



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

## Board Chair:

Austin Floyd

## Executive Director:

Julia A. Nelson

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**Total children in county under  
age 6: 9,597**

**Children under age 6 living in  
poverty: 10.8%**

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## Sumter County Highlights

- *"I am thankful for the First Steps' PAT program. I did not have a good model for parenting. I grew up in the foster care system... I know I'm a better parent from what I've learned from this program."*

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

It is our hope that children enter school with a wide range of knowledge and skills that deem them 'ready' for school and success for life. However, too often children lack the physical, social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive skills needed to enter school ready to learn. Children whose knowledge and skills are far behind those of their new classmates do enter school at a disadvantage. If they are unable to catch up, they face greater challenges throughout their academic journey. Early experiences actually influence brain development, establishing the neural connections that provide the foundation for language, reasoning, problem solving, social skills, behavior and emotional health.

Sumter County First Steps is acutely knowledgeable of challenges within our county. 1 in 5 children in Sumter County is born to parents not possessing a high school diploma; 1 in 7 children is born to mothers under the age 20; and 1 in 10 children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. These factors have contributed to our county partnership targeting our resources toward Family Strengthening through Parenting/Family Literacy Programs and Enhancing Quality Child Care with Facility Quality Enhancement, Center Staff Development and Training, and Scholarship/ABC Voucher Assistance.

Our efforts to improve school readiness can only be achieved with collaborations from public entities in Sumter County. Our partners in school readiness are Sumter School Districts 2 and 17; South Sumter Resource Center; Sumter-Lee Adult Education, and United Way Success by 6. A special thanks to each of these program vendors and their staff.

On a personal note, I view First Steps as having strategies and programs that are "emerging". It will take years to truly evaluate our effectiveness and our impact on the children we are serving. Our partnership will continue to consider our challenges and strengths as we strive to continue improving school readiness. We have a unique opportunity to provide parents and child care providers with the knowledge and skills needed to ensure each child has the support needed for their academic journey and success for life.

Julia A. Nelson  
Executive Director  
Sumter County 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.**

#### **Parenting**

Sumter County First Steps served 135 families using the Parents As Teachers program curriculum. PAT is an early childhood parent education and support program designed to empower all parents to give their children the best possible start in life. The home-based education program will also give parents the skills to overcome challenges in preparing their children for first grade. Parents will become more self-efficient and knowledgeable of family strengthening services available to ensure positive family functioning.

**Program Results:**

- Average number of home visits per family, per month: .93
- Percentage of families who met the minimum frequency requirement for home visits: 17%
- Average KIPS Pre-Score 2.8; Average KIPS Post-Score 3.46
- Average ACIRI Pre-Score 1.83(Adult 1.83; Child 1.8); Average Post-Score (Adult 1.8; Child 0.58)

**Family Literacy**

**Program description:** Sumter County First Steps will serve 75 or more families through Sumter-Lee Adult Education to provide comprehensive literacy services. The county partnership will use funds to continue with family strengthening programs to specifically target families with children ages birth to 5 who may be at-risk of school readiness. Priority will be given to target groups with most at-risk children. Efforts will be made to promote the program through media announcements and contact with the school district's other parenting programs, Early Head Start, Head Start, DSS, Untied Way Success by 6 and child care facilities will be provided by the vendor. This past year, Sumter-Lee Adult Education agreed to assist any Head Start parent with receiving their GED or H.S. Diploma. Vendor meetings will allow program managers to have open dialogue about the services their programs provide. Any service from another vendor may be used to enhance or complement any school readiness strategy.

The success of the program will be measured by:

- # of parents receiving GEDs./H.S. Diplomas
- # of parents tracking the number of families in the program
- # of parents moving up one or more level as measure by TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education)
- Increase in the # of parents reading to their children
- Increase in the # of parents increasing their attendance rate

**Program results:**

- 75 families served
- The average reading level as measured by the TABE for incoming students was 6.0 (6th grade reading level).
- All students have moved up at least one educational grade level as measured by the TABE.
- 38 students have moved up two or more educational levels as measured by the TABE.
- 7 students have earned their GED.
- 3 students have earned their High School Diploma.
- 30 students have received either a bronze, silver or gold Work Keys Certificate.

