



INSTITUTE *for* CHILD SUCCESS

**ICS LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS FOR THE
REFORM AND REAUTHORIZATION OF
SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS
TO SCHOOL READINESS**

Presentation to First Steps Reauthorization Panel

November 16, 2012



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INSTITUTE FOR CHILD SUCCESS

VISION: To foster and sustain a system that ensures the success of all children.

MISSION: Through research, advocacy and integration the Institute for Child Success leads public and private partnerships to coordinate, enhance and improve resources for the success of all children



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OVERARCHING GOALS IN ICS' PROPOSALS FOR FIRST STEPS REFORM AND REAUTHORIZATION

- ✓ Reauthorization, codification and assessment of First Steps'
Current Work
- ✓ Maximizing resources for young children in South Carolina
- ✓ Accountability, transparency, and clarity about First Steps'
efforts at the state and local level



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ICS OBJECTIVES FOR FIRST STEPS REFORM AND REAUTHORIZATION

ICS Objective 1 for First Steps Reform and Reauthorization

Objective: Include a definition of “school readiness” in the reauthorization legislation.

Strategy: Include a new section of definitions including, among others, a specific definition of “school readiness” and “pre-school child”. (Sec. 59-152-20. Definition.)

ICS Objective 2 for First Steps Reform and Reauthorization

Objective: Mandate that first steps work with the state department of education to propose, by a specific date, a common statewide assessment instrument to be administered to all children upon enrollment in state-funded 5K programs.

Strategy: Include specific language to this effect. (Sec. 59-152-35. School Readiness Assessment.)

ICS Objective 3 for First Steps Reform and Reauthorization

Objective: Mandate that all First Steps funded programs at the state and local levels be developed and implemented to directly support the attainment of “school readiness.”

Strategy: Include language to specifically require grant funds be used solely for this purpose (Sec. 59-152-100.); further develop the objectives and benchmarks for the First Steps State Office and local partnerships (Sec. 59-152-25. Objective; Sec. 59-152-30. School Readiness Comprehensive Long-range Initiative and Strategy); and restructure the funding formula to ensure this is the focus of grant renewals. (Sec. 59-152-90. Grant application; Criteria for allocations.)

ICS Objective 4 for First Steps Reform and Reauthorization

Objective: Include language that promotes the use of evidence-based programs and interventions over non evidence-based programs and interventions whenever possible and practical.

Strategy: Include language to define evidence based programs and promising programs (Sec. 59-152-20. Definitions.) and include language to mandate that at least 75% of a partnership’s state funding be used for evidence based programs (Sec. 59-152-100. Use of grant funds; Focus of activities and services.)

ICS Objective 5 for First Steps Reform and Reauthorization

Objective: Include within legislation specific direction regarding how First Steps grants to local First Steps partnerships can be expended and annually evaluated based on clearly defined statewide performance indicators and benchmarks tied to the attainment of “school readiness” as defined by the reauthorization legislation.

Strategy: Delete existing references to two different types of grants creating instead one grant for renewal based on specific criteria and performance measures. (Sec. 59-152-30. School Readiness Comprehensive Long-range Initiative and Strategy; Sec.59-152-90; and 59-152-100.).

ICS Objective 6 for First Steps Reform and Reauthorization

Objective: Include in the legislation language that allows for more competition in the awarding of First Steps grants to local partnerships.

Strategy: Include language in the funding formula to allow for more competition (Sec. 59-152-90. Grant applications; Criteria for allocations.).

ICS Objective 7 for First Steps Reform and Reauthorization

Objective: Include measures increasing the accountability of local partnerships to the State Board and increasing local partnership alignment with the defined “school readiness” criteria.

Strategy: Increase accountability by making grant renewal dependent on program and partnership success. (Sec. 59-152-90 and 59-152-100.).

ICS Objective 8 for First Steps Reform and Reauthorization

Objective: Include language that promotes state and local First Steps Board composition consistent with the objective of ensuring high-quality experiences for young children in local communities.

Strategy: Include language to better align state and local boards with the objectives as outlined in the reauthorization legislation (Sec. 59-152-60. County First Steps Partnerships; and Sec. 63-11-1720. Board members.).

1 CHAPTER 152.

2 SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS

3 **SECTION 59-152-10. First Steps to School Readiness initiative established.**

4
5
6
7 There is established South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness, a comprehensive,
8 results-oriented initiative for improving early childhood development by providing, through
9 ~~county~~ local partnerships, public and private funds and support for high-quality early childhood
10 development and education services for children by providing support for their families' efforts
11 toward enabling their children to reach school ready to learn.

