



# South Carolina

## 4-K Expansion Program

The South Carolina 4-K program provides full-day preschool services to 4-year-olds considered at-risk for academic problems. The 4-K Expansion Program began during the 2005-06 school year and expands the service delivery of 4-K to Head Start and child care centers. The 4-K and 4-K Expansion programs are essentially the same, except the 4-K program is much larger and limits funding to school districts, and 4-K Expansion funds require a dollar-for-dollar match by the grantee.

### Eligibility

**Income:** none

**Age:** children who are 4-years-old by September 1 of the program year

**Priority:** children who have significant school readiness deficiencies as determined by the DIAL-3 screening tool and the criteria for at-risk defined in the *4K Program Guidelines and Requirements*

### Length of Program

**Hours/day:** a minimum of six and a half hours per day, five days per week; programs have the option of providing three hours per day with an additional three and a half hours of extended care at no cost to the parent

**Days/year:** 140 days

### Eligible Providers

School districts can operate programs and/or sub-contract with community-based providers. The 4-K Expansion Program allows private child care providers and Head Start programs to receive funds directly from the state. Family child care providers are not eligible providers.

### Number Served<sup>1</sup>

220 children were served in the 4-K Expansion pilot Program in 2004-05

17,279 were served in the 4-K program in 2003-04

### Total Annual Budget

\$435,000 from state lottery funds for the 4-K Expansion Program in 2005-06

\$22.5 million for 4-K (2003-04)

### Monitoring

The Office of Early Childhood and/or South Carolina First Steps may conduct both announced and unannounced site visits throughout the year. The ECERS is used as a pre- and post-observation instrument. South Carolina First Steps develops and monitors an action plan if any program receive below a five on any of the ECERS subscales. All 4-K programs must also comply with the *4K Program Guidelines and Requirements*, which

---

<sup>1</sup> For updated figures on the program budget and number served, please see the NIEER State Preschool Yearbook at: <http://nieer.org/yearbook/states/>

includes four sets of standards: program information, standards, personnel and training, and assessment and monitoring. Teachers must be certified in early childhood education by the state, and a Bachelor's degree (B.A.) is preferred although not required.

## Governance

### **How are state pre-k programs integrated into community-based settings?**

The 4-K Expansion program requires providers to be in community-based settings. (There is a separate funding stream for school-based programs.) Community-based programs must use the school district as the fiscal agent, even though the contract is between the state and the community-based provider. Funds go to the school district, the district pays the teachers and may claim administrative costs, and the rest passes through to the provider.

### **Are there requirements to integrate the state pre-k and subsidized child care programs at the state or local level?**

There is no requirement at the state level. 4-K Expansion is an initiative of the Office of First Steps to School Readiness in partnership with the Office of Early Childhood Development in the Department of Education, and the Department of Social Services.

At the local level, a child care or Head Start program applying for 4-K Expansion funding must convene an early childhood advisory committee that includes, at minimum, a representative of the local school district, Head Start, private child care, preschool parents, and First Steps. These representatives must sign a letter of agreement documenting their participation in the council, and their agreement with the proposed plan. (Note: the school-based 4-K program must also convene an advisory council; the same council may advise both the school-based and the community-based programs. The 4-K Expansion program adds preschool parents to the council.)

## Procedures and Supports for Community-based Providers

### **What are the rules/guidelines for notifying and selecting pre-k providers?**

Every program that meets the quality standard defined by the Access to Better Child Care initiative receives a letter to submit an application. All Head Start and First Steps to School Readiness partnerships also received notification. The state posted the announcement on its procurement website.

A state review panel determines who will receive funding. The selection committee includes representatives from First Steps, the department of education, and the department of social services. All standards must be met prior to approval, except assistant teachers have 12 months to complete the Early Childhood Development Credential 101 coursework. The top three proposals in each of the seven regions receive a site visit from the Review Team to evaluate their physical capacity. Two of the three will be funded. This process only applies to community-based programs, but does not vary by the type of the community-based program.

**What resources are available to help providers become eligible to deliver pre-k services?**

Programs may receive start-up funding and funds for equipment and supplies. This is negotiated in each individual contract.

**Do teachers working in community settings earn comparable wages and benefits once they obtain the same credential as teachers in school-based settings?**

Yes. Salary and benefits are commensurate to levels of education and training, and the local school district pay and benefits scale.

## Supports for Working Families

**Is there any explicit discussion in the legislation or regulations of extending the day, coordinating with the child care subsidy program, or helping working families?**

Yes. The request for proposals states “South Carolina First Steps, in partnership the State Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Education, will ensure that quality 4-K classes are more accessible to children of working parents, particularly for those children who are at risk for low school readiness.” The Scope of Work requires programs to provide before- and after-school extended care at cost to parents, or with applicable and available child care vouchers.

**What policies help working families access pre-k and other supports?**

Providers participating in this program must provide wraparound services, and may charge fees for before and/or after school care, services during holidays, and/or care during the summer. Wraparound services for at-risk participants may be provided and/or funded through parent fees, vouchers, scholarships or other early education partners in the community.

Programs are encouraged to coordinate transportation with the local school district.

## Funding

**What is the per-child payment for the pre-k program?**

The competitive proposal process allows the state to negotiate funding for each provider individually. There is no formula, and no cap on costs. Salaries must be in line with the local school district. As a point of reference, the pilot program that preceded the 4-K Expansion program had an \$82,000 cap for a class of 18 to 20 children. Current proposals are expected in the \$60-80,000 range.

**How does the state pre-k funding affect other potential sources of funds for a provider?**

Child care vouchers can only be used for wraparound services. Children needing more than six and a half hours of wraparound care are eligible for a full-day subsidy.

4-K funds can be used to extend a half-day Head Start program to full day. They cannot be used to enhance the Head Start portion of the day.

## Sources

- Interview: Cody Carlton; Linda Mims

For information about national trends, read CLASP's *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-kindergarten* at [http://www.clasp.org/publications/all\\_together\\_now.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf).