



# Clarendon County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report*

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**Executive Director:**  
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**Total children in county under  
age 6: 2,525**

**Children under age 6 living in  
poverty: 17.7%**

## Clarendon County Highlights

- 728 children directly impacted; over 400 children indirectly impacted; 2,851 home visits conducted; over 4,000 books distributed.
- *"I am to do all I can for myself and my child."*

~Teen mom served in  
the PAT program

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Each year, as I review data from SC Kids Count on the state of children and families in Clarendon County, I am reminded of just how much work we have to do to prepare our youngest and most vulnerable citizens for success in school and in life. Then I sigh, take a deep breath, and remind myself what a wise person once said - that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. When I take a moment to slow down and reflect on our work, I am simply amazed at how far we have already come on this thousand-mile journey to get our children ready for school.

We have funded programs that have been proven effective in increasing school readiness in pre-school children; we have established partnerships with existing providers in the community, which allows us to reach a greater number of families and children than we would be able to serve if we were to go it alone; and we are actively working to implement programs and services in ways that are consistent with standards established by SC First Steps. Through our combined efforts, we have impacted over 1,100 children in Clarendon County during this past state fiscal year, and that is indeed cause for celebration. So, while we may yet have some miles left in our journey, I happily celebrate the miles we have logged thus far, and look forward to the journey ahead.

Sharon P. Williams  
Executive Director  
Clarendon Co. First Steps

## **First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas**

*The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:*

**Family Strengthening:** A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

**Healthy Start:** Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

**Quality Child Care:** Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

**Early Education:** Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

**School Transition:** The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

## **2007-08 County Partnership Programs by Strategy**

### **FAMILY STRENGTHENING**

#### **Parents As Teachers**

**Program description:** Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a parent education and family support program serving families from pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten, usually age 5. The purpose of this program is to help parents realize their maximum potential as their child's first and best teacher.

Parents are supported by certified parent educators trained to translate research-based information on early brain development into specific *when, what, how* and *why* advice for families. By understanding what to expect during each stage of development, parents can

easily capture the teachable moments in everyday life to enhance their child's language development, intellectual growth, social development and motor skills.

Through the PAT program, participant families:

- Receive personal home visits, during which a parent educator shares age-appropriate child development and parenting information;
- May attend parent group meetings, which offer opportunities for participant families to share information about parenting issues and child development. Parents learn and support each other, observe their children with other children and practice parenting skills;
- Receive screenings to assess their child's overall development as well as health, hearing and vision; and
- Have access to a resource network that links families to other community services, such as adult education.

**Impact:**

- 131 families with 139 children were served;
- 2,571 visits were conducted;
- 62.3% of families received at least two visits per month, as required by SC First Steps Program Standards;
- 85.25% of families' visits were at least 45 minutes in duration.

## **QUALITY CHILD CARE**

### **Child Care Center Staff Training and Development**

Program description: The Child Care Center Staff Training & Development program is a training program designed to provide early care and education professionals the training and support they need to provide higher quality services to the children in their care. Early care and education professionals who participate in these trainings are trained by highly qualified child care consultants who provide instruction in the areas of nutrition, child growth and development, child guidance, health and safety, and others.

**Impact:**

- 44.5 hours of training were offered to early care and education professionals in Clarendon County. Trainings included two professional conferences (Sharpening the Minds of Early Childhood Educators, held in November 2007, and the Central Cluster SCAEYC Conference on Early Care and Education, held in March 2008), Infant and Child CPR, First Aid, Blood Borne Pathogens Training, and workshops on making successful transitions in the classroom, stress management, guidance, socialization and discipline, brain development, child abuse, neglect and the law, language development, and the impact of abuse and neglect on child growth and development.
- All trainings were either registered or certified by the SC Center for Child Care Career Development, per SC First Steps program standards;
- 91 (unduplicated count) early care and education professionals were trained; and

- Over 400 children were indirectly impacted by the training and professional development early care and education professionals received.

## **EARLY EDUCATION**

### **S.C. Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)**

**Program description:** CDEPP offers state-paid tuition of 4-year-old kindergarten classes to eligible students living in the 37 trial and plaintiff school districts involved in the school funding equity lawsuit, *Abbeville et al. vs. South Carolina*. First Steps oversees CDEPP 4K classes offered in non-public school environments. To qualify for state-paid tuition, a student's family must qualify for TANF or free/reduced-price lunch, be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2007, and live in an eligible school district.

