



To: South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees  
From: Julia-Ellen C. Davis, Interim Director  
Date: June 16, 2017  
Re: Director's Report

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It's been a busy two months since the Board's last meeting. The Program and Grants and Finance and Administration Committees of the Board have been working collaboratively with the local Executive Director Leadership Council to develop recommendations for the evidence based program requirement and recommendations stemming from the 8 % Administrative Cost study. We are eager to share these recommendations at the June 16 Board meeting.

While the BabyNet transition continues, our Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership and 4K staff are focused on preparing for the start of the 2017-2018 program year - identifying additional sites, accepting applications, preparing training for staff, ordering supplies, and more.

In an effort to broaden the Board's knowledge of all that SC First Steps is involved in, this report was expanded to provide more information regarding SC First Steps' work in three areas - collaboration with partner agencies and community organizations, planning for Data Sharing Initiatives and meeting the needs of First Steps around equity, diversity and inclusion.

As we continue to have so much to be proud of at SC First Steps, we also endeavor to enhance the work environment and to ensure that it is safe and operates efficiently.

## **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

### **Reauthorization**

First Steps' reauthorization bill (H.3591) ended the year on the Senate's contested calendar – having received favorable votes in the House K-12 Education Subcommittee, the House Education and Public Works Committee, the full SC House, Senate K-12 subcommittee, and full Senate Education. We will enter January 2018 needing only a vote in the full Senate and the signature of Governor McMaster.

The bill was placed on the Senate's contested calendar by Senator Shane Martin, who has expressed a desire to have a permanent director in place before reauthorization comes to a final vote.

As you know the State Board has seated a search committee, with the goal of naming a permanent director this summer. Senator Martin is aware of this timeline and has provided assurances that once a director is named, he will clear a path for the passage of H.3591 when the General Assembly returns in January.

In the meantime, First Steps' reauthorization for FY18 has been secured via proviso.

Because 2017 is the first in a two-year legislative session, the bill will be picked back up in January and only require a Senate vote and the Governor's signature for passage, meaning it will not need to start over in the House when legislators return.

### **General Appropriations Act for FY18**

The SC General Assembly has completed work on its budget for FY18.

Under the budget as submitted to Governor McMaster for signature, First Steps will be funded at levels equal to FY17 (with the exception of BabyNet funds/staff being transferred to DHHS, effective July 1) – meaning local partnership allocations for FY18 will be as approved by the board for planning purposes in March. Provisos approved (or continued) by the conference committee will:

- Reauthorize First Steps until July 1, 2018.
- Increase 4K funding levels by the rate of inflation, to \$4,422 (+\$99) for tuition and \$563 (+\$13) for transportation.
- Permit First Steps to expend up to \$75K in 4K carry forward to meet technology needs among approved 4K providers.
- Permit First Steps to open 4K provider eligibility to military child care providers regulated by the US Department of Defense
- Authorize First Steps to develop a grant program designed to overcome barriers to 4K provider participation in underserved communities. (Additional explanation of this proviso is included as part of today's consent agenda.)
- Provide new model options to 4K providers – who will have the ability to choose between (and be compensated for):
  - A traditional 180-day x 6.5 hour daily schedule
  - An extended day schedule which will permit 180 days x 8.5 hours a day.
  - An extended school year option of 220 days x 6.5 hours.
  - A traditional school calendar (180 X 6.5) plus a summer program of up to ten weeks at 8.5 hours daily

### **LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS**

Executive Directors gathered in Columbia on June 6<sup>th</sup> for a full day meeting of the Executive Directors Council. The agenda included the following committee reports:

- Strategic Planning and Evaluation – review of new legislative reporting requirements
- Program and Grants – review of recommendations for evidence based program implementation
- Finance and Administration Committee – review of recommendations from the 8 % Administrative Cost study and implications for future cost allocation procedures

During the month of May, State Office Partnership Consultants/TAs completed a thorough review of all 46 Partnership Grant Renewal Applications and prepared recommendations. A summary of the renewal reviews this year demonstrated that program performance has continued to improve with only 8% of strategies state wide requiring conditional approval – compared to 11% last year. In our largest program investment, Parents As Teachers, every program met the rigorous home visit intensity requirement.

