.
- Completed the SC Voucher enrollment process at Thornwell Home for Children. Two more centers in Saluda and Lexington are working towards obtaining SC Voucher status.
- Delivered supplemental learning materials for all centers the week of August 22- 26, 2016.
- Conducted EHS-CCP Director monitoring visits to the partner sites in Anderson, Saluda, Laurens, Newberry, Orangeburg, and Allendale Counties.
- Assessed severe weather damage to our child care partner sites from Hurricane Matthew. Many sites were closed, but no substantial damage to centers has been reported.
- Provided child care partners access to the EHS database in ChildPlus in order to enter daily attendance and to view children's family and health information.

Family and Community Partnerships/ERSEA

- Maintained funded enrollment of 254 infants and toddlers with a current waitlist of 104 children.
- Submitted the annual Program Information Report (PIR) on August 31, which captured services to children and families in the 2015-2016 program year.
- Revised and distributed our SCFS EHS Parent Handbook to centers and enrolled families.
- Attended the Institute for Child Success (ICS) Symposium in Charlotte, NC on October 12-14.
- Launched a campaign to emphasize the importance of Average Daily Attendance (ADA). In September ADA was 86%.

Health Services

- 98% of our currently enrolled Early Head Start children have health insurance
 - 97% - Medicaid
 - 3% - Private Insurance
 - Other families are in process of waiting to be approved for Medicaid
- Completing over 500 developmental screenings on children (ASQ-3 & ASQ-SE-2)
 - Through the screening process, children are identified with the possibility of a delay.
 - These children are being referred to BabyNet for Early Intervention Services to evaluate if the children qualify for Early Intervention services.
- All family advocates are now in place and helping gather health information to meet program requirements.
 - We help the families gather:

- Immunizations
- Health History
- Nutrition Information
- Lead Testing
- Anemia Testing
- Hearing Screening
- Vision Screenings
- Dental Screenings
- Well Baby Checks
- Referrals to specialists as needed
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- Our Health Services Advisory Board will be meeting before the end of the year.
 - The Board currently consists of:
 - Early Head Start Parents
 - DHEC Dental Professional
 - Lions Club Member
 - BabyNet State Director
 - DHEC Immunization Nurse Consultant
 - CACFP- Child and Adult Care Food Program Head Start Specialist
 - Owner/Therapist of a Therapy Services Business that Covers 6/12 of our counties and provides Speech, Occupational and Physical Therapy for children.

FIRST STEPS 4K

First Steps 4K is in full swing with 189 active centers and 211 active classrooms for 2016-2017. Our current enrollment is 2,184 students (we received 2620 applications). We are utilizing the data management system, ChildPlus, to maintain our student data and invoicing records and documents.

Our 4K Leadership Academy was held on August 30 - September 1, 2016 with over 200 directors participating. Judy Jablon and her team worked on visionary and focused leadership skills with the participants. This convening provided practical strategies for directors in shaping their programs through intentionality and the goal of improving child outcomes.

All Regional Coordinators and teachers were trained on School Readiness Developmental Duffle kits to implement high quality literacy practices in our classrooms. New teachers to our 4K program completed Gold™ by Teaching Strategies assessment training. Our first professional development day was a regional day that focused on linking instruction and assessment. Teachers participated in on-line modules for a certificate of completion. All teachers are collecting documentation of performance to complete their first Preliminary Ratings by the 45th day of school.

The State 4K Director represented SC First Steps on a panel with our early childhood partners at the SC Association for the Education of Young Children (SCAEYC) conference on September 29 in Columbia. Hurricane Matthew caused a tremendous hardship for 4K centers, families, and teachers. Several classrooms experienced severe flooding and lost classroom materials. 45 school districts missed three days of school and our centers are in 24 districts that missed eight or more days now. Our 2016-2017 calendar has three scheduled inclement weather days as required by legislation. This is a critical situation that we are working to navigate.

SC 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, which is widely implemented by local partnerships. Of the state's 44 affiliate sites, 37 (84%) receive funding from SC First Steps. Our SC PAT Director is responsible for tracking and providing assistance to all 44 PAT sites, independent of funding source. The SC PAT Annual Performance Reports, which were submitted in August have been reviewed and compiled into the 2016 state PAT report, which includes the following:

Highlights from the 2015-16 Annual Performance Report Summary for SC Parents as Teachers Affiliates

- 1,925 families were served
- 2,187 children were served
- 31,640 home visits were performed
- 86% of families are low income, 26% have a low educational attainment, and 16% are teen parents.
- 78% of children served were from birth to 3 and 21% were 3 to 5 years old. This excludes prenatal at enrollment.
- 78% of families had 2 or more high risk factors and 17% had one high risk factor.
- 89% of families with 2 or more high risk factors received at least 75% or more visits twice monthly.
- 96% of families with 1 risk factor or less received at least 75% or more visits twice monthly.
- 132 Parent Educators are part of SC PAT -- 94% are degreed and 22% have a Master's degree or higher.
- 90% of all children served received a complete screening and 93% of 19-35 month olds had all immunizations up to date.
- 72% of all families met at least one goal set for their family.
- Family attrition rate was 16% (this excludes those who moved out of the service area).

