



# Sumter County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report*

**Board Chair:**  
Austin Floyd

**Executive Director:**  
Julia A. Nelson

**Contact Information:**  
112 Broad Street  
Post Office Box 2331  
Sumter, SC 29151

**Phone:** 803.774.3500  
**Fax:** 803.774.3501  
**E-mail:** firststeps43@ftc-i.net

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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

- 156 Children and 136 Adults in PAT
- 2,125 Home Visits
- 29 Parents attained GEDs
- 8 Parents attained a High School Diplomas
- \$20,890 FQE Grants awarded and 150 TA Hours
- 44.88% In-kind match
- 32 Scholarships/ABC Vouchers

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Sumter County First Steps (SCFS) celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> year as a local school readiness partnership. Sumter County shares South Carolina's enthusiasm and pride from their involvement in ameliorating school readiness. We know school readiness is the gateway to an individual's success in life and are thankful for the positive role we have played.

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 academy 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.

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 District 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.

# **2008-09 County Partnership Programs by Strategy**

## **FAMILY STRENGTHENING**

### **Parents As Teachers (PAT)**

Program description: Parents As Teachers PAT is a nationally acclaimed, research-based model of home visitation program designed to assist parents with the knowledge and skills needed to promote school readiness, healthy development, and the long-term success of their preschool-age children.

SCFS served 156 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.

PAT is composed of four components: home visits, group meetings, screenings and resource network. SCFS partners with Sumter County School Districts 2 and 17 and South Sumter Resource Center to implement this strategy.

### **Program results:**

- 156 children and 136 adults served in the program;
- 2,125 home visits conducted;
- 1,114 books given to families;
- Families participating in Keys to Interactive Parenting Scales (KIPS<sup>1</sup>) and Adult Child Interactive Parenting Scales (ACIRI<sup>2</sup>), demonstrated that parents are making improvements in the areas being measured because of PAT.

### **Family Literacy**

**Program description:** Sumter County First Steps served 78 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

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<sup>1</sup> KIPS is a convenient, reliable, evidence-based tool used to measure 12 parenting behaviors linked to child development. By assessing parenting behaviors, we are able to tailor services to individual families, track parenting progress and document program outcomes. For more information on the KIPS, visit [www.comfortconsults.com](http://www.comfortconsults.com).

<sup>2</sup> The ACIRI is a research-based tool used to measure the quality of adult and child interactions during shared book reading. The adult and child are assessed on 12 key reading behaviors.

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.

**Program results:**

- 78 families served
- 29 GEDs attained
- 8 High School Diplomas attained
- Average reading level as measured by the TABE for incoming students is 6.0 (6th grade reading level)
- 76 adults advanced to a higher grade level
- 106 adults gained at least one educational functioning level
- 13 adults gained at least one educational function level on the BEST
- 827 Books issued to parents
- 35 students have received either a bronze, silver or gold Work Keys Certificate

**Dolly Parton’s 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.

The Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL) is an early literacy program designed to: (1) Remove barriers to early literacy development in young children by increasing the number of age-appropriate books in the home environment (a child’s first classroom); (2) Increase the amount of shared reading between parents and their children; and (3) Foster a love of books and reading in young children. Children enrolled in the DPIL receive one free, carefully-selected, age-appropriate book each month from the time they enroll in the program until they either become five years old or move out of the county. Books are delivered to each child’s home by the United States Postal Service.

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.

**Program Results:**

- Approximately 3,401 books were distributed
- 350 Children under the age five in Sumter County
- Books were used to compliment PAT and other program strategies

**QUALITY CHILD CARE**

## **Facility Quality Enhancement**

**Program description:** Provide 9 Facility Quality Enhancement Grants in to child care facilities in Sumter County. Child Care facilities will include family, group, public and private child care centers, Head Start and Sumter County School District. In addition, eligible participating child care facilities will perform a self-assessment utilizing the ECERS-R, ITERS, and FDCRS. Eligible child care facilities will submit grant proposals. The grants are open to all childcare providers in Sumter County who are eligible to receive ABC vouchers.

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 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 \$20,890 were provided to 9 child care providers*
- *Child care providers received 150 Technical assistance hours*
- *6 facilities worked towards ABC Enhanced Status; 1 facility received enhanced status*
- *3 facilities worked toward receiving NAEYC Accreditations*
- *265 children were impacted by the FQE Strategy*
- *190 Books were given to child care providers*

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

**Program description:** The Child Care Center Staff Training & Development program is a training program designed to: (1) provide child care professionals with the training and support they need in order to deliver higher quality services to the children in their care; and (2) assist child care providers in securing on-going training in order to meet South Carolina Department of Social Services child care regulatory standards. Training sessions are delivered by highly qualified consultants who provide instruction in the areas of nutrition, child growth and development, child guidance, health and safety, and other topic areas. Trainings are delivered at no cost to Clarendon County child care professionals.

### **Program results:**

- 15 hours of certified training hours approved by CCCCCD
- 135 child care professionals; and
- 300 children were impacted.

## **Childcare Scholarships**

**Program description** The Scholarships Applications were distributed by Sumter County First Steps program participants. All other applicants are placed on a waiting list. The 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 than will call applicants on the waiting list.

