



Board Chair:
Victoria Belin

Executive Director:
Spencer R. Scott

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**Total children in county under
age 6: 2,903**

**Total Children in county
under 6 living in poverty %:
35.3%**

Marion County Highlights

- 4K Expansion
Programs are excelling at an enormous rate.
- Over 1000 children have received books from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
- Childcare
Providers improve their ITERS and ECERS scores with Technical Support provided by Facility Quality Enhancement.

Marion County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

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Marion County First Steps offers a number of programs under the First Steps School Readiness Strategy that are geared towards helping our children get ready for school. This year, we faced many challenges with programming due to state-wide budget cuts. We continued our *Family Strengthening Strategy* by partnering with all three districts in Marion County to offer Parent Child Home and Parents As Teachers. Combined, these programs successfully served more than 60 families in Marion County. Home Visitors administered Pre and Post tests for KIPS and ACIRI with results showing significant improvement in scores.

The *Quality Child Care Strategy* added a new component, providing Technical Assistance through **Facility Quality Enhancement** to five child care facilities throughout Marion County. Additionally, Marion County First Steps sponsored numerous **Child Care Trainings** and *collaborated* with Florence County First Steps to sponsor an end of the year child care conference in which more than 75 child care providers were in attendance and providers received approximately 375 DSS credit hours combined.

The *Early Education* Strategy reached new heights serving more children during the 2008-09 Fiscal Year and allowing centers to remain open that would otherwise be forced to close due to the economy.

Marion County First Steps serves as a positive force, serving the entire community, children, parents....families as we help children get ready for school.

Respectfully submitted,
Spencer R. Scott
Executive Director
Marion 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 and Parent Child Home

Program description:

The Marion County First Steps parenting programs (Parents as Teachers and Parent Child Home) focus on improving the parents' educational interaction with their child. This is achieved by allowing home visitors to visit the several times throughout the month for approximately 30 to 45 minutes each time.

While at the home, the home visitor assists the parent(s) and child with various activities that are designed to help the parent(s) aid in the developmental stages of the child.

Children who are in the Parent Child Home program receive educational items that will enhance their development.

Program results:

- In 2008-09 a total of 62 families were served in the MCFS Parenting Programs. 36 families were served in the Parents As Teachers Program and 26 families were served in the Parent Child Home Program
- Parents participating in the MCFS Parenting Program were given *Satisfaction/Effectiveness Surveys*.
 - 100% of parents surveyed were satisfied with the MCFS Parenting Program. (2% improvement from the 2007-08 Fiscal Year)
 - 100% of parents surveyed agreed that their interaction with their children improved as a result of being a part of the MCFS Parenting Programs.
 - 97% of participating parents strongly agreed they have learned more about age-appropriate activities with their children.
 - 100% of participating parents would recommend MCFS Parenting Programs to other citizens in the Marion County community.
- Three districts in Marion County implemented Parenting Programs during the 2008-09 Fiscal Year. District One implemented Parents as Teachers (PAT), Districts Two and Seven implemented Parent Child Home (PCH).

Program results for each program are listed below:

- **PAT** Program results indicate home visitors met their required monthly visits of at least two home visits per month with an overall average amount of time at each visit of over an hour.
- **PAT** Program results also show home visitors met 90% of their projected goal to serve 40 families, serving 36 families.
- **PAT** Program results show all parents in the PAT program received PAT PRE and POST Assessments for KIPS and ACIRI and there were significant improvements in both scores overall.
- **PCH** Program results for **MSD#2** indicate the home visitor met her required monthly visits by visiting PCH families at least six times each month for at least 30 minutes each visit.
- **PCH** Program results for **MSD#2** also show the home visitor met 93% of their goal to serve 15 families, having served 14.
- **PCH** Program results for **MSD#2** show at least 75% of PCH families received PRE and POST Assessments for KIPS and ACIRI and there were significant improvements in both scores overall.
- **PCH** Program results for **MSD#7** indicate the home visitor met the required monthly visits of at least six home visits per month with an average duration of 30 minutes per visit.
- **PCH** Program results for **MSD#7** shows the home visitor met 80% of their projected number of families to serve .The projected number to serve was 15 families, the home visitor served 12 families.

- **PCH** Program results for **MSD#7** also show at least 75% of PCH participants received PRE and POST assessments for KIPS and ACIRI. Results show significant improvements in scores, overall.

LITERACY

This component of Family Strengthening focuses on helping children to have exposure to quality books in an effort to help them learn and love to read.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has partnered with MCFS to provide FREE books to children birth to five years old. Since its inception in 2005 nearly 1000 books have been distributed to children throughout Marion County, which is 97% of the projected to serve number of children, 1000.

QUALITY CHILD CARE.