#### **Impact:**

- One private provider, the Wee Academy Learning Center, offers a CDEPP 4K class in Clarendon County;
- 10 students served.

## **SCHOOL TRANSITION**

### **Countdown to Kindergarten**

**Program description:** Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) is a school transition program for rising kindergarten children and their families. The program is designed (1) to instill confidence in children who are about to enter kindergarten and the world of school; (2) to create awareness and knowledge for parents about the importance of home activities relating to literacy and hands-on learning leading up to kindergarten; (3) to bridge the gap between home and school; and (4) to engage families, educators and community members in a community-wide effort to celebrate and support the transition into kindergarten as a significant educational and developmental milestone for children and their families.

A major component of the Countdown to Kindergarten program is the teacher home visits. The Partnership Board contracts with several certified kindergarten teachers who teach in Clarendon School Districts One, Two and Three. Each teacher is given a caseload of 10 children that they visit at home once per week for 7 weeks. An eighth visit is conducted at the school where the child will be attending kindergarten in the fall.

Each child is provided a transition tool-kit that consists of construction paper, pencils, makers, crayons, lacing beads, counting beads, blocks, books, a writing journal, a large floor puzzle and other materials children may encounter in the 5K classroom. Each week, teachers present a lesson using an item from the transition tool-kit as the content for the home visit. CTK teachers also model for parents ways in which they can use the materials with their children so that the learning continues long after the program has ended.

**Impact:**

- 46 children served;
- 280 home visits conducted;
- Countdown to Kindergarten resulted in improvements in parent-child interactions, including:
  - A 21% increase in the number of parents reporting that they read to or listened to their participant child read from a book;
  - An 11% increase in the number of parents reporting that they talked about letters, words, or numbers with their participant child;
  - A 21% increase in the number of parents reporting that they kept a regular morning or bedtime schedule for their participant child;
  - A 48% increase in the number of parents reporting that they visited the library with their participant child; and
  - A 13% increase in the number of parents reporting that their participant child spent less hours watching television, playing video games or playing on a computer.

**EARLY LITERACY**

**Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL):**

**Program Description:** The Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library is an early literacy program designed to remove barriers to early literacy development. The program is open to all children birth to five years old residing in Clarendon County. Each child enrolled in the program receives one free, carefully selected, age appropriate book each month until he/she turns five years old or moves out of the county.

**Impact:**

- 533 children served;
- 4,347 books distributed;
- 257 early literacy guides were distributed.

**Financial Summary**

<b>Expenditures by Funding Source</b>			
State Appropriation.	\$191,402	State Private	\$0
E.I.A. Appropriation	\$13,673	Local Private	\$4,129
Lottery Appropriation	\$300	Federal	\$0
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation	\$40,201	In-Kind	\$153,706

**GRAND TOTAL: \$403,411**

<b><u>Expenditures by Program/Strategy Name</u></b>	
Parents As Teachers	\$234,142
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library	\$10,044
Private C.D.E.P.P	\$39,434
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$14,144
Childcare Training & Professional Development	\$22,182
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$50,144
Administrative Functions	\$33,321
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$403,411</b>

*Local Match Percentage for FY 2008: 38% (at least 15% Legislative requirement)*

## **COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Marilyn Tsirigotis, Chairman, Harvin Clarendon County Library  
Kenneth E. Mance, Vice Chairman, Legislative Appointee  
Jennifer Howard-Kelley, Secretary, Family Education  
Angie Bruner, Early Childhood Education  
Mary Cooper, Legislative Appointee  
Connie Dennis, Clarendon School District Three  
Melissa Dennis, Parent of a Pre-school Child  
John Durant, Business  
Sara Flores, Legislative Appointee  
Marie Gibbons, Early Childhood Education  
Kathleen Gibson, Child Care  
Priscilla Green, Pre-K to Primary Education  
Ellen Hamilton, Nonprofit  
Pressley Harvin, Jr., Transportation  
Vera Dell Kennedy, Pre-K to Primary Education  
Catherine Kirkpatrick, Clarendon County DSS  
Amy Land, Legislative Appointee  
Georgia Mance, Head Start  
Rev. Jerome McCray, Family Education  
Ernestine Oliver, Clarendon School District One  
Robert Oliver, Parent of a Pre-school Child  
O. J. Papucci, Transportation  
Dr. Myra Pearson, Faith Community  
Rev. David Thurlow, Faith Community  
John Tindal, Clarendon School District Two  
Margaret Walker, Health Care  
Sara Wells, Region 4 DHEC  
Kathy Wright, Early Childhood Education