**Program results:**

- 28 children received Scholarships/ABC Vouchers administered by South Carolina Department of Social Services
- 4 parents received temporary assistance for emergency child care administered by SCFS

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<b><u>Expenditures</u> By Funding Source</b>	
State Appropriation ( <i>Fund 10</i> )	\$ 352,831
E.I.A. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 55</i> )	\$ 21,622
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> )	\$9,188
Local Private ( <i>Fund 20</i> )	\$ 5,850
Federal ( <i>Fund 30</i> )	\$ 38,246
In-Kind ( <i>Fund 25</i> )	\$ 105,084
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$532,621</b>

<b><u>Expenditures</u> By Program / Strategy Name</b>	
Parents As Teachers	\$ 221,113
Family Literacy	\$62,250
Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library	\$ 8,649
Countdown-to-Kindergarten	\$5,668
Child Care Training & Professional Development	\$ 63,025
Facility Quality Enhancement	\$ 26,096
Scholarships/ABC Vouchers	\$68,720
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$ 42,794
Administrative Functions	\$ 34,506
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 532,621</b>

## NOTABLE DONORS

<i><b>DONOR'S NAME</b></i>	<i><b>AMOUNT</b></i>
Kiwanis Club of Sumter	\$540
Dr. Virginia Brown	\$57
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$597</b>

*Local Match Percentage for FY 2009: 44.88%*  
*(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 - Wateree Head Start  
Libby Dubose, School District 2 Appointee  
Paula Durham, Business Community  
Sherreka Fredrick, Child Care Provider  
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  
Earlene Walker, Early Childhood Educator  
Wayne Zamora, Private Businessman

## **Success Stories**

“Susie Smith” has three children under the age of 6 and came to us with no high school credential and no job. She completed her GED and enrolled into a program Central Carolina where she led to her being credential as a Certified Nursing Assistant. She then became employed by a nursing home. When I last spoke to her (just before Thanksgiving) she was still employed and planning to go on to school for additional certifications. She also reported that she continues to read to her children daily "they don't let me miss reading time". She also volunteers each month at their school.

Submitted by  
Sharon Teigue, Director  
Sumter-Lee Adult Education

“Thank you for your help with a ABC Voucher. I could not go to college without your help. Again, thank you so much.”

## **COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT**

In FY09, 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

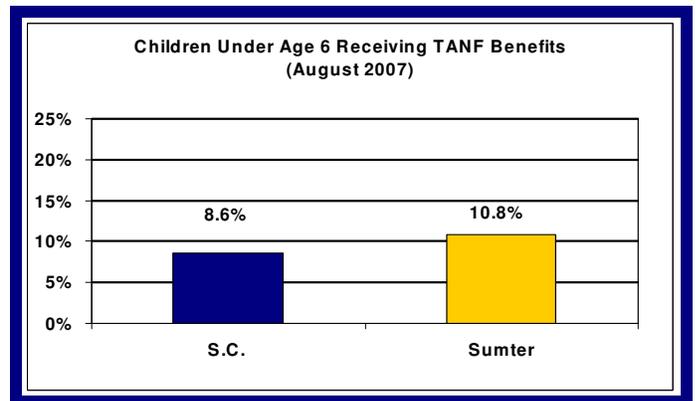
Total Children Under Six: 9,597

### 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.

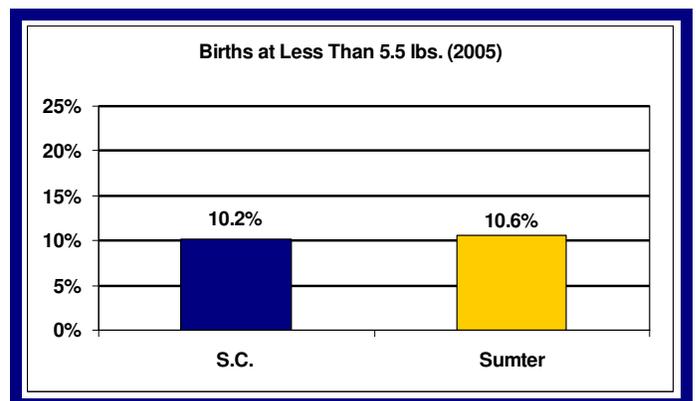


### CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

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.

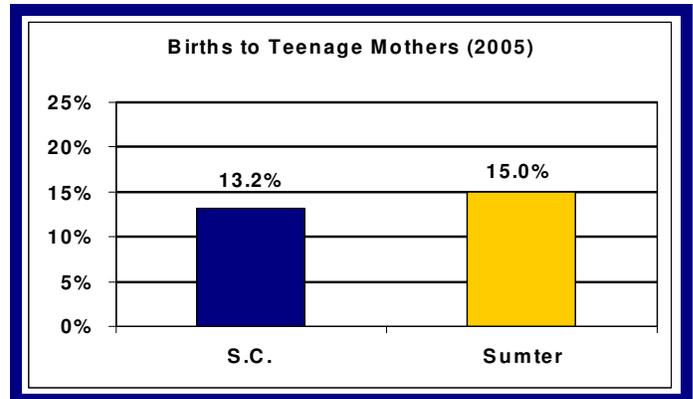


## **BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS**

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.



## **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.

