

## **First Steps Legislation**

Title 59 - Education

CHAPTER 152.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS

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

There is established South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness, 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.

SECTION 59-152-20. Purpose.

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

SECTION 59-152-30. Goals.

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

- (1) provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
- (2) increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
- (3) promote high quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;

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

(5) mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to learn.

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

The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees established in Section 20-7-9710 shall oversee the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative.

SECTION 59-152-50. Office of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness established; duties.

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

(1) provide to the board information on best practice, successful strategies, model programs, and financing mechanisms;

(2) review the county partnerships' plans and budgets in order to provide technical assistance and recommendations regarding local grant proposals and improvement in meeting statewide and local goals;

(3) provide technical assistance, consultation, and support to county partnerships to facilitate their success including, but not limited to, model programs, strategic planning, leadership development, best practice, successful strategies, collaboration, financing, and evaluation;

(4) recommend to the board the applicants meeting the criteria for First Steps partnerships and the grants to be awarded;

(5) submit an annual report to the board by December first which includes, but is not limited to, the statewide needs and resources available to meet the goals and purposes of the First Steps to School Readiness initiative, the ongoing progress and results of the First Steps to School Readiness initiative statewide and locally, fiscal information on the expenditure of funds, and recommendations and legislative proposals to further implement the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative statewide;

(6) provide for on-going data collection and contract for an in-depth performance audit due January 1, 2003, and every three years thereafter, to ensure that statewide goals and requirements of the First Steps to School Readiness initiative are being met; and

(7) coordinate the First Steps to School Readiness initiative with all other state, federal, and local public and private efforts to promote good health and school readiness of young children and support for their families.

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

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

(B) At a countywide meeting the participants shall begin to select, to the extent possible within the area covered by the partnership:

(1) Not more than two members from each of these categories to sit on the First Steps partnership board:

(a) pre-kindergarten through primary educator;

(b) family education, training, and support provider;

(c) childcare and early childhood development/education provider;

(d) healthcare provider;

(e) transportation provider;

(f) nonprofit organization that provides services to families and children;

(g) faith community; and

(h) business community.

(2) Three parents of pre-school children. After the first year of the implementation of the First Steps to School Readiness initiative, parents serving on the County First Steps Partnership Board must have pre-school children being served by First Steps programs; and

(3) Four members from early childhood education.

(C) After the county partnership board has been formed, if necessary to assure that all areas of the county are adequately represented and reflect the diversity of the county, each county legislative delegation may appoint up to four additional members. Of these members, two are appointed by the Senate members and two by the House of Representative members of the delegation from persons with resources, skills, or knowledge that have specific interests in improving the readiness of young children for school.

(D) Each of the following shall designate one member to serve as a member of its County First Steps Partnership Board:

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

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

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

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

#### SECTION 59-152-70. First Steps Partnership Board; powers and duties.

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

(1) adopt by-laws as established by the First Steps to School Readiness Board to effectuate the provisions of this chapter which must include the creation of a periodic meeting schedule;

(2) coordinate a collaborative effort at the county or multi-county level which will bring the community together to identify the area needs related to the goals of First Steps to School Readiness; develop a strategic long-term plan for meeting those needs; develop specific initiatives to implement the elements of the plan; and integrating service delivery where possible;

(3) coordinate and oversee the implementation of the comprehensive strategic plan including, but not limited to, direct service provision, contracting for service provision, and organization and management of volunteer programs;

(4) create and annually revise a county needs assessment;

(5) implement fiscal policies and procedures as required by the First Steps office and as needed to ensure fiscal accountability of all funds appropriated to the partnership;

(6) keep accurate records of partnership's meetings, programs, and activities;

(7) collect information and submit an annual report by October 1 to the First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, and otherwise participate in the annual review and the three-year evaluation of operations and programs. The first annual report must be submitted October 1, 2000. Reports must include but not be limited to:

(a) determination of the current level and effectiveness of services for young children and their families;

(b) strategic goals for increased availability, accessibility, quality, and efficiency of activities and services for young children and their families which will enable children to reach school ready to learn;

(c) monitoring of progress toward strategic goals;

(d) report on implementation activities;

(e) recommendations for changes to the strategic plan which may include new areas of implementation;

(f) evaluation and report of program effectiveness and client satisfaction before, during, and after the implementation of the strategic plan, where available; and

(g) estimation of cost savings attributable to increased efficiency and effectiveness of delivery of services to young children and their families, where available.

