



## FACT SHEET: Early Step Forward

**REQUEST:** Increase funding for Early Step Forward

### **What is Early Step Forward (ESF)?**

- Innovative, evidence-based County-funded project to support positive social-emotional development of young children. More than 1,000 children served in 2009.
- Mental health professionals stationed in eleven Head Start and day care centers in Mount Vernon, Yonkers, and Port Chester, with an additional 6 sites beginning to use the ESF model.
- Three tiered program
  - Universal support to all children. *Second Steps* curriculum builds social-emotional skills.
  - Training for staff members and families in *Second Steps* principles.
  - Intervention and treatment for children with specific challenges.
- Evaluation of outcomes conducted in 2008-09 school year among 732 children.

### **Funding History**

- Initial funding of \$250,000 added by BOL to 2006 Budget, funded one program in 4 centers.
- \$500,000 added by BOL in 2007, continued in 2008, supporting 2 more programs + evaluation and administration.
- In 2009 budget, CE proposed \$250,000, BOL added \$387,000, ensuring continuation of all direct services. 2009 total funding = \$637,000.

### **Program Outcomes**

- Children showed significant improvement in social-emotional skills and wellbeing from Fall to Spring, with fewer social-emotional issues noted by parents in the Spring.
- 2/3 of children with clinically significant social-emotional issues in the Fall no longer scored in the problem range in the Spring.
- No children have been expelled or suspended from an ESF site.
- Teachers/day care staff learning to address children's social-emotional challenges.

### **Estimated ESF Cost Effectiveness and Savings**

- Research shows that for each \$1.00 invested in quality early childhood programs, the return on investment to the public ranges from \$2.69 to \$7.16.
- The projected ESF savings to Westchester County for 2009 are \$1,705,400 to \$4,539,440 and for 2010 are \$2,273,050 to \$6,050,558.

### **Future Directions**

- Increase funding from 2009 level to \$768,470.
- Includes 5% COLA, additional staff to increase program capacity by 3 new centers, ongoing evaluation and data analysis of program implementation.
- Build on data collection and evaluation for 2009-2010 school year, and more refined data analysis of further outcomes and trends in this expanded sample.

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Campaign for Kids is an inter-agency collaborative led by Westchester Children's Association, which works to ensure that all children are *healthy, safe, and prepared for life's challenges*. For more information, please visit [www.wca4kids.org](http://www.wca4kids.org).