



To: South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees  
From: Julia-Ellen C. Davis, Interim Director  
Date: January 20, 2017

**RE: Interim Director's Report (December 2016-January 2017)**

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Happy New Year!

December and January have been action packed as we welcome lawmakers back to Columbia, and continue preparing for the transition of our BabyNet Program to the SC Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). We anticipate the physical transfer of certain key BabyNet leaders to begin within the next 4-6 weeks.

Staff are also busy preparing for a planned Early Head Start monitoring review, which will take place in early February. We are very proud of all of our EHS accomplishments – some of which were recently highlighted on the website of the Thornwell Children's Home in Clinton. I have attached both articles for your enjoyment.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

SC First Steps requires legislative reauthorization by July 1, 2017. Ken Wingate, Dan Wuori and I recently met with Rep. Allison who is working with staff and legislative colleagues to prepare a bill, which we hope to share in the coming days.

First Steps has its preliminary Ways and Means budget hearing before the K-12 Education Subcommittee (Rep. Bill Whitmire, Chair) on Wednesday, January 11. We were pleased to have Ken join us for the presentation.

**LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS**

Two additional Technical Assistance staff will be welcomed to our TA Team as early as February 2<sup>nd</sup>. One TA will be based in the Columbia office and the second will be located in Kingstree to serve the Pee Dee area. This will bring our Technical Assistance Team to a total of nine members.

The monthly leadership webinar for First Steps Executive Directors and Board Chairs is scheduled for Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am. First Steps webinars are held on the third Tuesday of each month to share information with local partnerships about all First Steps programs – Local Partnerships, the 4-K Program, Early Head Start, Baby Net and Parents as Teachers – and provide updates regarding legislative activity and key community events.

January will mark the beginning of the process for updating the First Steps Operations and Program Accountability Standards. Feedback will be collected from local First Steps staff, board members and vendors, as well as interested community stakeholders. Revised standards will be presented to the State Board for approval in March.

Staff reviewed the "2017 Priority Goals and Objectives" that were submitted for each partnership and plan to present an analysis describing state wide trends during the January 24<sup>th</sup> webinar. The summary of goals and objectives serves to guide technical assistance work and indicates areas where further training and resources are needed.

Technical Assistance staff will work closely with finance staff to assist local partnerships in monitoring the monthly finance reports that they are receiving. The goal will be to ensure spending of carry forward and

documenting that in-kind match are on track in order to prevent end of the fiscal year close out issues. We have recently added a new finance staff member dedicated to local partnership support and will be working over the coming months to further enhance technical assistance in this area.

### **SC PARENTS AS TEACHERS (PAT)**

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

- Fourteen Quality Endorsement Program (QEP) sites have begun their self-study process. They attended a First Steps webinar on January 9<sup>th</sup> to review the process, receive feedback, and ask questions. These calls will occur on a regular basis until the self-study is due on April 3, 2017 to support their efforts to achieve "Blue Ribbon Status." A face-to-face meeting is currently being planned for February for supervisors to delve deeper into the self-study. The 14 programs going through QEP this year include First Steps' funded affiliates in Aiken, Allendale, Berkeley, Clarendon 2, Darlington, Jasper, Lexington 1, Lexington 2, Lexington 3, Lexington/Richland 5, McCormick, Pickens, Richland, and York 1. Many of these affiliates have blended First Steps funds with school district funds, while a handful operate solely from the local First Steps partnership office.
- New home visiting staff in PAT and Nurse-Family Partnership programs were trained in the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Third Edition (ASQ-3)* and *Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Social Emotional (ASQ-SE)* on January 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Planning has begun in collaboration with SC Children's Trust to help transition five new MIECHV federally funded sites from the Healthy Steps Model to Parents as Teachers. A meeting with Home Visiting staff from CTF was held to put a transition plan in place. The initial step will be to have Healthy Step providers shadow seasoned PAT providers on a home visit to see what a home visit is like. The application process for these five sites will begin in February.
- Thirty PAT affiliates met all seventeen Essential Requirements in 2015-2016. The other affiliates are working on success plans this month to ensure that they will improve in specific areas by the end of this program year.
- The PAT Director traveled to Washington, DC in December and will go to St. Louis in later January to participate in the final selection of the next Chief Executive Officer for the National Parents as Teachers Office. She is representing all PAT State Leaders in the search process that will likely wrap up by the end of January 2017.

