




The collage features several images: a group of children in red shirts, a group of children and adults in front of a 'NOW ENROLLING' sign, and a mascot holding a 'FIRST STEPS' sign.



**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



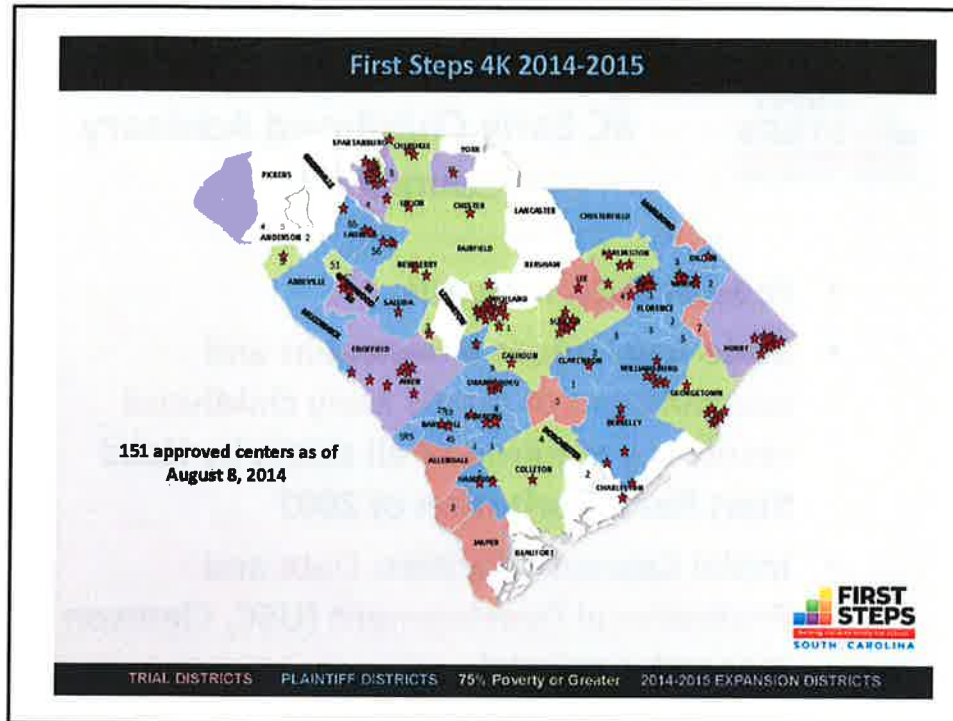
- **Health** (ex. Nurse-Family Partnership)
- **Family Strengthening** (ex. Parents as Teachers, Early Steps to School Success, Parent-Child Home)
- **Early Intervention** (early identification, referral and wrap around care for BabyNet families and children, autism services)
- **Child Care** (ex. Quality 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