(B) Each County First Steps Partnership may, in the performance of its duties, employ or acquire administrative, clerical, stenographic, and other personnel as may be necessary to effectuate the provisions of this section. However, overhead costs of the partnership's operations may not exceed eight percent of its implementation/management grant allocation unless prior approval is received from the First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees.

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

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

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

SECTION 59-152-80. First Steps grants.

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### SECTION 59-152-90. Grant applications; criteria for allocations.

(A) To obtain a grant, a County First Steps Partnership or developing partnership shall submit an application to the Office of First Steps in a format specified by the First Steps to School Readiness Board. The application shall include, as appropriate to the level of grant applied for, the level of funding requested, a description of needs of children and families; assets and resources available; and the proposed strategies to address needs as they relate to the goals of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness.

(B) To receive a Level One development of the collaborative effort, needs assessment, and strategic planning grant, the County First Steps Partnership must meet the criteria established by the First Steps to School Readiness Board including, but not limited to, total population covered by the partnership and quality of any pre-existing needs assessment and/or strategic plans for that geographic area.

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

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

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

SECTION 59-152-100. Focus of activities and services.

(A) All activities and services provided by a First Steps Partnership must be made available to young children and families on a voluntary basis and must focus on the following:

(1) lifelong learning:

(a) school readiness;

(b) parenting skills;

(c) family literacy; and

(d) adult and continuing education.

(2) health care:

(a) nutrition;

(b) affordable access to quality age-appropriate health care;

(c) early and periodic screenings;

(d) required immunizations;

(e) initiatives to reduce injuries to infants and toddlers; and

(f) technical assistance and consultation for parents and child care providers on health and safety issues.

(3) quality child care:

(a) staff training and professional development incentives;

- (b) quality cognitive learning programs;
- (c) voluntary accreditation standards;
- (d) accessibility to quality child care and development resources; and
- (e) affordability.

(4) transportation:

- (a) coordinated service;
- (b) accessibility;
- (c) increased utilization efficiency; and
- (d) affordability.

(B) Any part of the initiative within the county strategic plan using local district resources within a school district must be conducted only with approval of the district's board of trustees.

#### SECTION 59-152-110. Use of grant funds.

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

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

Funds received for implementation of a county partnership's implementation/management grant may not be used for capital expenses for new construction. However, funds may be made available for renovating, refurbishing, or upgrading of existing facilities used to support First Steps to School Readiness activities and services for children, families, and providers from funds made available to the partnerships in Section 59-152-150(C) and Section 20-7-9740(A). The county partnership must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the First Steps to School Readiness Board that the capital expenditure is:

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

SECTION 59-152-130. Partnership matches; annual report.

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

(1) local wealth, using such indicators as the number and percentage of children eligible for free and reduced lunches in grades 1-3; and

(2) in-kind donated resources.

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

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

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

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

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

(A) The Office of First Steps to School Readiness shall develop and require partnerships to adopt and implement a standard fiscal accountability system including, but not limited to, a uniform, standardized system of accounting, internal controls, payroll, fidelity bonding, chart of accounts, and contract management and monitoring. Additionally, the accountability system shall require competitive bids for the purchase or procurement of goods and services of ten thousand dollars or more. A bid other than the lowest bid may be accepted by a majority vote of the county partnership board if other considerations outweigh the cost factor; however, written justification must be filed with the Office of First Steps. The Office of First Steps may contract with outside firms to develop and ensure implementation of this standard fiscal accountability system, and the

Office of First Steps may inspect fiscal and program records of county partnerships and developing partnerships to ensure their compliance with the required system. The Office of First Steps may contract with a state entity with existing means for developing contracts and disbursing funds in order to make use of the existing infrastructure, if it is efficient and not administratively burdensome to partnerships.