**Dolly Parton Imagination Library**

**Program Description:** All children/families participating in any SCFS program will be enrolled in this strategy. All remaining book enrollments will be made available to Sumter County children at-large. Vendors for SCFS have agreed to implement the books into lessons to verify and promote reading of the books.

Officially, this program will be open to all children in Sumter County. However, the Partnership will make an effort to advertise the program through organizations and agencies (i.e., DSS, DHEC, Head Start, School Districts' Parenting Programs, etc.) that serve at-risk populations. This will allow us to capture more of those children who may be at risk of school failure.

Approximately 3,924 books were distributed to 327 children under the age of five in Sumter County.

## **QUALITY CHILD CARE**

### **Child Care Training & Professional Development**

**Program description:** Sumter County First Steps (SCFS) will offer Center Staff & Development to child care providers who serve children ages birth to five. This initiative will provide ongoing staff development and mentoring to increase the knowledge of childcare workers and improve the quality of programs offered in participating childcare facilities. SCFS will administer this strategy. Funding may be used to purchase supplies, equipment, age-appropriate educational materials, hire substitute staff to allow staff to attend training, and to support the cost of staff training as appropriate.

Program results:

- Partnership sponsored its first Conference for Childcare Providers
- 114 Childcare Staff received 14 hours of DSS Certified Training
- 6 hours of CCCCDC Certified Training Provided
- 8 hours of CCCCDC Registered Training Hours

### **Facility Quality Enhancement**

**Program description:** Provide 7 Facility Quality Enhancement Grants to child care facilities in Sumter County. Child Care facilities will include family, group, public and private child care centers, Head Start, and the Sumter County School District. In addition, eligible participating child care facilities will perform a self-assessment utilizing the ECERS-R, ITERS, and FDCRS.

All providers in Sumter County who accept ABC Vouchers are eligible for the competitive grant. Notice of the Facility Enhancement Grant was sent to all providers in Sumter County who accept ABC Vouchers. The list of all facilities receiving ABC vouchers was obtained from the Department of Social Services ABC Division. Announcements were also placed in the newspaper and on the local cable ad channel.

**Program results:**

- Quality enhancement grants (\$29,349) were offered to 8 child care providers
- Child care providers received 91.15 Technical assistance hours

- Delivered 71 hours of childcare training on various early childhood curricula, health and safety, child guidance, child growth and development and multiple sessions (approximately 40 hours) of training for the National Child Development Associate Credential, which encompasses all of the aforementioned areas.
- Trained 110 staff members from 54 facilities, with over 886 children.

### **Childcare Scholarships**

**Program description:** Scholarship Applications were distributed to families participating in Sumter County First Steps programs. All other applicants are placed on a waiting list. Eligibility is based on the ABC Voucher program and DSS' ABC Division determines eligibility. These applicants provided proof of income eligibility and employment or school enrollment prior to completing a scholarship application. Applications were processed as they are received within thirty days of receipt. Applicants are notified if they are approved, denied or if their application was incomplete. If all allotted slots are filled, new and incomplete applications are denied. If all the allotted slots are not filled, DSS will send First Steps the number of applications needed to fill the slots. First Steps then will call applicants on the waiting list.