With the approval of the renewals we will begin preparing the FY 18 Grant Agreements between the State Office and Local Partnerships. No changes are anticipated to the grant agreement language from last year.

We welcome the following three new First Steps Executive Directors to our partnership network in the past few months: Doris Mitchell for Barnwell County, Latetia Staggers for Williamsburg County and Shirleen Lewis for Dillon County.

The next monthly leadership webinar for First Steps Executive Directors and Board Chairs will be held July 18 at 10:00 AM. First Steps Webinars are typically 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 to provide updates regarding State Legislature activity and key community events. We are also planning a meeting with Executive Directors during the 4K Academy tentatively set for Wednesday, August 15.

The Diversity and Equity Planning Team met on May 11 to begin their work of assessing the professional development needs of First Steps at all levels of the organization around equity, diversity and inclusion. The team will be participating in a webinar series – *Advancing Race Equity and Inclusion* – sponsored by a collaboration of agencies including The Children’s Trust, Sisters of Charity, Alliance for a Healthier South Carolina, Eat Smart-Move More, Palmetto Association for Children and Families, and First Steps.

### **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. Since March 17, PAT has accomplished the following:

- Approved three new PAT Affiliates for implementation in FY 18 with funds from MIECHV.
- Worked closely with the EHS-CCP Family Services/ERSEA Manager to complete and submit an application for affiliation. Implementation will begin this fall with a total of 17 Family Educators.
- Recognized one First Steps Partnership that has been approved for a new PAT Affiliate in FY 18 and another that has been approved to consolidate two affiliates into one.
- Held an ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE 2 Training on March 27 at the First Steps Office in Columbia. On April 18 a training on ASQ-SE-2 was held for the Lowcountry Region in Beaufort.
- Conducted an *Adult Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI)* Training on March 28 at the First Steps Office in Columbia.
- Recognized the completion and submission of twelve PAT Affiliates’ self-study for Quality Endorsement on April 3. The self-study was a year long process and each will be thoroughly reviewed by a team at Parents as Teachers National this summer. Blue Ribbon Status for those will be announced in October 2017.
- Participated in the PAT National Foundational and Model Implementation Training which was held the week of April 17-21 in Columbia. There were approximately 30 participants from SC and other states. Children’s Trust of SC hosted the training.
- Attended on April 25, *A Life Skills Progression (LSP)* training in Columbia, SC.
- Reviewed for renewal all PAT strategies in May that are annually funded by SC First Steps. All affiliates met the required visits per month and screening data. 88% met the KIPS and ACIRI outcomes benchmarks.

- Planned an Annual Performance Review Webinar and call in preparation for the gathering of data for the National and State Reports from FY 17 for early June.

## **EARLY HEAD START - CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP (EHS-CCP)**

Our current EHS-CCP enrollment is 254 students in 15 centers with a total of 32 classrooms.

Program highlights in the third quarter include:

### **Governance**

- Held Policy Council meetings on April 21 and June 2.
- Submitted Continuation Application for 2017-2018 program year on May 1
- Attended the meeting for the second round of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantees. On May 23-25, the National Center on Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships hosted the Early Head Start Expansion and Partnership Planning Meeting on behalf of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Head Start and the Office of Child Care in Tysons Corner, Virginia. SC First Steps was invited to send a team of six which included the Interim Director, Chief Financial/Chief Operations Officer, EHS-CCP Director, a future partner, and two other staff.

### **Personnel**

- Began the work to establish twenty-one positions as part of the expansion grant for our Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Program. Once established, we will be posting and filling those positions.
- Interviewed and selected a Family Advocate to serve centers in Allendale and Bamberg counties. Hired a new Program Assistant to help with the Round 2 project.
- Conducted conference calls with EHS-CCP child care directors on April 26 and May 31, as well as, a EHS-CCP child care directors meeting on May 17. Executive Directors from the local county partnerships were invited to participate in these calls.
- Provided leadership and ChildPlus training to EHS-CCP center directors on May 17.
- Hired consultant with Federal Monitoring experience to assist with on-going monitoring efforts.
- Prepared for Pre-Service Training on July 5-7 for all SC First Steps and CCP staff.
- Began ERSEA Certification (Levels I-IV) training with H.G.Jones and Associates for Family Services staff.