Daycare Provider Training

The goal of daycare provider training is to provide quality trainings to local daycare providers at an affordable rate. These trainings help providers increase their knowledge, enhance their facilities and provide a better learning environment for the children they serve.

- During the 2008-09 Fiscal Year, 20 childcare providers attended MCFS sponsored trainings.
- Combined, daycare providers received over 255 DSS credit hours.
- 100% of childcare providers attending MCFS sponsored trainings agree that the trainings are needed and very beneficial in Marion County.

Facility Quality Enhancement

This component of Quality Childcare is designed to help improve childcare facilities throughout Marion County. Technical Assistance is available to aid providers in enhancing their facilities. During the 2008-09 Fiscal Year, five daycare facilities received Technical Assistance via Facility Quality Enhancement.

- During the 2008-09 Fiscal Year, Five daycare facilities received Technical Assistance via Facility Quality Enhancement.
- All participating facilities were given Pre and POST Assessments for ITERS, ECERS and FCCRS. Results indicate four of the five facilities improved their overall score.

EARLY EDUCATION.

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

CDEPP offers state-paid tuition of 4 year old kindergarten classes to eligible students living in the 37 trial and plaintiff's 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-priced lunch, be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2007 and live in an eligible district.

Program results:

- During the 2008-09 Fiscal Year, approximately 50 students were served
- Four providers in Marion County offered CDEPP 4K classes last year.
- Since its inception, CDEPP has brought nearly \$500,000.00 to the struggling economy in Marion county. CDEPP has given jobs to qualified teachers and it has helped impoverished parents to afford quality childcare for their children. Additionally, childcare providers have been able to continue offering childcare services in a county that has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Expenditures By Funding Source	
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 10</i>)	\$118,769
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 11</i>)	\$15,856
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 55</i>)	\$9,348
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 56</i>)	\$928
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 60</i>)	\$202,222
State Private (<i>Fund 15</i>)	\$1,498
Local Private (<i>Fund 20</i>)	\$1,297
Federal (<i>Fund 30</i>)	\$32,319
In-Kind (<i>Fund 25</i>)	\$12,117
TOTAL:	\$394,354

Expenditures By Program / Strategy Name	
Parenting Programs	\$93,150
Family Literacy	\$2,333
Imagination Library	\$21,753
CDEPP 4K Programs	\$198,916
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$994
Childcare Quality Enhancement	\$16,290
Childcare Training and Professional Development	\$14,154
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$29,350
Administrative Functions	\$17,414
TOTAL:	\$394,354

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Shellion Lewis	\$30.00
Mary Fore	\$10.00
Judy Gause	\$10.00
Linda Dozier	\$10.00
Margarette Davis	\$10.00
Rosemary Willis	\$20.00
Mae Frances Davis	\$20.00
Marquita Anderson	\$10.00
Lillian Hunter	\$20.00
Mattie Heriol	\$10.00
Arthur Heriol	\$10.00
Amy Cross	\$30.00
Elizabeth Campbell	\$30.00
Makeshia Pee	\$30.00
Tammy Cross	\$30.00
Sharon Legette	\$30.00
Billie Ann Ceaser	\$30.00
Joyce James	\$40.00
Dainta McGill	\$30.00
Debra Gerald	\$30.00
Jean Davis	\$20.00
Mary Alice McGill	\$30.00
Eva Bentow	\$30.00
Eateral Moody	\$10.00
Priscilla Ford	\$10.00
Cora Brantley	\$10.00
Shirley Foxworth	\$10.00
Emma Williams	\$10.00
Sherita Boatwright	\$10.00
Eleanor Monroe	\$10.00
Shelia Zollicoffer	\$20.00
Dorothy Snow	\$10.00
Jean Pearson	\$20.00
Janet Simmons	\$10.00
Tiffany Martin Smith	\$10.00
Jacquelyn Taylor	\$10.00
Sonya Townsend	\$10.00
Melinda Moore	\$10.00
Latoya Allen	\$10.00
Daphne Benbow	\$10.00
Rosa Johnson	\$10.00

Barbara Smith	\$10.00
Ruth Davis	\$10.00
Troy Johnson Learning Korner	\$100.00
Little Promises	\$110.00
Pee Dee Electric	\$1000.00
TOTAL: \$1,950.00	

Local Match Percentage for FY 2009: 32.6%
(at least 15% Legislative requirement)