Training on screenings and assessments for new parenting providers is scheduled for the last week in October in Columbia.

Since the August 18th SC First Steps Board meeting, the following training was implemented with our partners:

- National PAT Foundational 2 training (3 years through kindergarten) on August 29-30 in Aiken, South Carolina. It was hosted by the Aiken County First Steps Partnership with over 40 participants who attended the training from South Carolina and other surrounding states.
- PAT National Foundational and Model Implementation training was mid-August in Columbia at which time 40 new PAT providers and supervisors from SC and other neighboring states were trained.
- 4th Annual Strengthening Families through Collaboration Parenting Conference at Brookland Baptist Conference Center had about 230-250 participants from North and South Carolina on September 12-13. The SC First Steps' PAT State office hosted the training, which was 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). It featured four keynote speakers and fourteen professional development sessions to assist all home visiting programs in SC in achieving positive outcomes for children and families.

e-SPOTLIGHT

e-Spotlight, a regular publication highlighting the programs and successes of local First Steps partnerships continues monthly. To access the archive of all partnership e-Spotlights, visit the First Steps website at: <http://scfirststeps.com/first-steps-e-spotlight-2>

OPERATIONS UPDATE

The BabyNet Program has completed sorting, organizing and storing over 1,000 boxes of BabyNet Client Records which were housed all over the state. These boxes included files brought over from DHEC when the program first transferred to First Steps. Each file was documented, placed in its correct order and entered into a database. These paper files were then uniformly labeled and put into document storage in a single location in Columbia. This was a huge undertaking and was completed in the last month.

The 4K Program has implemented a new data system and part of that includes the capability to track enrollment and attendance. This is allowing a major change in the way providers are paid for tuition for the 4K children. The new process, which is currently being implemented, will bring additional efficiency, greater accountability, and faster payments to providers.

The State Office is in a leased space at 1300 Sumter Street, which is being sold. The State Office's lease is good through at least the summer of 2018. Preliminary information indicates that the new owner plans to continue the lease with us as the lessee.

[I CAN]/PROFILE OF THE READY KINDERGARTNER - PHASE II

Moving forward on the [I CAN] campaign is going to be imperative in fulfilling the most recent additions of legislative requirements on the promotion of school readiness in South Carolina.

That section of the law (59-152-32) currently reads that the SC First Steps Board:

- (1) in consultation with the State Board of Education, and with the advice and consent of that board, adopt a description of school readiness that includes specific:
 - (a) characteristics and development levels of a ready child that must include, but are not limited to, emerging literacy, numeracy, and physical, social, and emotional competencies;
 - (b) characteristics of school, educators, and caregivers that the board considers necessary to create an optimal learning environment for the early years of students' lives; and
 - (c) characteristics of the optimal environment which would lead to the readiness of students and their continued success;
- (2) establish specific benchmarks and objectives for use by the board of trustees, local partnership boards, and any agency that administers a program to benefit preschool children;
- (3) determine whether state and local programs and activities are effective and contribute to achieving the goals established in Section 59-152-30; and
- (4) publish and distribute a list of approved evidence-based and evidence-informed programs.

To that end, SC First Steps has initiated the [I CAN] campaign, which promotes the importance of early childhood readiness and the impact and support that must be provided through Parents and Caregivers, Community Groups, and Schools and Educators.

Through the website, iCan.sc, and social media outlets, we have published the approved Profile of the Ready Kindergartner and sought input and feedback from local First Steps partnerships across the state. Simultaneously, we have been working with the Program and Grants Committee of the Executive Directors' Council to refine messaging and begin development of specific Phase II deliverables to support outreach to each of the three target support groups. These include:

- Printed versions of the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner (English and Spanish) for distribution through the state office and local partnerships. (Our thanks goes out to the translation team at SC DHEC for their rapid response in translating that content.)
- Baseline PowerPoint presentation (similar in structure and function to the 2000 Days presentation from NC.) that can be customized for use by local partnerships for outreach and promotion of First Steps within communities and early childhood education overall.
- Video of the importance of early childhood education in South Carolina and how it fits into the overall structure and strata of education in the state).
- Development of support-group-appropriate action steps that correlate to each of the target readiness actions in the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner. These will then be developed into support-group-targeted materials like:
 - Parent-child activity cards
 - Parent-child activity social media posts
 - Call-to-Action promotional materials demonstrating ways that various community groups can become involved and active in early childhood.

- Commitment material for community group involvement.
 - School-Educator resources for implementation of early childhood strategies
 - Online portal (on iCan.SC) for internal and external resources for each support group
- Development of a Kindergartner-to-STEAM initiative that pairs specific activities with target readiness actions from the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner to be correlative relationships between primary and secondary learning and the school readiness preparation that SC First Steps promotes and provides.
- Advertising Campaign on promoted social media platform and possibly public-service and paid-advertising outreach through radio and television outlets.

Coinciding with these efforts, we propose the initiation of an [I CAN] Development Campaign to raise non-public funds that could extend the outreach efforts.