#### **Program results:**

- 33 children received Scholarships/ABC Vouchers administered by South Carolina Department of Social Services

## **SCHOOL TRANSITION.**

### **Countdown to Kindergarten**

**Program description:** Countdown to Kindergarten is a school transition strategy, designed to successfully bridge at-risk students into the K-12 school environment. Preschool children with little or no formal preschool education will be chosen to participate in this program. Certified Kindergarten teachers make 8-one hour home visits to identified families/students during the summer prior to the student beginning Kindergarten. Participants are identified by a community partnership (local schools, First Steps, DSS, Head Start, faith partners, etc). Students are screened for participation, and parent participation is required. During the home visits, children and families are introduced to actual materials used in Kindergarten classrooms, and are given a Kindergarten Transition Toolkit (books, puzzles, clay, blocks, floor mats, etc) to keep. The final visit is a "field trip" to the school where the child will attend class in the fall. There are three components to the strategy: public awareness, home visitation, and the culminating Celebration at EdVenture Children's Museum.

#### **Program results:**

- 30 Children participated
- 93.3% of all families received all 7 home visits
- 65.38% of the parents possessed a high school diploma
- 34.62% did not finish high school
- 69.23% of the children served lived with single parents
- 19.23% of the children served lived with both parents
- 11.54% of the children served lived with a guardian/foster parent

- 7.69% of the children served have been diagnosed with a physical or mental handicapping condition
- 92.31% of the children served qualified for free lunch
- 3.85% of the children served qualified for reduced lunch
- 30% increase in parents reading to their children

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<u>Expenditures</u> By Funding Source	
State Appropriation ( <i>Fund 10</i> )	\$450,611
E.I.A. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 55</i> )	\$32,763
Lottery Appropriation ( <i>Fund 35</i> )	\$0
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 60</i> )	\$0
C.O.E. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 65</i> )	\$0
N.F.P. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 70</i> )	\$0
State Private ( <i>Fund 15</i> )	\$15,647
Local Private ( <i>Fund 20</i> )	\$4,408
Federal ( <i>Fund 30</i> )	\$0
In-Kind ( <i>Fund 25</i> )	\$140,583
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$644,012</b>

<u>Expenditures</u> By Program / Strategy Name	
Parent As Teachers	\$217,381
Family Literacy	\$76,756
Imagination Library	\$8,938
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$8,800
Childcare Quality Enhancement	\$81,745
Childcare Training & Professional Development	\$32,278
Scholarship Initiative	\$131,628
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$39,224
Administrative Functions	\$47,262
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$644,012</b>

## NOTABLE DONORS

<i><b>DONOR'S NAME</b></i>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Austin Floyd	\$54.00
D & D Heating and Air, Inc. (Libby DuBose)	\$50.00
Dora and Alfred Washington	\$27.00
Earline Walker	\$27.00
Erica Clark	\$27.00
Faith Line	\$27.00
Jennifer G. Miles	\$54.00
Juanita Riley	\$27.00
Michelle Parker Davis	\$27.00
Pam Dinkins	\$27.00
Rebecca Drum	\$27.00
Tami Nix	\$200.00
Teresa Nelson	\$54.00
Toni Y. Brew	\$54.00
United Negro College Fund	\$500.00
Walter and Julia Newman	\$200.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$1,382.00</b>

*Local Match Percentage for FY 2008: 36%*  
*(at least 15% Legislative requirement)*

## **COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Austin Floyd, Board Chair, Board Chair legislative appointee  
 Toni Brew, Family Education, Training & Support Provider  
 Artrell Brown, Treasurer, Head Start Appointee  
 Dr. Virginia Brown, School District 17 Appointee  
 Erica Clark, Secretary, Healthcare  
 Libby Dubose, School District 2 Appointee  
 Paula Durham, Business Community  
 Sherreka Fredrick, Child Care Provider  
 Faith Line, County Library Appointee  
 Melinda Branham, DHEC Appointee  
 Jennifer Miles, Pre-school education

Walter Newman, Legislative Delegation Appointee  
Tami Nix, State Liaison, child care provider  
Michelle Davis Parker, Transportation Provider  
Cynthia Ransom, Early childhood education  
Juanita Riley, Parent of Pre-School Child  
Maria Guadalupe Sanchez, Parent of Pre-School Child  
Earlene Walker, Early Childhood Educator  
Dora Washington, Early Childhood Educator  
Wayne Zamora, Private Businessman

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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.



