



Contact: Patricia Sullivan
Email: psullivan@scfirststeps.org
Phone: 843-339-0819



Darlington County First Steps Expands on Health

Hartsville, SC -Darlington County First Steps (DCFS) is enlarging its focus in the health arena. DCFS programs have addressed family wellbeing, school readiness, reproductive health and contraceptive education in their various programs which all deal with health in some capacity. As time progressed and perspectives broadened, a glaring red flag appeared that could not go unnoticed: the state of men's health.

Some may ask how men's health fits into the conversation with First Steps and that answer is simple, every health factor directly effects another. For example, low birth rates are a result of particular health behaviors, access to clinical care, and social and emotional factors just as the number of children living in poverty and single-parent households.

"Men's health is a focal point for us because they are often the forgotten ones. If men aren't well or informed, then our community isn't either" said Patricia Sullivan, Communications Specialist for DCFS. Men's Health is one avenue that will bring DCFS' vision to fruition- strong families in healthy communities.

DCFS has secured its position as a Men's Health Network Affiliate where they will work to advance strategies and policies which address and reduce health disparities in males. To kick off the men's health initiative in Darlington County, DCFS partnered with Gospel in the Park and CareSouth Carolina to conduct a Mini-Health Fair where men, women, and children had the opportunity to check their blood pressure, cholesterol, and Body Mass Index. In addition, Mayor Carl M. Pennington signed a proclamation declaring June as Men's Health Month in Hartsville. The proclamation "encourages all citizens to increase awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles, regular exercise, and medical check-ups for preventative health practices and early detection efforts."

Statistics show that there is a need to better health among Darlington County citizens. Below are Darlington County rankings compared to other counties in South Carolina, provided by County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (1 being the best, 46 being the worst):

- Health Outcomes- 35
- Length of Life (premature death)- 40
- Health Factors- 34
- Health Behaviors (adult obesity, physical inactivity, sexually transmitted diseases, teen births, etc.) - 38
- Clinical Care (uninsured, preventable hospital stays, diabetes monitoring, etc.) - 38

- Social and Emotional Factors (children in poverty, single-parent households, unemployment, social associations, etc.) - 27

DCFS has established a Men's Health Collaborative Committee to tackle these issues. Committee members are representatives from D.S.S., Nurse-Family Partnership, and S.C. Thrive. The committee wishes to see members from the faith-based and barbershop community join them in their efforts as they have access to men of all ages and backgrounds.

Improving the health of communities is to create a culture where the health of all individuals is priority number one. It takes everyone working together to achieve strong families in healthy communities.