### **EARLY HEAD START – CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP**

The program continues to operate at full enrollment in fifteen sites in twelve SC counties. Highlights during the previous thirty days includes,

#### **Federal Monitoring**

- A fiscal monitoring call with the Early Head Start Federal Review Team was held on Thursday, January 19.

#### **Governance/Program Management**

- A joint meeting of the Policy Council and EHS-CCP Governance Council was held on January 6, allowing the two bodies to interact. During this meeting, staff presented the revised Selection Criteria for 2017, adopted unanimously by both groups.
- First Steps received notice of its anticipated Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) Federal Review. The on-site visit is scheduled for February.
- Conducted the annual self-assessment with representatives from the staff, Board of Trustees, Policy Council and the community during the week of January 3-6, 2017. Training was provided to the self-assessment team members prior to participating in the self-assessment. The results were compiled and reviewed by the team the following week. The final report with follow-up action plan is in the process of being prepared.
- Evaluated program progress in QRIS ratings at monthly staff meeting.
- Collected Professional Development plans for EHS-CCP Teachers.
- Annual Performance Appraisals were completed by Center Directors.

- Met with potential playground vendors on December 20 to advertise EHS playground renovations.
- Attended the Region IV Office of Head Start and T/TA Network Head Start Program Performance Standards training in Columbia on January 12-13. Representatives of the senior staff, EHS-CCP management team and others from SC First Steps EHS-CCP attended the training.

### **Health Services**

- First Steps' Early Head Start Health Services Advisory Council (HSAC) met on Wednesday, December 14<sup>th</sup> to receive an introduction to Early Head Start and its health requirements.
  - Health partners represented in HSAC include:
    - DHEC-Immunization Compliance
    - BabyNet
    - Mental Health
    - Environmental Health
    - DHEC-Dental Health
    - DSS-CACFP food program
    - Nutrition-Registered Dietician
    - DHEC-WIC
    - Pediatric Therapy-Speech, Physical & Occupational
    - Parents
- Collaborated with the Registered Dietician to address allergies, alter menus, etc.
- Met with LifeShare Mental Health Southeastern US Director to begin Mental Health Services.
- Participated and joined in a state-wide Head Start/Early Head Start Health Network Collaboration meeting.
- Sent our Health Coordinator to the Head Start/Early Head Start Health Coordinator's December training in Savannah, Georgia
- Our Children By the Numbers:
  - 98.9% of our children have insurance.
  - 96% of our children have a dental home.
  - 100% of our children have a medical home.

### **Family and Community Partnerships/ERSEA**

- Maintained funded enrollment of 254 infants and toddlers with a current waitlist of 145 children.
- Provided training to Family Advocates on in-kind, transitions and the ChildPlus software.

### **BABYNET**

BabyNet is working closely with DHHS to ensure a smooth transition in leadership. Among the transition highlights for the past 30 days:

- Weekly meeting with SCDHHS BabyNet Project Management Team and BNSO initiated Jan. 4.
- Planned activities for January 2017:
- Review of all contracts
- Site evaluations of six SPOE offices and BabyNet State Office staff
- Review of HR transfer activities.

South Carolina Part C has been selected for a Differentiated Monitoring and Supports site visit during the summer of 2017.

Referrals received from July 1, 2016 to January 8, 2017 = 6,323. The top referral sources include the following:

- Top Physician: 2,450
- CAPTA: 1,300
- Parent/Relative: 1,247

Current Enrollment (birth to 36 months): 4,548

**45-day Process**

During the month of November 2016, each of the state's 7 BabyNet regions averaged less than 45 days from referral to initial IFSP.

<b>Average Days to Initial IFSP by SPOE District (November 2016)</b>							
	<b>Anderson</b>	<b>Charleston</b>	<b>Colleton</b>	<b>Horry</b>	<b>Richland</b>	<b>Spartanburg</b>	<b>York</b>
<b>Days</b>	30	41	33	37	34	37	39

**FIRST STEPS 4K**

Our current 4K enrollment is 2,226 students in 187 centers with 206 classrooms.