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## **COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT**

In FY08, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

## **Testimonials**

*“I recently got pregnant. At first, I was depressed about going to school. Meeting in small groups with all others is helping me to cope with my pregnancy. There are so many things to learn in the First Steps program. We are in the process of learning skills during the trimester periods. I am in the first trimester plan. This program is teaching me to learn about my baby’s body before he/she is born. We are also being advised on how to be responsible and consistent in their prenatal health care and habit. I am thankful for these guidelines.”*

*~Teen parent (name withheld to protect her privacy)*

*“I would like to be honest with whoever read this information. First Steps is an outstanding program. I am a teen mom who was thinking about dropping out of school. Just as this was about to happen, Mrs. Nelson and Ms. Hammett came to my class and introduce themselves. We started meeting every week. I do not like to miss. The information and ideas are wonderful. This program came to my family especially when I was about to make another mistake. I am to do all I can for myself and my child. We want to make a success in life.”*

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*“I have enjoyed working with Ms. Debbie Thompson and my grandson since he was in K-4 to K-5. It has been a pleasure to watch him learn from the materials that she has provided him. The program is very helpful.”*

*~Skippy Walter*

*“Thank you so much for including our child in the First Steps. Mrs. Debbie Thompson has been a great help in selecting books and games for [my child] that she really enjoys. The material we have received has been helpful to our daughter. She has learned so much and the books/games have been a super supplement to what she learns in class. Fun and learning go hand in hand and this program makes it easier to keep the learning process going at home.”*

*~Barbara Fulcut*



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

# Clarendon County

Total Children Under Six: 2,525

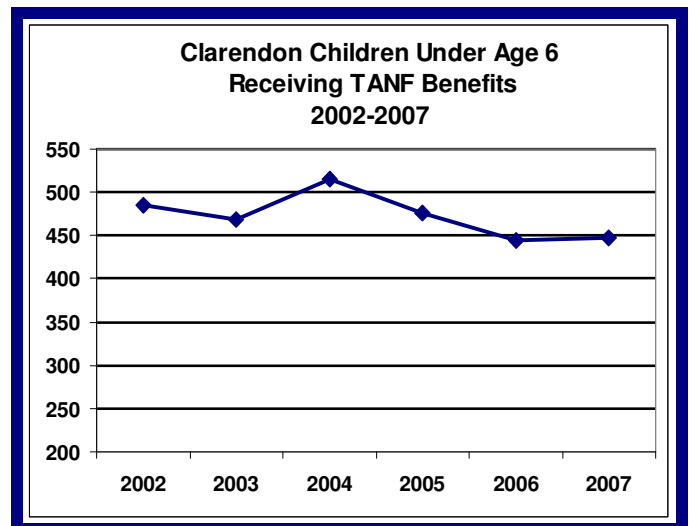
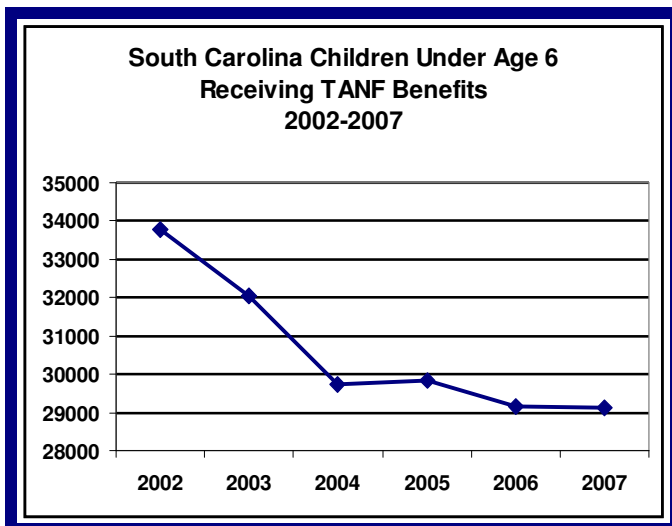
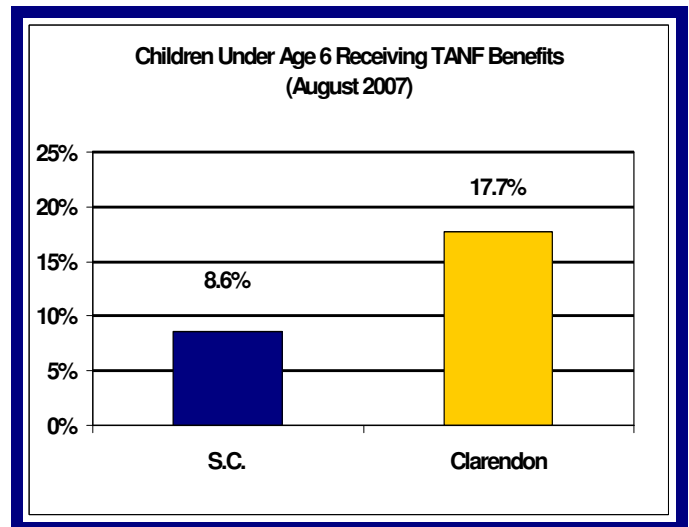
## CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%      Clarendon County (2007): 17.7%

***Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 6 Clarendon County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the "below basic" level (PACT) by third grade.***

Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.

447 of Clarendon County's 2,525 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

# Clarendon County

Total Children Under Six: 2,525

## CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

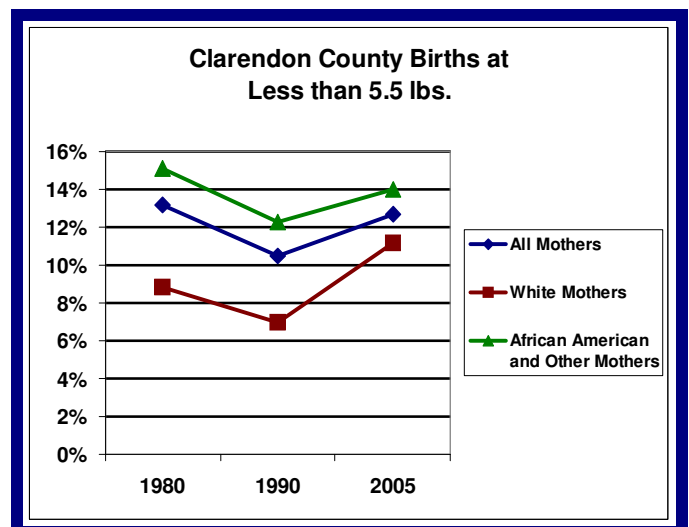
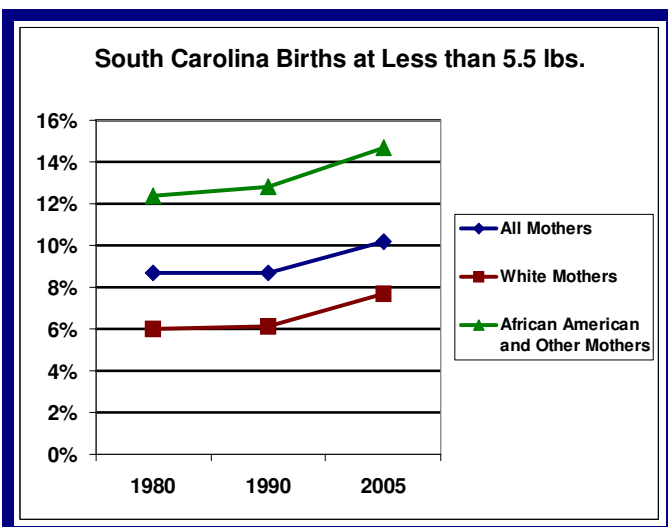
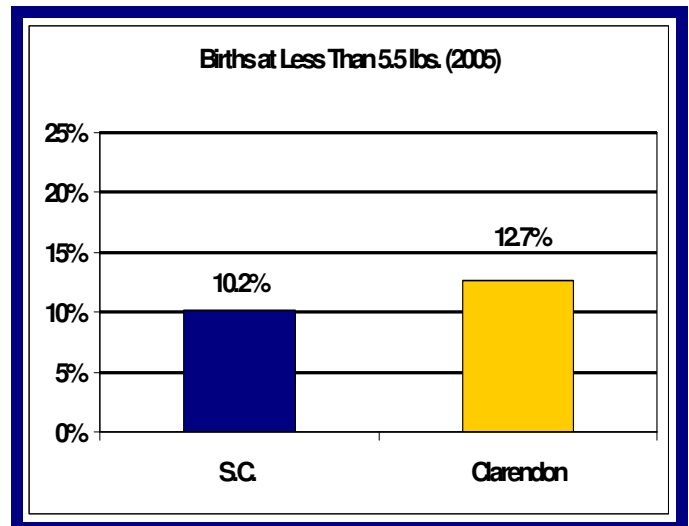
Clarendon County (2005): 12.7%

**Fast Fact:** Nearly 1 in 8 Clarendon County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the "below basic" level (PACT) by third grade.

Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.

Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.

49 of the 387 children born in Clarendon County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Clarendon County

Total Children Under Six: 2,525

## BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

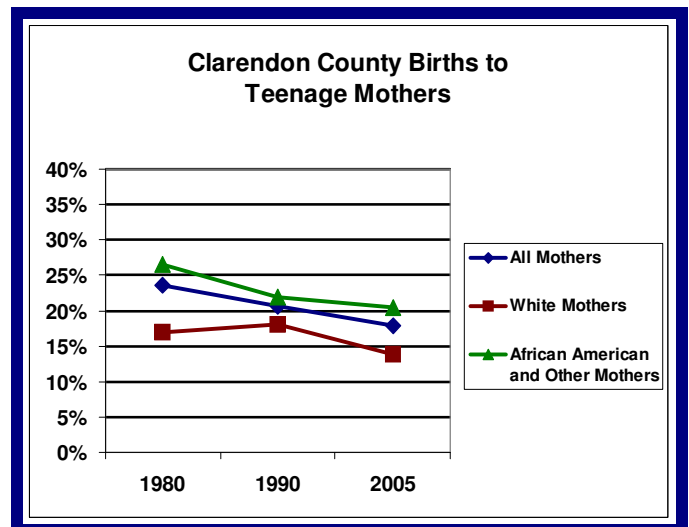
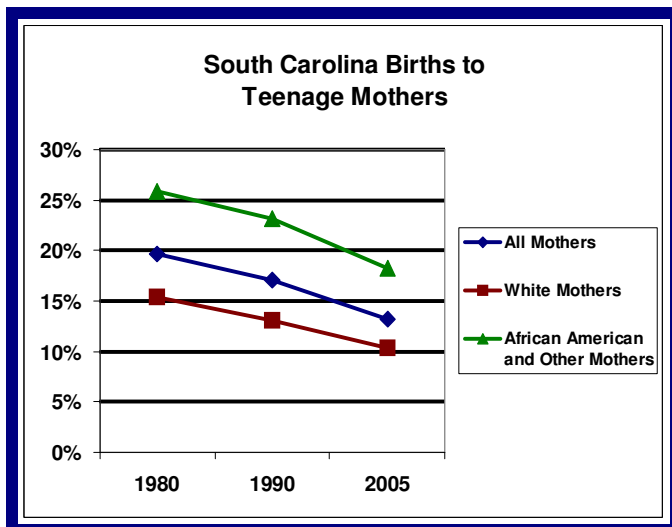
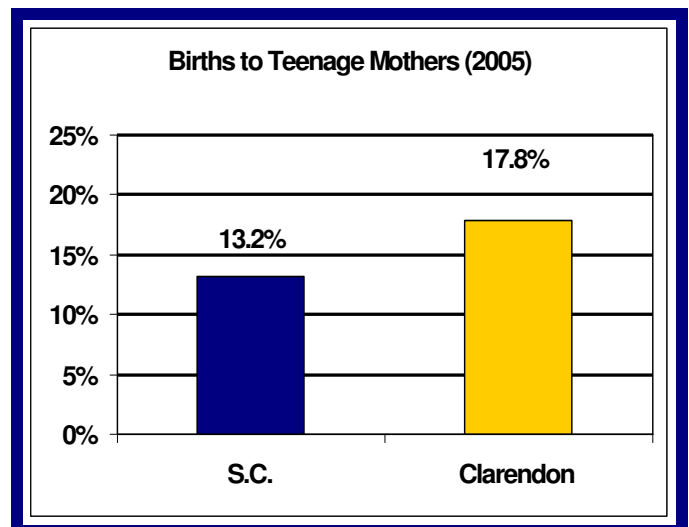
Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%