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

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

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

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

#### SECTION 59-152-160. Evaluation of progress.

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

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

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

First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees; powers; duties; fund

SECTION 3. Chapter 7, Title 20 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

"Article 33

Section 20-7-9700. There is established the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, an eleemosynary corporation, which shall oversee the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative, a broad range of innovative early childhood development and education, family support, health services, and prevention efforts to meet critical needs of South Carolina's children through the awarding of grants to partnerships at the county level as provided for in Section 59-152-90.

The board may accept gifts, bequests, and grants from any person or foundation. The fund and grants from the fund shall supplement and augment, but not take the place of, services provided by local, state, or federal agencies. The board of trustees shall carry out activities necessary to administer the fund including assessing service needs and gaps, soliciting proposals to address identified service needs, and establishing criteria for the awarding of grants.

Section 20-7-9710. There is created the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees which must be chaired by the Governor and must include the State Superintendent of Education who shall serve as ex officio voting members of the board. The board is composed of the twenty appointed, voting members as follows:

(A) The Governor shall appoint two members from each of the following sectors:

- (a) parents of young children;
- (b) business community;
- (c) early childhood educators;
- (d) medical or child care and development providers; and

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

(B) The President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall appoint one member from each of the following sectors:

(a) parents of young children;

(b) business community;

(c) early childhood educators; and

(d) medical or child care and development providers.

(C) The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint one member from each of the following sectors:

(a) parents of young children;

(b) business community;

(c) early childhood educators; and

(d) medical or child care and development.

(D) The Chairman of the Senate Education Committee or his designee.

(E) The Chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee or his designee.

(F) The chief executive officer of each of the following shall serve as an ex officio nonvoting member:

(a) Department of Social Services or his designee;

(b) Department of Health and Environmental Control or his designee;

(c) Department of Health and Human Services or his designee;

(d) Department of Mental Health or his designee;

(e) Department of Disabilities and Special Needs or his designee;

(f) Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services or his designee;

(g) Department of Transportation or his designee; and

(h) Budget and Control Board, Division of Research and Statistics or his designee.

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

(a) South Carolina State Library;

(b) Transportation Association of South Carolina; and

(c) State Advisory Committee on the Regulation of Child Day Care Facilities.

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

Vacancies for any reason must be filled in the manner of the original appointment for the unexpired term. No member shall serve more than two terms or eight years, whichever is longer. Members who miss more than three consecutive meetings without excuse or members who resign must be replaced in the same manner as their predecessor. Members may be paid per diem, mileage, and subsistence as established by the board not to exceed standards provided by law for boards, committees, and commissions. A complete report of the activities of the First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees must be made annually to the General Assembly and the State Auditor.

Section 20-7-9720. To carry out its assigned functions, the board is authorized, but not limited to:

(1) develop a comprehensive long-range initiative for improving early childhood development and increasing school readiness;

(2) promulgate regulations, establish guidelines, policies and procedures for implementation of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative;

(3) provide oversight on the implementation of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative at the state and county levels;

(4) facilitate and direct the establishment of developing County First Steps Partnerships and establish the criteria for designation of County First Steps Partnerships;

(5) establish criteria and procedures for awarding state First Steps grants to County First Steps Partnerships;

(6) provide technical assistance, consultation services, and support to County First Steps Partnerships including: the creation and annual revision of county needs assessments; the

prioritization, implementation, and evaluation of each First Steps Partnership's strategic plans based on needs assessments; and the identification of assets from other funding sources;

(7) assess and develop recommendations: for ensuring coordination and collaboration among service providers at both the state and county level, for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of state programs and funding and other programs and funding sources, as allowable, as necessary to carry out the First Steps to School Readiness initiative, including additional fiscal strategies, redeployment of state resources, and development of new programs;

(8) establish results oriented measures and objectives and assess whether services provided by County First Steps Partnerships to children and families are meeting the goals and achieving the results established for the First Steps initiative pursuant to Chapter 152, Title 59;

(9) receive gifts, bequests, and devises for deposit for awarding grants to First Steps Partnerships; and

(10) report annually to the General Assembly by January first on activities and progress to include recommendations for changes and legislative initiatives and results of program evaluations.