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

# Sumter County

Total Children Under Six: 9,597

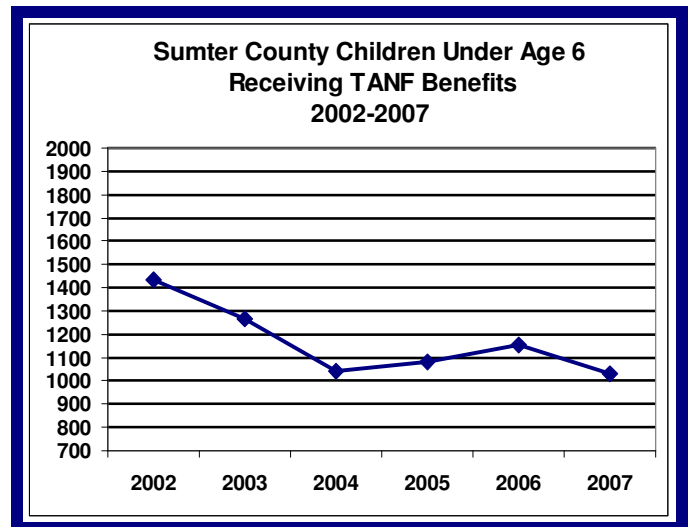
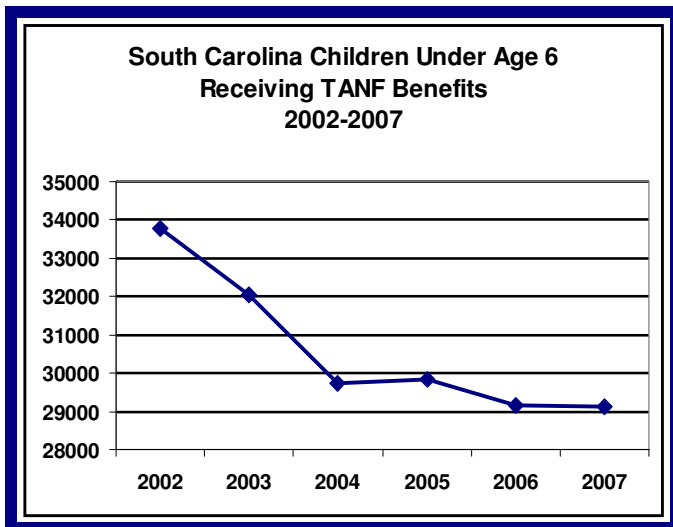
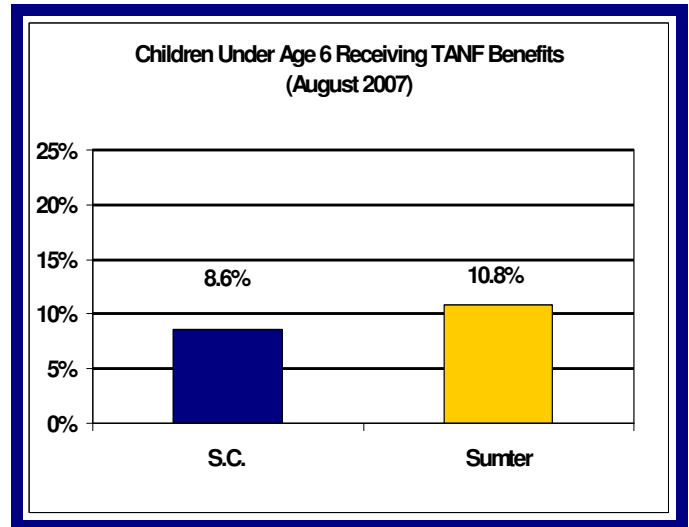
## CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%      Sumter County (2007): 10.8%

**Fast Fact:** Roughly 1 in 10 Sumter 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.

1,033 of Sumter County’s 9,597 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