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Victoria Belin, Early Childhood Education
Howard Blakeney, Faithbased
Vara Risinger, Early Childhood Education
Angela Slagle, Early Education
Kandace Bethea, Marion School District One
Dr. Nathaniel Miller, Marion School District Two
Dr. Everette Dean, Marion School District Seven
Cathy Pruett, Marion County Library
Jane Ward, DHEC
Mae Frances Davis, Pre-K thru Primary Teacher
Esther Richardson, Pre-K thru Primary Teacher
Pat Gibson, Childcare Provider
Rachel Mason, Healthcare Provider
Lula Coleman, Transportation Provider
Jackie Curry, Non-Profit
Yolanda Moore, Parents of Pre-School Children
Vernetta McNeil, Parents of Pre-School Children
Susie Hill, Member of Early Childhood Education

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

Your 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile will be inserted by OFS after this section. For your reference, a PDF of this risk profile was sent to you along with your Annual Report Template

Testimonials

Parent Child Home is a good way for a parent to be interactive with their child. Books and other materials are given to help parents work with their child. Overall, it's a really good program.

*Kizzy Simmons, PCH Parent Marion
School District #2*

Marion County First Steps has been very instrumental in assisting Child Care Providers enhance their facilities. They coordinate very educational trainings and workshops that are of great benefit to providers, parents and their children. The MCFS staff is always readily available to assist providers, as needed. We have been very pleased with Marion County First Steps and the services they provide.

*Annette Gerald, Childcare Provider
Facility Quality Enhancement Participant*

If it was not for these books provided by Marion County First Steps and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, many young children would not have any books. Plus, it has been a wonderful message to the parents each month, "please read to your young child." Thank you and your organization for everything.

*Katherine Duguay, Nurse Home Visitor
Safe School – Healthy Students*

Parent Child Home is a very good program for parents and children. It helps when you have a nice, friendly person, like Ms. Mason who comes into your home and works with you and your children. My children love the games and the books. They really enjoy it when we read the books and play with the puzzles together.

Chiquita Yates, PCH Parent MSD#2

I found the program to be helpful for me and my child. It helped her to learn her numbers, letters and start reading. Danasha loves getting the books and other gifts, like the puzzles. I would highly recommend this program to my friends.

Jessica Myers, PCH Parent MSD#7

Loretta McGill became an entrepreneur in childcare due to an unexpected dismissal from the job that employed her for several years. McGill's Bundles of Joy opened its doors to the Marion community in 2000 and began working with Marion County First Steps. At Bundles of Joy, we have embraced the community and they in return have welcomed us whole-heartedly. Although the daycare/childcare center has had its share of challenges and hurdles; we have overcome, persevered and continued to improve. It was a difficult period four years ago when the ABC program experienced drastic budgetary cuts, however, we thank God for our Marion County First Steps program. We were approved for our 4K program four years ago and we have received numerous grants from the First Steps Facility Quality Enhancement Program. We began the 4K program with a license to serve 20 children, but we only had an enrollment for 12 children. After receiving positive feedback from the community, schools and churches, this year, not only are we serving 20 children, we have a standing waiting list.

We have testimonials from parents expressing their satisfaction and gratitude for having the 4K program available in Marion County. Parents have expressed their preference for our program versus the 4K program in public schools. We have had children come to us with developmental delays and were told that they would not enter a regular 4K program. As a result of being in the 4K program at Bundles of Joy, working with the Bundles staff, those same children are back on track with their peers.

We would like to tell First Steps thank you for supporting us so we can continue to offer the highest level of early childhood education in Marion County.

----*Loretta McGill*, Owner/Director

Marion School District One provides excellent programs for parents. Parents As Teachers and Parent Child Home are a blessing...a God-send. I have had three children to go through these programs and they are all doing well now because of it. I truly believe that. My great-aunt used to care for my oldest son. While in her care, all John did is watching TV. After becoming a part of the PCH program, he was exposed to books and other learning materials. John is now in the 6th grade; he is currently an honor roll student and is in the BETA club. My youngest son, Ethan is currently apart of the PAT program. He also loves being apart of the program. I think these types of programs are important because as parents we have so much going on and sometimes we don't have a lot of time for our children. Parenting programs force us to stop and make time....it makes us make our children's growth and development a priority and my kids appreciate it more than you know. I highly recommend either of these programs.

----*Tina Swinton*, PAT Parent MSD#1

The SC General Assembly created in 1999 the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Initiative as a “comprehensive, results-oriented initiative for improving early childhood development by providing, through county partnerships, public and private funds and support for high quality early childhood development and education services for children by providing support for their families’ efforts toward enabling their children to reach school ready to learn”...here’s what happened next:

Over the past ten years, amid continuous budget cuts in light of the nation’s financial distress, Marion County First Steps has made great strides in its efforts to prepare children for school. Since its inception in 1999, each year our program has maintained and built on its collaborations with community leaders, partnering with all three districts in Marion County, along with Pee Dee Healthy Start, DHEC, DSS, members of faith-based organizations, local businesses, parents, teachers, healthcare providers, the Marion Board of Education, the Marion Fire Department, the Marion Police Department, the Marion County Recreational Department, the Marion County Housing Authority, the Marion County Post Office, the Brittani Foundation, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, Pee Dee Electric Co-Operative, childcare Providers and Success By Six. These partnerships have resulted in an immeasurable amount of volunteer time spent in the best interest of our children. Time that equates to more than 3000 hours over the past ten years, equaling more than \$30,000.00 In-kind in that time.