Section 20-7-9730. The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees shall employ, by a majority vote, a director of the Office of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness and other staff as necessary to carry out the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative, established in Title 59, Chapter 152, and other duties and responsibilities as assigned by the board. The director, with the approval of the board, shall hire such staff as is considered necessary to carry out the provisions of the initiative.

Section 20-7-9740. (A) A separate fund must be established to accept nongovernmental grants, gifts, and donations from any public or private source for the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative. Each donor may designate up to one-half of their contribution to specific counties or a county. Both the designated and undesignated funds may be used to meet the local match required in Section 59-152-130. All funds may be carried forward from fiscal year to fiscal year. The State Treasurer shall invest the monies in this fund in the same manner as other funds under his control are invested and all interest derived from the investment of these funds shall remain in the fund. The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees shall administer and authorize any disbursements from the fund. Private individuals and groups must be encouraged to contribute to this endeavor.

(B) In addition, a separate fund within the state general fund must be established for monies that may be appropriated by the General Assembly for the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative. These funds may be carried forward from fiscal year to fiscal year. The State Treasurer shall invest the monies in this fund in the same manner as other funds under his control are invested. The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees shall administer and authorize any disbursements from the fund.

(C) All interest derived from the investment of the funds in subsections (A) and (B) shall remain a part of each respective fund."

Contributions through income tax returns

SECTION 4. Section 12-6-5060(A) of the 1976 Code, as added by Act 76 of 1995, is amended to read:

"(A) Each taxpayer required to file a state individual income tax return may contribute to the Nongame Wildlife and Natural Areas Program Fund, the Children's Trust Fund of South Carolina as created by Section 20-7-5010, or the Eldercare Trust Fund of South Carolina as created by Section 43-21-160, or the First Steps to School Readiness Fund as created by Section 20-7-9740 by designating the contribution on the return. The contribution may be made by reducing the income tax refund or by remitting additional payment by the amount designated."

Department of Social Services to support First Steps to School Readiness initiative

SECTION 5. The 1976 Code is amended by adding:

"Section 43-1-240. The State Department of Social Services in establishing priorities and funding for programs and services which impact on children and families during the first years of a child's life, within the powers and duties granted to it, must support, as appropriate, the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative, as established in Title 59, Chapter 152, at the state and local levels."

Board and Department of Health and Environmental Control to support First Steps to School Readiness initiative

SECTION 6. The 1976 Code is amended by adding:

"Section 44-1-280. The Board and Department of Health and Environmental Control in establishing priorities and funding for programs and services which impact on children and families during the first years of a child's life, within the powers and duties granted to it, must support, as appropriate, the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative, as established in Title 59, Chapter 152, at the state and local levels."

Other state agencies to support First Steps to School Readiness initiative

SECTION 7. It is the intent of the General Assembly that state agencies involved in early child care and development and education and in health and support services to families with young children shall actively support the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative. In addition to those agencies answering directly to the Governor, those agencies headed by boards and commissions or constitutional officers shall use their resources to support, as appropriate, the goals of the First Steps initiative reflected in Section 59-152-20 and the long-term plans of the First Steps Partnerships and to assure that relevant planning documents or processes are

consistent with, and supportive of early childhood development and education, family support, and health.

Time effective; prospective repeal

SECTION 8. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor. The provisions of this act are repealed July 1, 2007, unless reauthorized by the General Assembly.

Ratified the 24th day of June, 1999.

Approved the 28th day of June, 1999.

---

State House Network-LPITS@<http://www.scstatehouse.net>

State House Network-LPITS@<http://www.scstatehouse.net>