



FIRST STEPS
Getting children ready for school.
SOUTH CAROLINA

SC First Steps to School Readiness

House Oversight Committee
February 24, 2015
Blatt 110



- First Steps is South Carolina's **comprehensive, early childhood education initiative.**
- Created by the General Assembly in 1999 to **improve the school readiness of South Carolina's 336,000 children under six.**



PURPOSE

“The purpose of the First Steps initiative is to **develop, promote, and assist** efforts of agencies, private providers, and **public and private** organizations and entities, at the **state level** and the **community level**, to **collaborate and cooperate** in order to focus and intensify services, assure the most **efficient use of all available resources**, and eliminate duplication of efforts to serve the needs of young children and their families.”

- Section 59-152-20 (1999, 2006, 2014)



LEGISLATIVE GOALS

1. **Provide parents with access** to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
2. **Increase comprehensive services** so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
3. **Promote high quality preschool programs** that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;



LEGISLATIVE GOALS

4. **Provide services** so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and
5. **Mobilize communities** to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed.

- Section 59-152-20 (1999, 2006, 2014)



GOVERNANCE

State Board of Trustees

- 25 Voting Members
- Chaired by Governor (or designee)
- Superintendent of Education (or designee)
- SC legislators (2 House, 2 Senate)
- Child-serving agency heads
- Business, parent, medical and early childhood representatives appointed by Governor, Senate, House leadership

Local Partnership Boards in all 46 counties

(Includes parents, school districts, early educators, as well as medical, business, faith, social services, philanthropic, library, local government and other nonprofit leaders)



STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS



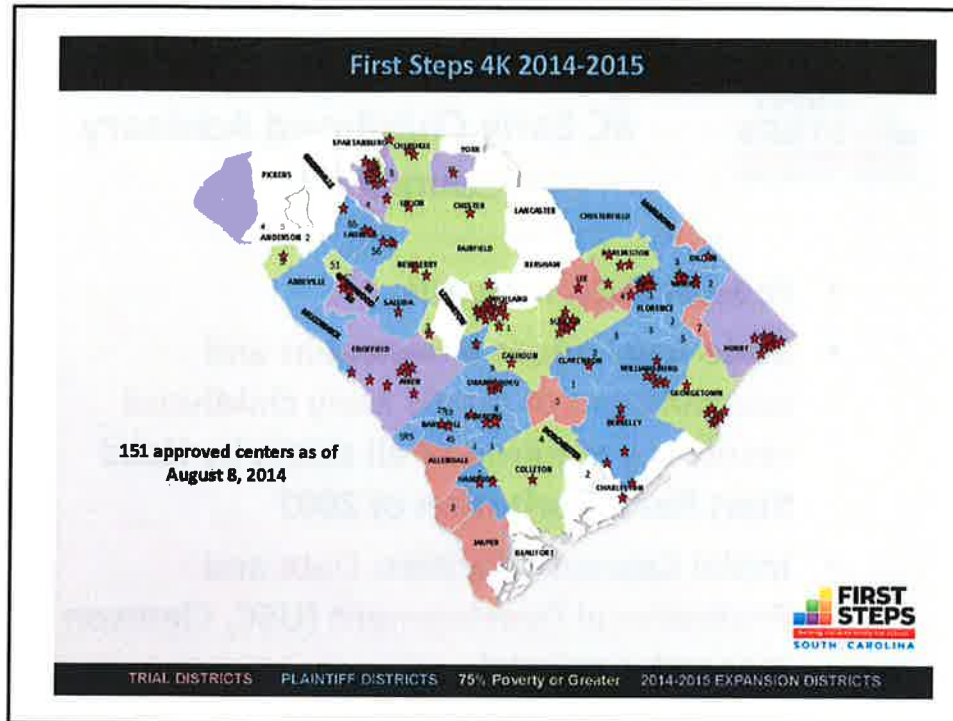
- **Health** (ex. Nurse-Family Partnership)
- **Family Strengthening** (ex. Parents as Teachers, Early Steps to School Success, Parent-Child Home)
- **Early Intervention** (early identification, referral and wrap around care for BabyNet families and children, autism services)
- **Child Care** (ex. Quality Enhancement, Training and Coaching, Scholarships)
- **Early Childhood Education** (ex. 4K, Head Start)
- **School Transition** (ex. Countdown to Kindergarten)



ADDED LEGISLATIVE DUTIES: 4K (2006)

Full-day 4K Legislation resulted from **school equity funding lawsuit**.

- Expanded Pre-K began in fall 2006 in public/private settings serving children in 37 trial/plaintiff districts, now **61 eligible school districts** with poverty index of 70% or greater.
- Children eligible for **free-reduced lunch and/or Medicaid**, **age 4 by September 1**, and **residing in eligible district** may select public or private 4K
- Children receive **full-day service**, are offered **before** and **after school care** to support working families



ADDED LEGISLATIVE DUTIES: BabyNet (2010)

BabyNet transferred to First Steps by Executive Order; staff transferred by budget proviso

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** - federal special education law created in 1986. SC began statewide implementation of **Part C services in 1994** (Early intervention interagency system for disabled and developmentally delayed infants and toddlers ages 0-3)
- Funded by **federal, state, private** sources
- **10,000 referrals** annually
- Large **increase in autism services 0-3** over past two years. (2012 = 87, 2014 = 403)



ADDED LEGISLATIVE DUTIES: SC Early Childhood Advisory Council (2010)

- Federal duty, no funds
- State-level **needs assessment and coordination of public early childhood resources** required of all states by Head Start Reauthorization of 2007
- Initial Council priorities: **Data** and **Professional Development** (USC, Clemson research projects)



NEW in 2015: Early Head Start- Child Care Partnerships

- First Steps awarded **3 of 4 NEW Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership expansion grants** for SC in December 2014 (totaling \$30.5 million over 5 years)
- Children to be **served comprehensively** in eligible **child care settings/homes**; with wrap around community services
- Awards expand services for low-income infants and toddlers in 14 counties:
 - Allendale, Anderson, Bamberg, Berkeley, Dillon, Georgetown, Laurens, Lexington, Newberry, Orangeburg, Saluda, and York.
 - Charleston
 - Spartanburg