Partnerships with the Brittani Foundation and Pee Dee Electric Co-Operative helped bring Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library to Marion County. Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library is the literacy program that provides new books to children from birth to five years old. Pee Dee Electric Co-Operative has donated more than \$5000.00 to this initiative and the Brittani Foundation has donated countless volunteer hours to help maintain the program in Marion County. To date, nearly 1000 children in Marion County have received FREE books from Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library.

Child care providers in Marion County have significantly benefited from having Marion County First Steps in their community. Since 1999, Marion County First Steps has served more than 100 childcare providers and more than 1800 children. Childcare providers have actively participated in childcare trainings, workshops and conferences. Childcare providers have benefited from the addition of the Facility Quality Enhancement Program and CDEPP in Marion County. Both programs have provided in depth Technical Assistance and Mentoring in addition to materials and supplies to enhance facilities.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Marion County

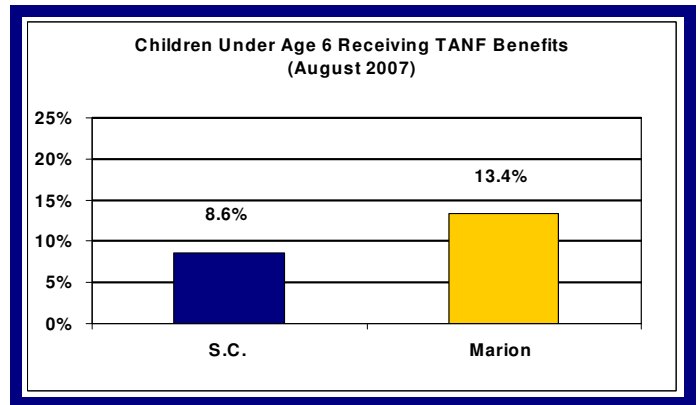
Total Children Under Six: 2,903

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4% Marion County (2007): 13.4%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 8 Marion 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.
- 389 of Marion County’s 2,903 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.

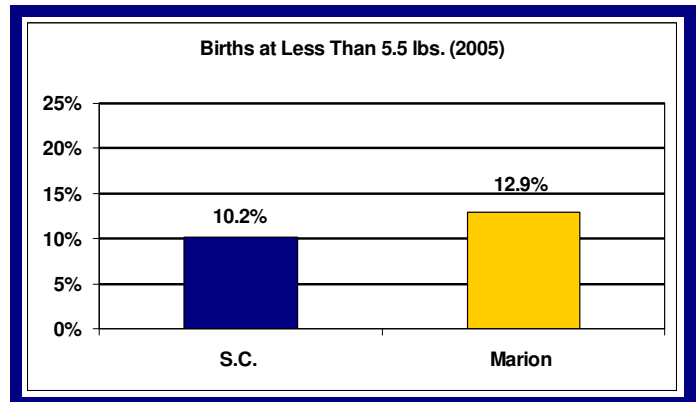


CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2% Marion County (2005): 12.9%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 8 Marion 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.
- 56 of the 434 children born in Marion County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.

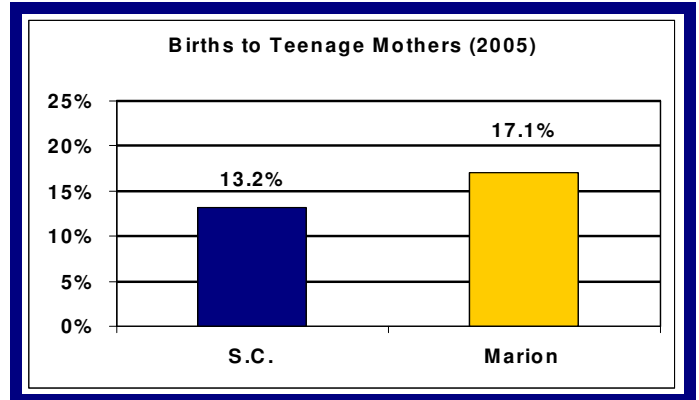


BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2% Marion County (2005): 17.1%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 6 Marion 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.
- 74 of the 434 children born in Marion County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7% Marion County (2005): 26.3%

Fast Fact: 1 in 4 children in Marion 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.
- 114 of the 434 children born in Marion County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.