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

- Maintained a waiting list of at least 325 children with a funded enrollment of 254 infants and toddlers. This represents 30% infants; 36% one year olds; and 34% two year olds.
- Maintained the monthly ADA of 86.32% in May 2017. If a program's monthly ADA rate falls below 85%, the program must analyze the causes of absenteeism to identify any systematic issues that contribute to the program's absentee rate.
- Enrolled 84 children with vouchers, which is 33% of our funded enrollment and exceeds the 25% grant requirement.
- Identified that the majority of our EHS families (66.2%) are employed. 26.5% are currently in school. The percentage of two parent families in the program is 9.4% with 87.5% of the single-parent families being headed by the mother.

- Documented our fathers' participation rate, which is currently 61.7% based on family goal setting, home visits, parent conferences, Policy Council participation, and workshop attendance.

### **Health and Disability Services**

- Identified that 98.3% of our currently enrolled Early Head Start children have health insurance:
  - 98% - Medicaid
  - 2% - Private Insurance
  - Other families are in the process of being approved for Medicaid
- Completed all developmental screenings (ASQ-3 & ASQ-SE-2)
  - Identified through the screening process children who may have a delay.
  - Referred children to BabyNet for evaluation if they qualify for Early Intervention Services.
  - Have 23 children (9%) with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Four additional IFSPs are in the process of being provided and eleven additional children who have been referred for evaluations are being tracked.

### **FIRST STEPS 4K**

Our 2016-2017 school term closed with 4K enrollment of 2,167 students in 205 classrooms at 186 centers.

Recent highlights of the program include collaborations with other agencies:

- Assessed with Creative Curriculum Gold™ by Teaching Strategies 100% of all 2016-2017 SC First Steps 4K students by the spring checkpoint window which closed on May 24. All students were assessed in all domains.
- Approved for the 2017-2018 school term as of early June eighteen new centers, including:
  - First Department of Defense center, Shaw Air Force Base Daycare
  - First Catholic schools, St. Anthony's in Florence and St. Martin de Porres in Columbia
  - Additional centers will be accepted prior to the start of the 2017-2018 school term
- Worked with SC Department of Education to assign SUNS numbers for year-end students who entered after our initial fall report.
- Approved 628 student applications in ChildPlus for 2017-2018 as of early June. In collaboration with DSS, a postcard was recently mailed to eligible families. Applications are continuously coming in for approval.
- Represented by the State 4K Director, Martha Strickland, on the SC Department of Education's Preschool Curriculum Review Panel which will continue through the summer.
- Included the 4K Program as a participant on the Homeless No More SC team.
- Involved in the SC Pyramid Model State Leadership Team, coordinated by the SC Department of Education's Office of Special Education Services.
- Represented by our 4K Regional Coordinators at CCR&R Technical Assistance Collaboration Team Meetings (TACT) during the spring.
- Supported nineteen 4K Center Directors who are over half-way completed towards the AIM4X SC Cohort (AIM 4 Excellence), the Online Director's Credential through National Louis University's McCormick Center via SC First Steps. The project is led by two of our 4K Regional Coordinators, Kristine Jenkins and Sharon Bruton.
- Began the planning of our 4K Summer Academies with the theme of "Construction!":
  - New 4K Teachers, August 7-9
  - New Center Directors, August 9

- All Directors, August 10-11
- All 4K Teachers and Para-educators, August 14-17

### **BABYNET**

BabyNet is continuing its work with the transition from First Steps to DHHS. We are working with DHHS to develop a contract for the working relationship after June 30. All BabyNet staff will be transitioned into DHHS between now and that date. As of July 1, all BabyNet expenses and operations will be the responsibility of DHHS. We are waiting for decisions from DHHS on a number of issues related to the transition. We are appreciative of our staff as they have been extremely responsive to meeting every request from DHHS in a very timely fashion.