The Education Oversight Committee 4K Report, Part II was released on January 17. Assessment data findings from Gold™ by Teaching Strategies showed appropriate gains from fall to year end. Private 4K students were slightly below the publisher's developmental range in fall 2015. Private 4K students were within the publisher's developmental range in spring 2016.

Our 4K Team will attend and support professional development with our lead teachers, assistants, and directors at the upcoming South Carolina Early Childhood Association (SCECA) Conference on January 19-21. Our objectives will relate to supporting curriculum, standards, assessment, and the social-emotional domain. Our next professional development day is March 17 and will be held regionally with an emphasis on individualizing instruction and documenting growth.

Applications are now available for new sites to apply as 4K Providers for 2017-2018. Current renewed centers have received the 2017-2018 Student Application and new student registrations are being received and processed.

The 4K Program and state office staff are also completing an evaluation of the administrative and fiscal processes for the program to improve its operations. That includes developing improved processes for payments for the centers and teachers for tuition, stipends, and classroom supplies. This includes a plan to prepare the program in the case of continued growth and development of improved techniques to support and communicate with parents.

## Child with Rare Genetic Condition Excels in Thornwell's Early Head Start Program

*"As a parent, you want your kids to have the opportunity to learn," said Ricky Huffman, whose two-year-old son is in the early head start*



*program at Thornwell. "You want your kids to excel."*

Huffman said his son, Ash, wasn't excelling at the daycare he was in before coming to Thornwell. Ash usually picked up a toy and sat in a corner. Or, worse yet, the daycare staff put him in a chair and left him by himself. Regardless, Ash didn't receive the one-on-one attention he needs.

You see, Ash is one of only 100 people in the world with a condition known as Nicolaides-Baraitser syndrome. He's the first child in South Carolina with it and the youngest person in the world who has this rare genetic condition that stunts his growth, causes seizures, affects his ability to learn.

### Making Progress

Despite having the condition, Ash has grown by leaps and bounds in the few months he's been in Thornwell's early head start program. Ash's teachers design lessons for Ash's needs, as they do for all of the children in the program. His teachers work with him to help him

improve his communication skills. This alone is significant since Nicolaides–Baraitser syndrome affects Ash's ability to speak.

"But since he's been at Thornwell, he's now saying 'Daddy' and 'Mama' clearly," Huffman said.

Ash's teachers at Thornwell also teach him how to use his hands to communicate. Plus, the tables and the toy stations in the room allow Ash to practice his motor skills.

## Specialized Care

"The specialized care is phenomenal," Huffman said. "We watch our son who was struggling, who wasn't even making a sound, and now he's making movements with his hands and he's making sounds. He's not just silent. That's a huge thing."

Ash has specialists who visit him at Thornwell to help manage his condition and keep track of his development. They agree that the two-year-old has progressed since being in the early head start program. In fact, they recognized a difference in how much he was interacting and communicating in the first two weeks he came to Thornwell.

"When you become part of Thornwell," Huffman said, "hands down, it's the best . . . for getting your child early education that will be with them through the rest of their lives."

## Enroll Now

The Early Head Start program and the 4K program are two early childhood education programs offered at Thornwell. Both grant-supported programs are free to eligible families, and both are now enrolling. To find out if you qualify, please complete the form below or call 864-938-2794.

## Two-Year-Old Gets a Head Start in School

*Jewell Hollingsworth wants the best for two-year-old Zayden. But she realized that letting a friend watch him while she worked wasn't allowing Zayden to develop as she wanted him to.*



"He didn't have any interaction with other kids," Hollingsworth said.

However, Hollingsworth is a single parent and couldn't afford to put Zayden in daycare. Luckily, she heard about Thornwell's early head start program. The program is free for eligible families and is designed for children ranging from infants to 36 months old.

### The Early Head Start Difference

It didn't take long for Hollingsworth to tell a significant difference in Zayden's social and academic skills.

"He's talking a lot more than he did before the program," Hollingsworth said. "And he can spell his name already."

Zayden is in a room with eight other children and two teachers. The teachers interact with the children to help them develop their social skills and plan activities to further help them learn according to their age and ability level.

Hollingsworth, a life-long Clinton resident, knew that Zayden would be well-taken care of at Thornwell.

“Enrolling in the early head start program was a smart thing to do,” she said. “It’s free. It gets the kids the interaction they’re going to need later on.”