12
13 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

14
15 **SECTION 59-152-~~20~~ 15. Purpose.**

16
17 The purpose of the First Steps initiative is to develop, promote, and assist efforts of agencies,
18 private providers, and public and private organizations and entities, at the state level and the
19 community level, to collaborate and cooperate in order to focus and intensify services, assure the
20 most efficient use of all available resources, and eliminate duplication of efforts to serve the
21 needs of young children and their families. First Steps funds must not be used to supplant or
22 replace any other funds being spent on services but must be used to expand, extend, improve, or
23 increase access to services or to enable a community to begin to offer new or previously
24 unavailable services in their community. The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
25 Board of Trustees, Office of First Steps to School Readiness, and the ~~County~~ Local First Steps
26 Partnerships shall ~~assure that collaboration, the development of partnerships, and the sharing and~~
27 ~~maximizing of resources are occurring before funding for the implementation/management~~
28 ~~grants, as provided for in this chapter, are made available.~~ ensure that collaboration, the existence
29 and continued development of partnerships, and the sharing and maximizing of resources are
30 occurring in order for the funding of grants, as provided for in this chapter, to continue.

31
32 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

33
34 **59-152-20. Definitions.**

35
36 (A) 'School readiness' means the level of development, as analyzed through the following
37 domains indicating that children, their families, caregivers, healthcare providers, educators,
38 and communities are capable and prepared to promote student success in kindergarden and
39 beyond: physical health and well being; social competence; emotional health and maturity;
40 language and literacy development; mathematical thinking and cognition skills; motor skills;
41 and general knowledge.

42
43 (B) 'Pre-School Child' means a child prenatal to age five.

1 (C) 'Partnership' refers to a First Steps county or multi-county organization designated as such by
2 the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, organized under
3 Section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as a private nonprofit, and formed to
4 further, within the coverage area, the purpose and goals of the First Steps initiative as stated
5 in Section 59-152-15 and Section 59-152-25.

6 (D) 'Evidence-based program' means one that is based on a clear, consistent program model that
7 either:

8 (1) is designated as such by the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
9 Board of Trustees because it

10 (a) is grounded in published, peer reviewed research;
11 linked to program determined outcomes;

12 (b) employs well trained and competent staff along with
13 continual professional development, relevant to the
14 specific model being delivered;

15 (c) demonstrates strong linkages to other community-
16 based services; and

17 (d) is operated to ensure program fidelity;

18 (2) Or is designated as such by the South Carolina First Steps to School
19 Readiness Board of Trustees because it is commonly recognized by experts
20 in the field as such a program.

21 (E) 'Promising program' means a program that does not satisfy the criteria of an evidenced-based
22 program but that the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees
23 determines is supported by research indicating its potential effectiveness.

24
25 **SECTION 59-152-~~30~~25. Goals.**
26

27 The goals for South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness are to:

28 (1) provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their
29 families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;

30 (2) increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical,
31 developmental, and learning problems;

32 (3) promote high quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will
33 promote normal growth and development;

34 (4) provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to
35 thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to learn; and

1 (5) mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and
2 their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to learn.
3 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.
4

5 **59-152-30. School Readiness Comprehensive Long-range Initiative and Strategy.**
6

7 (A) In Section 63-11-1720, the South Carolina State First Steps to School Readiness Board of
8 Trustees is given the authority to carry out its assigned functions by, among others,
9 developing a comprehensive long-range initiative for improving early childhood
10 developments and increasing school readiness and establishing results oriented measures
11 and objectives and assessing whether services provided by First Steps Partnerships to
12 children and families are meeting the goals and achieving the results established for the First
13 Steps initiative pursuant to Chapter 152, Title 59. In order to fulfill these duties, on or
14 before July 1, 2014, the State Board shall do the following:

15 (1) adopt a description of school readiness, which shall contain specific
16 details as to the characteristics and development levels of a ready
17 child in South Carolina, include any specific requirements of school,
18 educators, and caregivers that the State Board feels is necessary to
19 create an optimal learning environment for the early years of
20 students' lives, and describe characteristics of the optimal
21 environment which would lead to the readiness of students and their
22 continued success; and

23 (2) establish specific benchmarks and objectives for use by the South
24 Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, County
25 or Multi County Partnership Boards, and any state agency
26 administering state-funded programs for the benefit of pre-school
27 children, as defined by Section 59-152-20 (B) of this Chapter, to
28 determine whether state and local programs and activities are
29 effective and contributing toward progress in achieving the goals
30 established in Section 59-152-25 of this Chapter.
31

32 (B) On or before July 1, 2019, and on or before January 1 every five years thereafter, the state
33 board shall review the school readiness description and the benchmarks and objectives and
34 adopt any appropriate revisions
35
36

37 **59-152-35. School Readiness Assessment.**
38
39

40 (A) On or before July 1, 2015, the state board shall work with the South Carolina Department of
41 Education to recommend one or more assessments that are aligned with the definition of
42 school readiness as it applies to children, defined in Section 59-152-20, the description of
43 school readiness, and the goal in Section 59-152-25(1) in order to evaluate and measure
44 students' levels of school readiness. In recommending assessments of students' school
45 readiness, the state board shall consider assessments that are research-based; recognized

1 nationwide as reliable instruments for measuring school readiness; and suitable for
2 determining the instruction and interventions students need to improve their readiness to
3 succeed in school. School readiness assessments shall not be used to deny a student
4 admission or progression to kindergarten or first grade.