### **DATA SHARING INITIATIVES**

First Steps is involved with several interagency data initiatives, including:

#### **State Data Team**

Last fall, First Steps joined the State Data Team, an informal group of data and evaluation professionals from state agencies, convened by the Children's Trust. The State Data Team meets bi-monthly to learn about and become involved in data initiatives happening within and across agencies, as well as learn about emerging best practices in data integration and visualization. Multi-agency projects that First Steps has or will become involved with since joining the State Data team include:

- Child Health and Well-Being Coalition (Children's Trust/DHEC)
- South Carolina Opportunity Index (Children's Trust)
- Working Together Works Strategic Plan (Commission on Minority Affairs)

#### **Early Childhood Development Collection System Executive Panel**

This interagency panel around integrating early childhood data was convened in March 2017 by the House Education and Public Works Committee and staffed by the SC Department of Education. The panel has two major goals:

- Develop online early childhood data profiles, by county (estimated completion September 2017)
- Work towards a more unified, integrated early childhood data system for the state

First Steps has been active on this panel, currently assisting SC Department of Education staff with identifying data sources and drafting the Business Requirements Document necessary for obtaining the needed data for the county early childhood data profiles.

#### **Coordinating Council for Workforce Development State Data Sharing Group**

First Steps is part of this data sharing group, convened by the SC Department of Commerce, for the purpose of developing and implementing data sharing procedures to best meet the needs of the state's economy. By enabling state data to be shared longitudinally, from birth through workforce participation, the state can develop and answer, through data, research questions pertaining to which public investments – early childhood programs and services being one – are having the greatest impact on economic indicators such as job growth, earnings, etc.

#### **Human Resources: Employee Training**

Training is being identified for staff based on need and to enhance their skills. The Active Shooter Situations Training for staff in the Columbia Office will be provided by Wayne Freeman, SLED agent, on July 17, 9:30-11:30AM to provide tips and practical information on what to do

during such an event. Supervisory Training is being provided over 4 days to supervisors in September and the next available date in November/December. Diversity training was provided this spring and will be continued to all levels of First Steps.

## **FINANCE AND OPERATIONS UPDATE**

### **8% Administrative Cap on Local Partnerships**

State office staff selected Scott and Company, LLC, a local CPA Firm, to conduct the required independent study of the administrative costs and rates for the local partnerships. This was required by statute to be completed by July 1, 2017. Once the recommendations were received they were shared with the ED Leadership Council's Finance and Administration Committee and all Local Partnership Executive Directors. The ED Finance and Administration Committee had a number of meetings with state staff to consider the implications of the recommendations. All Executive Directors were surveyed for input into the recommendation that goes before the SC First Steps Board of Trustees on June 16, 2017.

### **Child Care Partner Tax Credits**

State Office Staff have been working with a number of organizations to develop a plan and convene meetings for input on Child Care Provider needs in SC. One option that has come up through two public meetings that have been held across the state is a plan that Louisiana implemented which provides tax credits for child care providers, their staff, parents, and business that donate for their efforts. The organizations that have been involved include The Children's Trust, the Institute for Child Success, Save the Children, SC First Steps and the United Way of SC.

### **Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Space Plan**

The new Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Program positions will require reorganizing the state office and taking advantage of the movement of the BabyNet staff out of the building. A plan is being developed to house the new employees with some being located in the state office and others in various counties based on their job functions and the location of the new child care partnership sites.

### **Regional Finance Managers**

Every five years, we are required to post an RFP (Request for Proposals) for the CPA Firms that support the state office and the Local Partnerships. Russell Brown has been working on this process for the last eight months with the SC Material Management Office (MMO). Through this process, MMO posts, reviews and awards a new provider for the next five years. For the next five years, one of our financial managers has received the bid for the entire state. Manley Garvin LLC, a CPA Firm that has worked with us for a number of years, won the award. Staff is working on a transition plan to allow for a smooth transition.

### **Facility Improvements**

We continue to work to improve the quality of our operations and the facility. Two recent activities include updating the signs in the building in Columbia both inside and outside, and improving the technology in our conference rooms. The signs are being updated to show the current logo. The conference room improvements should greatly improve the quality of our conference calls and webinars, as well as, communications with multiple partners and the local partnerships.