# Sumter County

Total Children Under Six: 9,597

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

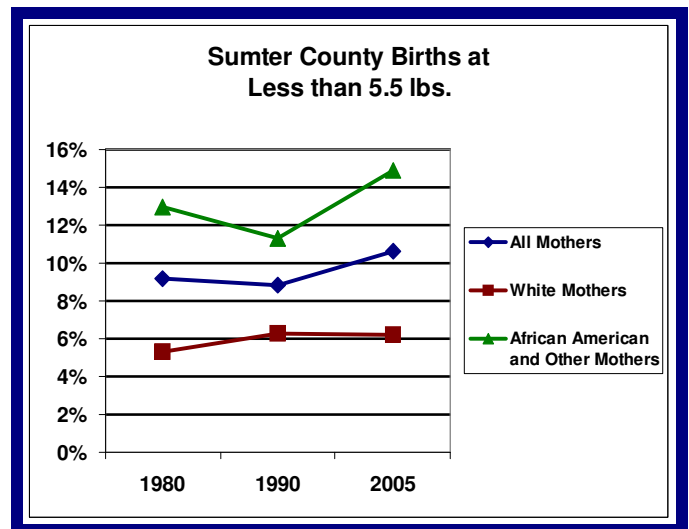
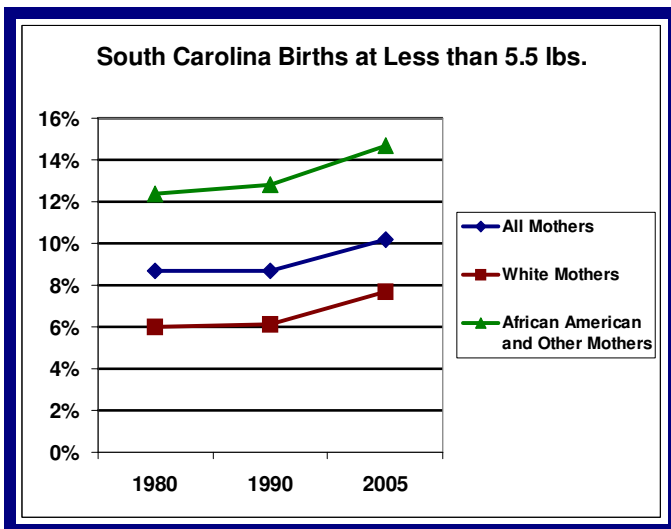
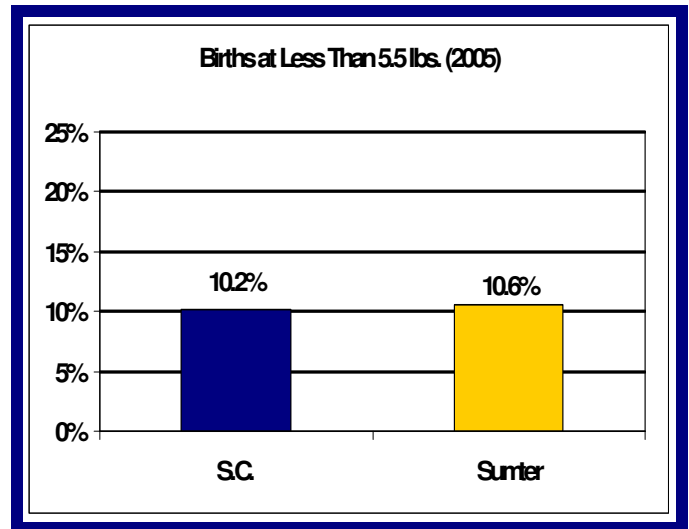
Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%      Sumter County (2005): 10.6%

**Fast Fact:** 1 in 10 Sumter 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.

175 of the 1,656 children born in Sumter County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