5
6 (B) If and when a school readiness assessment is adopted as a result of the recommendation
7 made pursuant to part (A) of this Section, results shall not be publicly reported for individual
8 students. Following adoption of the school readiness assessment, the state board shall adopt
9 a system for reporting population-level results that provide baseline data for measuring
10 overall change and improvement in students' skills and knowledge over time.

11
12 **SECTION 59-152-40. Board of Trustees to oversee initiative.**

13
14 The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees established in Section
15 63-11-1720 shall oversee and be accountable for the South Carolina First Steps to School
16 Readiness initiative.

17
18 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

19
20
21 **SECTION 59-152-50. Office of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness established;**
22 **duties.**

23
24 Within the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, an Office of South
25 Carolina First Steps to School Readiness shall be established. The office shall:

- 26
27 (1) provide to the board information on best practice, successful strategies, model
28 programs, and financing mechanisms;
29 (2) review the ~~county~~ partnerships' plans and budgets in order to provide technical
30 assistance and recommendations regarding local grant proposals and improvement in
31 meeting statewide and local goals;
32 (3) provide technical assistance, consultation, support, and oversight to ~~county~~
33 partnerships to facilitate their success including, but not limited to, model programs,
34 strategic planning, leadership development, best practice, successful strategies,
35 collaboration, financing, and evaluation;
36 (4) recommend to the board the applicants meeting the criteria for First Steps
37 partnerships and the grants to be awarded;
38 (5) submit an annual report to the board by December first which includes, but is not
39 limited to, the statewide needs and resources available to meet the goals and purposes of
40 the First Steps to School Readiness initiative, the ongoing progress and results of the
41 First Steps to School Readiness initiative statewide and locally, fiscal information on the
42 expenditure of funds, and recommendations and legislative proposals to further
43 implement the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative statewide;

- 1 (6) provide for on-going data collection and contract for an in-depth performance audit
2 due January 1, 2003, and every three years thereafter, to ensure that statewide goals and
3 requirements of the First Steps to School Readiness initiative are being met; and
4 (7) coordinate the First Steps to School Readiness initiative with all other state, federal,
5 and local public and private efforts to promote good health and school readiness of
6 young children and support for their families.

7
8 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

9 **SECTION 59-152-60. County Local First Steps Partnerships; selection of board members;**
10 **election and term of chairman; records of meetings; abstention from voting.**

11
12 (A) Each South Carolina county shall be represented by a county or multi-county First Steps
13 Partnership Board.

14
15 (B) ~~(A) The Office of First Steps to School Readiness, in collaboration with each county~~
16 ~~legislative delegation, shall initiate county forums for the purpose of bringing together~~
17 ~~stakeholders who are actively involved or interested in early childhood development and~~
18 ~~education so as to initiate a County First Steps Partnership. The times and locations of these~~
19 ~~forums and county wide meetings~~ Partnership Board meetings and elections must be
20 publicized in the local print and broadcast media.

21 ~~(B) At a countywide meeting the participants~~ In accordance with the election process stated
22 in the bylaws established by the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of
23 Trustees, each Local Partnership Board shall begin to select, to the extent possible within the
24 area covered by the partnership, consist of the following:

25
26 (1) A minimum of twelve and a maximum of twenty-four elected members
27 with not more than four from any one of the following categories shall
28 be selected from the following categories to sit on the First Steps
29 Partnership Board: Not more than two members from each of these
30 categories to sit on the First Steps partnership board:

- 31 (a) ~~pre-kindergarten through primary educator;~~
32 (b) family education, training, and support provider;
33 (c) childcare and early childhood
34 development/education provider;
35 (d) healthcare provider;
36 (e) school district representative with
37 responsibilities in early childhood programs;
38 ~~(e) transportation provider;~~
39 (f) nonprofit organization that provides services to
40 families and children;
41 (g) faith community; and
42 (h) business community, and
43 (i) ~~(2) three parents of pre-school children. After~~
44 ~~the first year of the implementation of the First~~
45 ~~Steps to School Readiness initiative, parents~~

1 serving on the County First Steps Partnership
2 Board must have pre-school children being
3 served by First Steps programs; and.

4 ~~(3) Four members from early childhood education.~~

5
6 ~~(2) (C)~~ After the county partnership board has been formed, i If necessary to
7 assure that all areas of the county or multi-county region are adequately
8 represented and reflect the diversity of the county coverage area, each
9 county legislative delegation may appoint up to four additional
10 members. Of these members, two are appointed by the Senate members
11 and two by the House of Representative members of the delegation from
12 persons with resources, skills, or knowledge that have specific interests
13 in improving the readiness of young children for school.