Clarendon County (2005): 17.8%

**Fast Fact:** Nearly 1 in 6 Clarendon County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.

69 of the 387 children born in Clarendon County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

# Clarendon County

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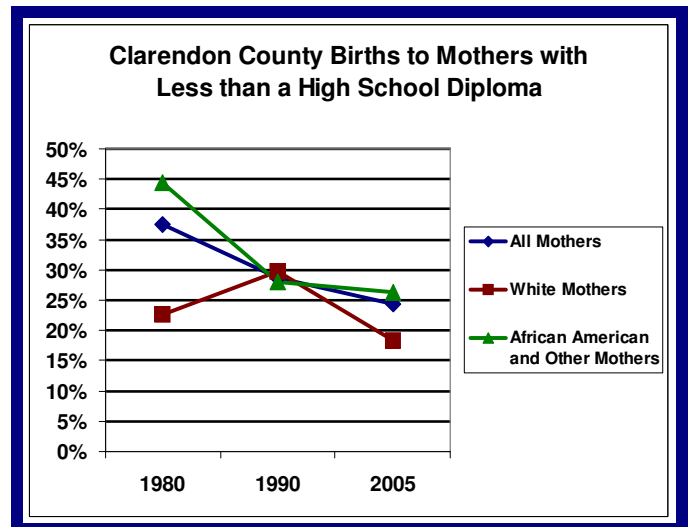
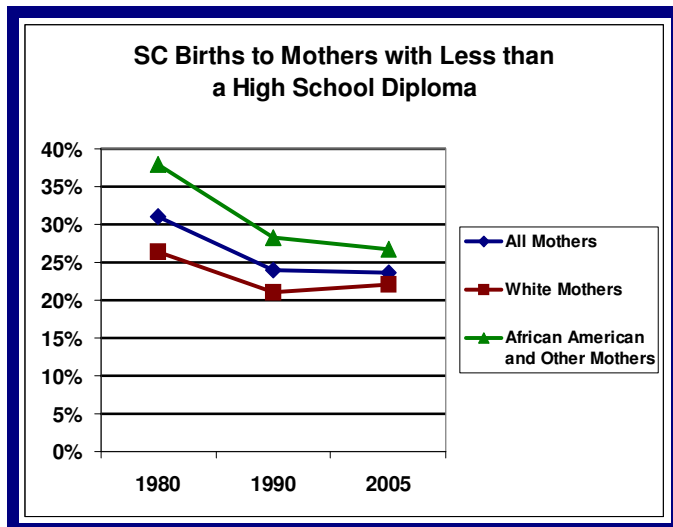
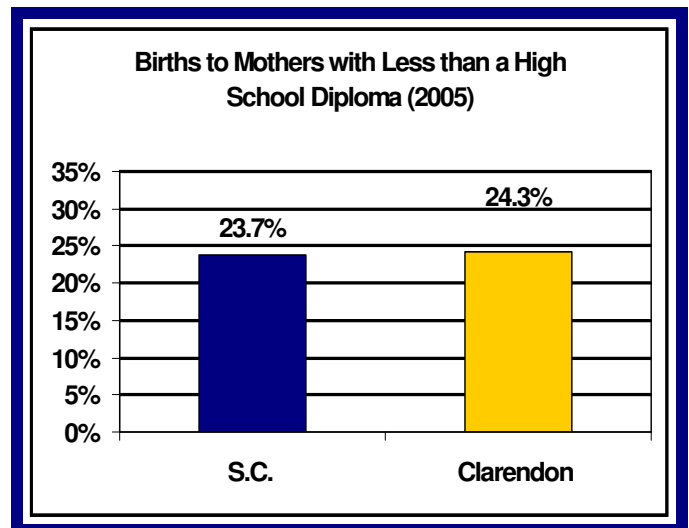
## BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%      Clarendon County (2005): 24.3%

**Fast Fact:** Nearly 1 in 4 children in Clarendon County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.

94 of the 387 children born in Clarendon County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.



## ***Testimonials***

*“I recently got pregnant. At first, I was depressed about going to school. Meeting in small groups with all others is helping me to cope with my pregnancy. There are so many things to learn in the First Steps program. We are in the process of learning skills during the trimester periods. I am in the first trimester plan. This program is teaching me to learn about my baby’s body before he/she is born. We are also being advised on how to be responsible and consistent in their prenatal health care and habit. I am thankful for these guidelines.”*

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