# Sumter County

Total Children Under Six: 9,597

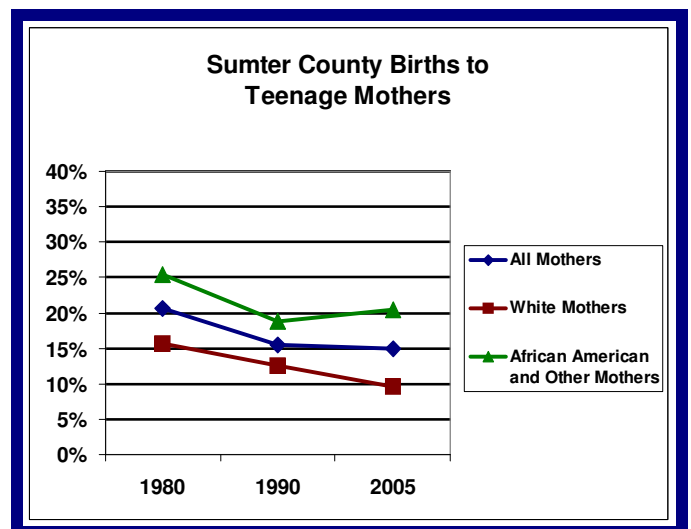
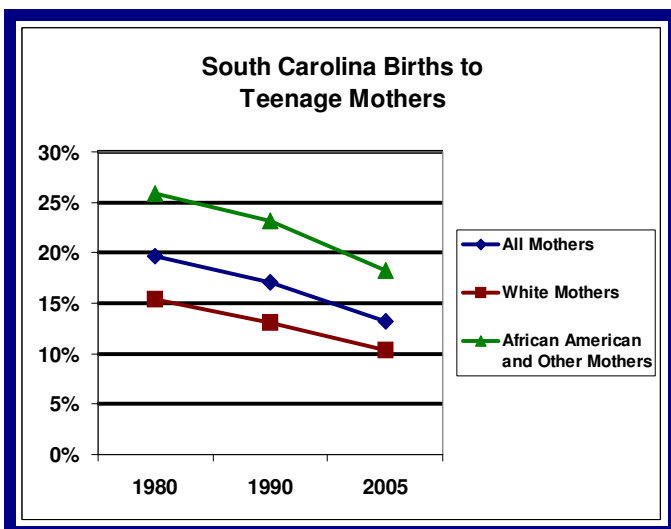
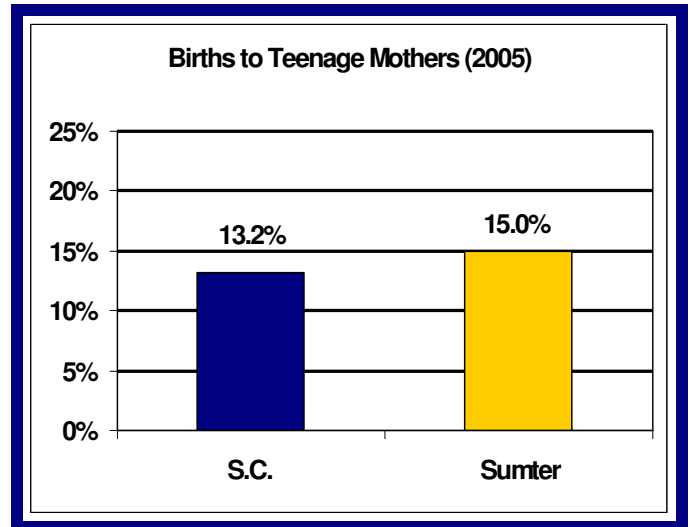
## BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%      Sumter County (2005): 15.0%

**Fast Fact:** 1 in 7 Sumter 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.

248 of the 1,656 children born in Sumter County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

# Sumter County

Total Children Under Six: 9,597

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

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%      Sumter County (2005): 21.9%

**Fast Fact:** Just over 1 in 5 children in Sumter 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.

362 of the 1,656 children born in Sumter County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.