14
15 ~~(3) (D)~~ Each of the following located within a a particular First Steps Partnership
16 coverage area, shall designate one individual with responsibility in early
17 childhood programs member to serve as a non-voting member of the its County
18 Local First Steps Partnership Board:

- 19 (a) county department of social services;
20 (b) county department of health and environmental control;
21 (c) Head Start;
22 (d) county library; ~~and~~
23 ~~-(e) each of the school districts in the county.~~

24
25 ~~(C) (E)~~ Members who miss more than three consecutive meetings without excuse or members
26 who resign must be replaced from the same categories as their predecessor. The terms of
27 the members of a ~~County~~ First Steps Partnership Board are for two years; however,
28 membership on the board may not exceed six consecutive years.

29
30 ~~(D) (F)~~ The chairman of a ~~County~~ First Steps Partnership Board must be elected by majority vote
31 of the board. The chairman shall serve a one-year term; however, the chairman may be
32 elected to subsequent terms not to exceed a total of four consecutive years.

33
34 ~~(E) (G)~~ ~~County~~ First Steps Partnerships must have policies and procedures for conducting
35 meetings and disclosing records comparable to those provided for in the Freedom of
36 Information Act. Prior to every vote taken by the board, members must abstain from voting
37 if the issue being considered would result in a conflict of interest. The abstention must be
38 noted in the minutes of the meeting.

39
40 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

41
42
43 **SECTION 59-152-70. First Steps Partnership Board; powers and duties.**

44
45 (A) A First Steps Partnership Board shall, among other powers and duties:

- 1
- 2 (1) adopt by-laws as established by the First Steps to School Readiness Board to
- 3 effectuate the provisions of this chapter which must include the creation of a periodic
- 4 meeting schedule;
- 5 (2) coordinate a collaborative effort at the county or multi-county level which will bring
- 6 the community together to identify the area needs related to the goals of First Steps to
- 7 School Readiness; develop a strategic long-term plan for meeting those needs;
- 8 develop specific initiatives to implement the elements of the plan; and integrating
- 9 service delivery where possible;
- 10 (3) coordinate and oversee the implementation of the comprehensive strategic plan
- 11 including, but not limited to, direct service provision, contracting for service
- 12 provision, and organization and management of volunteer programs;
- 13 (4) create and every three years ~~annually~~ revise a county needs assessment;
- 14 (5) implement fiscal policies and procedures as required by the First Steps office and as
- 15 needed to ensure fiscal accountability of all funds appropriated to the partnership;
- 16 (6) keep accurate records of partnership's meetings, programs, and activities;
- 17 (7) collect information and submit an annual report by October 1 to the First Steps to
- 18 School Readiness Board of Trustees, and otherwise participate in the annual review
- 19 and the three-year evaluation of operations and programs. The first annual report must
- 20 be submitted October 1, 2000. Reports must include but not be limited to:
- 21 (a) determination of the current level and effectiveness of
- 22 services for young children and their families;
- 23 (b) strategic goals for increased availability, accessibility,
- 24 quality, and efficiency of activities and services for
- 25 young children and their families which will enable
- 26 children to reach school ready to learn;
- 27 (c) monitoring of progress toward strategic goals;
- 28 (d) report on implementation activities;
- 29 (e) recommendations for changes to the strategic plan
- 30 which may include new areas of implementation;
- 31 (f) evaluation and report of program effectiveness and
- 32 client satisfaction before, during, and after the
- 33 implementation of the strategic plan, where available;
- 34 and
- 35 (g) estimation of cost savings attributable to increased
- 36 efficiency and effectiveness of delivery of services to
- 37 young children and their families, where available.

38

39 (B) Each ~~County~~ First Steps Partnership may, in the performance of its duties, employ or acquire

40 staff pursuant to the local partnership bylaws established by the South Carolina First Steps

41 Board of Trustees administrative, clerical, stenographic, and other personnel as may be

42 necessary to effectuate the provisions of this section. *However, overhead costs of the*

43 *partnership's operations may not exceed eight percent of its implementation/management*

44 *grant allocation unless prior approval is received from the First Steps to School Readiness*

45 *Board of Trustees.*

1
2 (C) Each ~~County~~ First Steps Partnership may apply for, receive, and expend federal, state, and
3 local funds, grants, and other funding.

4
5 (D) ~~Day~~ Child care facilities receiving grants must first use a portion of their funds to achieve
6 licensed status and then to achieve the equivalent status to that of enhanced ABC provider.

7
8 (E) To be designated a ~~County~~ First Steps Partnership, the county or multi-county partnership
9 must be a private nonprofit corporation organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal
10 Revenue Code. ~~However, developing partnerships which have not yet received 501(c)(3)~~
11 ~~status may qualify for grants if they have received a state charter for incorporation and meet~~
12 ~~other criteria as established by the board.~~

13
14 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

15
16
17
18 **SECTION 59-152-80. First Steps grants.**

19 ~~(A) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the First Steps to School Readiness initiative be~~
20 ~~implemented as soon as county partnerships are ready to utilize the funds efficiently and~~
21 ~~effectively to improve services.~~

22 ~~(B) Two levels of First Steps grants may be awarded as follows:~~

23 ~~(1) Level One for the development of the collaborative effort, needs assessment, and strategic~~
24 ~~planning; and~~

25 ~~(2) Level Two for implementation/management of activities and programs.~~

26 ~~The level of grant awarded to a county partnership must be based on the readiness of the county~~
27 ~~partnership to implement the First Steps initiative. The First Steps Board shall establish the~~
28 ~~criteria for qualifying for each grant level. The allocations for the grants shall take into~~
29 ~~consideration the quality of the grant proposal.~~

30 ~~(C) Implementation/management grants must be funded annually by the First Steps to School~~
31 ~~Readiness Board and may be awarded for up to three years. Implementation grants are~~
32 ~~renewable based upon criteria established by the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness~~
33 ~~Board of Trustees, including the results of performance audits.~~

34
35 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

36
37 **SECTION 59-152-90. Grant applications; criteria for allocations.**

38
39 (A) Local Partnership grants may be funded annually by the First Steps to School Readiness
40 Board and may be funded for up to three years.

41
42 ~~(B) To receive a Level One development of the collaborative effort, needs assessment, and~~
43 ~~strategic planning grant, the County First Steps Partnership must meet the criteria established by~~
44 ~~the First Steps to School Readiness Board including, but not limited to, total population covered~~

1 by the partnership and quality of any pre-existing needs assessment and/or strategic plans for that
2 geographic area.

3
4 ~~(C) To receive a Level Two implementation/management grant for First Steps to School~~
5 ~~Readiness, a County First Steps Partnership must have completed a needs assessment and review~~
6 ~~by the First Steps to School Readiness Board and develop a comprehensive, long-range plan to~~
7 ~~provide high quality early childhood development and education services. The plan must~~
8 ~~identify the needs of children and their families in the local area; assets and resources available;~~
9 ~~explain how supports and services are to be organized and delivered; establish measurable~~
10 ~~objectives and interim goals for meeting the local and state goals for First Steps; and an~~
11 ~~evaluation plan.~~

12
13 ~~(D) In developing these plans, the First Steps Partnership must be given sufficient flexibility, but~~
14 ~~they must be accountable to the First Steps to School Readiness Board for fiscal management,~~
15 ~~program management, and program results.~~

16
17
18 (B) (A) To obtain a grant, a County First Steps Partnership or developing partnership shall
19 submit an application to the Office of First Steps in a format specified by the First Steps to
20 School Readiness Board. The application shall include, as appropriate to the level of grant
21 applied for, the level of funding requested, a Budget Spending Plan and a Renewal Plan
22 which must contain a description of needs of children and families; assets and resources
23 available; and the proposed strategies to address needs as they relate to the goals of South
24 Carolina First Steps to School Readiness.

25
26 (C) Effective July 1, 2014, of the funds allocated to First Steps Partnerships by the South
27 Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, the first 60% of funds will be
28 base funding and the

29 ~~(E) The allocations for the grants shall take into consideration the quality of the grant~~
30 ~~proposal; the population of children birth to age five contained in the area served by the~~
31 ~~partnership; the percentage of students in grades 1-3 who are eligible for the free and~~
32 ~~reduced price lunch program; average per capita income; and the area's ability to support the~~
33 ~~strategic plan initiative. The criteria also shall take into account the standing of the~~
34 ~~geographical area covered by a county partnership in relation to the statewide Kids Count~~
35 ~~indicators. Priority must be given to strategic plans that incorporate models with~~
36 ~~demonstrated success.~~

37
38
39 (D) The remaining 40% of the funds appropriated to the State First Steps Board of Trustees shall
40 be distributed to the local partnerships based on the following factors (1)-(3). The State
41 Office of First Steps will determine and establish criteria and procedures for the evaluation
42 of the factors to be weighted as follows:

43 (1) 25% of the 40% shall be distributed based on the quality of the grant
44 proposal.

- 1 (2) 25% of the 40% shall be distributed based on the adherence to the First
2 Steps Accountability Standards, and
3 (3) 50% of the 40% shall be distributed based on the level of interagency,
4 cross county, and cross organization collaboration with more weight
5 being given to proposals which indicate the highest levels.
6
7

8 (E) In conjunction with the independent external program evaluation as established Section 59-
9 152-160, the South Carolina State Board of First Steps to School Readiness shall conduct a
10 formal review of the funding process in Parts (C) and (D) of the section. Upon completion
11 of the review, the South Carolina State Board of First Steps to School Readiness shall
12 submit to the General Assembly a statement either verifying the continued applicability and
13 appropriateness of the funding process in use at that time or recommending any appropriate
14 and necessary changes.
15

16 (F) In the event of a Multi-county Partnership, funding shall reflect the combined total
17 allocations of the associated counties.
18
19

20 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.
21
22

23 **SECTION 59-152-100. Use of grant funds; Focus of activities and services.**
24

25 (A) ~~Implementation/management of~~ Grants provided to ~~County~~ First Steps Partnerships must be
26 used to address the needs of young children and their families as identified in the
27 partnerships' comprehensive plans. The funds must be used to expand, extend, or improve
28 the quality of provided services if there is evidence as to existing programs' effectiveness;
29 offer new or previously unavailable services in the area; or increase access to services.
30 Grant funds may not supplant current expenditures by counties or state agencies on behalf of
31 young children and their families, and may not be used where other state or federal funding
32 sources are available or could be made available.

33 (B) After overhead costs for a partnership's operations as permitted in Section 59-152-70(B), at
34 least seventy-five percent of state funds appropriated to a local partnership must be used by
35 the local partnership for evidence based programs as defined in Section 59-152-20 of this
36 Chapter and not more than twenty-five percent of state funds appropriated to a local
37 partnership may be used by the local partnership for 'promising programs' as defined in
38 Section 59-152-20 of this Chapter.

39 (C) ~~(A)~~ All activities and services provided by a First Steps Partnership must be made available
40 to young children and families on a voluntary basis and must focus ~~on the following:~~ solely
41 on 'school readiness' as defined in Section 59-152-20 by implementing programs geared
42 specifically toward the achievement of the First Steps goals pursuant to Section 59-152-25.

43 ~~(1) lifelong learning:~~

- 1 (a) school readiness;
2 (b) parenting skills;
3 (c) family literacy; and
4 ~~(d) adult and continuing education.~~
5 (2) health care:
6 (a) nutrition;
7 ~~(b) affordable access to quality age-appropriate health care;~~
8 ~~(c) early and periodic screenings;~~
9 ~~(d) required immunizations;~~
10 ~~(e) initiatives to reduce injuries to infants and toddlers; and~~
11 ~~(f) technical assistance and consultation for parents and child care providers on health and safety~~
12 ~~issues.~~
13 (3) quality child care:
14 ~~(a) staff training and professional development incentives;~~
15
16 ~~(b) quality cognitive learning programs;~~
17 ~~(c) voluntary accreditation standards;~~
18 ~~(d) accessibility to quality child care and development resources; and~~
19 ~~(e) affordability.~~
20 (4) transportation:
21 ~~(a) coordinated service;~~
22 ~~(b) accessibility;~~
23 ~~(c) increased utilization efficiency; and~~
24 ~~(d) affordability.~~
25
26 (D) ~~(B)~~ Any part of the initiative within the county partnership's strategic plan using local district
27 resources within a school district must be conducted only with approval of the district's board
28 of trustees.

29
30 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

31
32
33 **SECTION 59-152-110. Use of grant funds.**

34
35 ~~Implementation/management grants provided to County First Steps Partnerships must be used to~~
36 ~~address the needs of young children and their families as identified in the partnerships'~~
37 ~~comprehensive plans. The funds must be used to expand, extend, or improve the quality of~~
38 ~~provided services if there is evidence as to existing programs' effectiveness; offer new or~~
39 ~~previously unavailable services in the area; or increase access to services. Grant funds may not~~
40 ~~supplant current expenditures by counties or state agencies on behalf of young children and their~~
41 ~~families, and may not be used where other state or federal funding sources are available or could~~
42 ~~be made available.~~

43
44 ~~HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.~~
45

1 **SECTION 59-152-120. Use of grant funds for capital expenditures.**

2
3 Funds received for implementation of a county partnership's implementation/management grant
4 may not be used for capital expenses for new construction. However, funds may be made
5 available for renovating, refurbishing, or upgrading of existing facilities used to support First
6 Steps to School Readiness activities and services for children, families, and providers from funds
7 made available to the partnerships in Section 59-152-150(C) and Section 63-11-1750(A). The
8 county partnership must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the First Steps to School Readiness
9 Board that the capital expenditure is:

10 (1) a priority need for the local initiative and other state or federal funds for such projects are
11 insufficient; and (2) necessary to provide services to under-served children and families.

12
13 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

14
15
16 **SECTION 59-152-130. Partnership matches; annual report.**

17
18 (A) The County First Steps Partnerships shall provide an annual match of fifteen percent. The
19 South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees may decrease this
20 percentage requirement for a partnership based on their capacity to provide that match. The
21 First Steps Partnerships should encourage Private individuals and groups ~~must be~~
22 ~~encouraged~~ to contribute to a partnership's efforts to meet its match. The match required of
23 individual partnerships by the First Steps Board should take into consideration such factors
24 as:

- 25 (1) local wealth, using such indicators as the number and percentage of
26 children eligible for free and reduced lunches in grades 1-3; and
27 (2) in-kind donated resources.

28 Only in-kind donations, as defined by the standard fiscal
29 accountability system provided for in Section 59-152-140, which
30 meet the criteria established by the South Carolina First Steps to
31 School Readiness Board of Trustees and that are quantifiable may be
32 applied to the in-kind match requirement. Expenses, including those
33 paid both by cash and through in-kind contributions, incurred by
34 other nonstate entities participating in county partnerships may be
35 included in determining matching funds.

36 (B) The Office of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness shall establish guidelines
37 and reporting formats for county partnerships to document expenses to ensure they meet
38 matching fund requirements. The office shall compile a report annually on the private cash
39 and in-kind contributions received by the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
40 Board of Trustees and County First Steps Partnerships.

41
42 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

43
44 **SECTION 59-152-140. Carrying funds forward into subsequent years.**

1 To ensure effective use of funds, awards under contract for County First Steps Partnerships, with
2 the approval of the Office of First Steps to School Readiness, may be carried forward and used in
3 the following fiscal year. Funds appropriated to South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
4 may also be carried forward into subsequent years.

5
6 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.
7
8
9

10 **SECTION 59-152-150. Development and adoption of standard fiscal accountability system;**
11 **private funds to be held separate; disbursements; applicable offenses.**
12

13 (A) The Office of First Steps to School Readiness shall develop and require partnerships to adopt
14 and implement a standard fiscal accountability system including, but not limited to, a uniform,
15 standardized system of accounting, internal controls, payroll, fidelity bonding, chart of accounts,
16 and contract management and monitoring. Additionally, the accountability system shall require
17 competitive bids for the purchase or procurement of goods and services of ten thousand dollars
18 or more. A bid other than the lowest bid may be accepted by a majority vote of the county
19 partnership board if other considerations outweigh the cost factor; however, written justification
20 must be filed with the Office of First Steps. The Office of First Steps may contract with outside
21 firms to develop and ensure implementation of this standard fiscal accountability system, and the
22 Office of First Steps may inspect fiscal and program records of county partnerships and
23 developing partnerships to ensure their compliance with the required system. The Office of First
24 Steps may contract with a state entity with existing means for developing contracts and
25 disbursing funds in order to make use of the existing infrastructure, if it is efficient and not
26 administratively burdensome to partnerships.
27

28 (B) Each County First Steps Partnership shall expend funds through the South Carolina First
29 Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees or its fiscal designees until the capacity of the
30 County First Steps Partnership to manage its fiscal and administrative responsibilities in
31 compliance with the standard accountability system has been reviewed and certified by the South
32 Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees or its designee.
33

34 (C) Private funds received by a County First Steps Partnership must be deposited in a separate
35 fund.
36

37 (D) Disbursements may be made only on the written authorization of the individual designated
38 by the county partnership board and only for the purposes specified. A person violating this
39 section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined five thousand dollars or
40 imprisoned for six months, or both.
41

42 (E) The offenses of misuse, misappropriation, and embezzlement of public funds, apply to this
43 chapter.
44

45 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

1
2 **SECTION 59-152-160. Evaluation of progress.**
3

4 (A) The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees shall establish
5 internal evaluation policies and procedures for County First Steps Partnerships for an annual
6 review of the functioning of the partnership, implementation of strategies, and progress toward
7 the interim goals and benchmarks. In instances where no progress has been made, the Office of
8 First Steps to School Readiness shall provide targeted assistance and/or the South Carolina First
9 Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees may terminate the grant. In addition, a program
10 evaluation of the First Steps to School Readiness initiatives at the state and local levels must be
11 conducted every ~~three~~ five years by an independent, external evaluator under contract with the
12 South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees. However, the selected
13 evaluator shall be approved, and the evaluation overseen, by a committee consisting of three
14 members, one appointed by the First Steps Board, one appointed by the President Pro Tempore
15 of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House. These committee members must
16 be professionally recognized as proficient in child development, early childhood education, or a
17 closely related field. The first report shall be provided no later than January 1, 2003.
18

19 (B) County First Steps Partnerships must agree to participate in such an evaluation in order to
20 receive a First Steps grant. Subsequent grant approval and grant allocations must be dependent,
21 in part, on the results of the evaluations. If an evaluation finds no progress has been made in
22 meeting local goals or implementing strategies as agreed to in the First Steps grant, the grant
23 ~~must~~ may be terminated.
24

25 (C) The purpose of the evaluation is to assess progress toward achieving the First Steps goals
26 and to determine the impact of the initiative on children and families at the state and local levels.
27 The impact assessment shall include, but is not limited to, school readiness measures; benefits
28 from child development services; immunization status; low birth-weight rates; parent literacy;
29 parenting skills; parental involvement; transportation; and developmental screening results.
30 During the course of the evaluation, if an evaluator determines that any state agency has failed to
31 comply with the coordination and collaboration provisions as required in this chapter, the final
32 report must reflect that information. Program evaluation reports must be reported to the General
33 Assembly no later than three months after conclusion of the evaluation. All County First Steps
34 Partnerships shall cooperate fully in collecting and providing data and information for the
35 evaluation.
36

37 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.
38
39
40
41

42 **ARTICLE 17.**
43

44 **FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
45
46

1 **SECTION 63-11-1720. Board members.**
2

3 (A) There is created the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees which
4 must be chaired by the Governor and must include the State Superintendent of Education
5 who shall serve as ex officio voting members of the board. ~~The board is composed of the~~
6 ~~twenty appointed, voting members as follows:~~
7

8 (B) In making the appointments specified in Sections 63-11-1720(C)(1-3) of this Chapter, the
9 Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the South Carolina
10 House of Representatives shall consult each other working toward the goal of geographical
11 representation on the board by appointing individuals from the following categories to ensure
12 that each congressional district is represented.
13

14 (C) The board is composed of the twenty appointed, voting members as follows:
15

16 (1) The Governor shall appoint two members from each of the following sectors:
17

18 (a) parents of young children;
19

20 (b) business community;
21

22 (c) early childhood educators;
23

24 (d) ~~medical or~~ and child care and development providers, one member from
25 each profession; and
26

27 (e) the General Assembly, one member from the Senate and one member from
28 the House of Representatives.
29

30
31 (2) The President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall appoint one member from each of the
32 following sectors:
33

34 (a) parents of young children;
35

36 (b) business community;
37

38 (c) early childhood educators; and
39

40 (d) medical or child care and development providers.
41

42 (3) The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint one member from each of
43 the following sectors:
44

- 1 (a) parents of young children;
2
3 (b) business community;
4
5 (c) early childhood educators; and
6
7 (d) medical or child care and development.
8
9

10 (4) The chairman of the Senate Education Committee or his designee.

11
12 (5) The chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee or his designee.

13
14 (6) The chief executive officer of each of the following shall serve as an ex officio
15 nonvoting member:

- 16
17 (a) Department of Social Services or his designee;
18
19 (b) Department of Health and Environmental Control or his designee;
20
21 (c) Department of Health and Human Services or his designee;
22
23 (d) Department of Mental Health or his designee;
24
25 (e) Department of Disabilities and Special Needs or his designee;
26
27 (f) Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services or his designee;
28
29 (g) Department of Transportation or his designee;
30
31 (h) Department of Commerce or his designee;
32
33 (i) Department of Employment and Workforce or his designee;
34
35 (j) ~~(h)~~ State Budget and Control Board, Division of Research and Statistics or
36 his designee; and
37
38 (k) ~~(i)~~ State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education;
39
40 (l) State Commission on Higher Education; and
41
42 (m) State Head Start Collaboration Officer.
43

44 (7) The following organizations shall designate one member to serve as an ex officio
45 nonvoting member:

1
2 (a) South Carolina State Library; and

3
4 ~~(b) Transportation Association of South Carolina; and~~

5
6 ~~(c)~~ (b) State Advisory Committee on the Regulation of Childcare Facilities.

7
8
9 (B) The terms of the members are for four years and until their successors are appointed and
10 qualify, except of those first appointed. ~~When making the initial appointments, the Governor, the~~
11 ~~President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall~~
12 ~~designate half of their appointments to serve two-year terms only.~~ The appointments of the
13 members from the General Assembly shall be coterminous with their terms of office.

14
15 (C) Vacancies for any reason must be filled in the manner of the original appointment for the
16 unexpired term. A member may not serve more than two terms or eight years, whichever is
17 longer. A member who misses more than three consecutive meetings without excuse or a
18 member who resigns must be replaced in the same manner as his predecessor. Members may be
19 paid per diem, mileage, and subsistence as established by the board not to exceed standards
20 provided by law for boards, committees, and commissions. A complete report of the activities of
21 the First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees must be made annually to the General
22 Assembly.

23
24 HISTORY: 2008 Act No. 361, Section 2.

25
26
27 **SECTION 63-11-1725. Early Childhood Advisory Council.**

28
29 (A) Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 9837b(b), and as designated in Executive Order Number 2010-06,
30 the members of the First Steps Board of Trustees shall serve as South Carolina's Advisory
31 Council. Each member of the First Steps Board of Trustees (both voting and non-voting) shall be
32 considered a voting member of the Advisory Council. Each Advisory Council member's term
33 shall be concurrent with his/her service
34 to the First Steps Board of Trustees.

35
36 (B) While parallel in membership, the Advisory Council shall act as a distinct entity
37 for the purpose of fulfilling the responsibilities outlined in 42 U.S.C. § 9837b(b)(1)(D)(i) and
38 shall keep separate minutes that shall explicitly distinguish actions and votes of the Advisory
39 Council. The Advisory Council must officially adjourn prior to acting as the First Steps Board.

40
41 (C) Furthermore, the State Director of First Steps shall coordinate the activities of the Advisory
42 Council.

43
44
45 **SECTION 63-11-1735. BabyNet.**

1
2 (A) Pursuant to Subchapter VIII, Chapter 33, Title 20, U. S. Code Annotated, the South Carolina
3 First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees is designated by Executive Order 2009-12 as
4 the department or lead agency as defined in South Carolina Code Section 44-7-2520 and used in
5 Title 44, Chapter 7, Article 21 of the South Carolina Code of Laws.
6

7 (B) Pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq., in
8 Executive Order 2009-12, the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees
9 is designated as the responsible lead agency through which Part C Program will be administered.
10

11 (C) In order to establish South Carolina’s maintenance of effort under the Individuals with
12 Disabilities Education Act, Part C, each agency providing early intervention services shall
13 coordinate with South Carolina First Steps to ensure the documentation of all Individuals with
14 Disabilities Education Act, Part C expenditures on an annual basis.
15

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