

Children
Leadership
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CELEBRATING

15
years

2005 Annual Report



Southern Institute
ON CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Table of Contents

Letter from the Chairman	2
Letter from the President and CEO	3
Background and Introduction	4
Southern Business Leadership Council	6
Process Improvement Center	8
Covering Kids & Families	10
Carolina Nutrition Alliance	12
South Carolina Obesity Assessment Project	14
Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and Early Education	16
On the Horizon for 2006	18
Board of Directors	20
Staff	21
Chronology of Major Activities	22
Publications	28

The Southern Institute on Children and Families is an independent, non-profit organization that improves the well-being of children and families through knowledge, leadership and action. We educate through research of policies, systems and practices. We generate greater awareness and equip community and business leaders and policymakers with knowledge to make informed decisions. The Southern Institute on Children and Families is funded through grants and contributions. The southern states included in the work of the Southern Institute on Children and Families are: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

While the primary focus of the Southern Institute on Children and Families is on the South, the Southern Institute directs national programs related to its mission.

The Southern Institute on Children and Families is a 501(c)(3) organization funded through grants and contributions from corporations, foundations and individuals. Financial donations to the Southern Institute are tax deductible. For information, please call (803) 779-2607 or send an email to info@thesoutherninstitute.org.

MISSION STATEMENT



Southern Institute

ON CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Knowledge - Leadership - Action

**ANNUAL REPORT
2005**

Letter from the Chairman



I have always had strong convictions that regardless of circumstances or means, all children should have the opportunity for good health, quality education, safety and economic security. These convictions have led me across this country and even outside its borders to promote understanding and gain support for improving the conditions in which many of our children live. I chose this life because I believe there is no cause more worthy or more necessary than providing children with opportunities to live up to their fullest potential. The Southern Institute on Children and Families shares these convictions with me, and I consider it both an honor and a privilege to serve as Chairman of the Board of Directors.

I am proud of the reputation the Southern Institute has earned as a source for credible research and strategic solutions. This year we received international recognition for our use of regional data indicators to improve access to child care financial aid for lower-income families in the South. During recent years our efforts have contributed to:

- A reduction in the number of uninsured children in the United States by nearly 2 million since 1998.
- Quality improvements in Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program eligibility processes in more than half of the states in the nation.
- Improvements in child care policies and programs serving over 800,000 children in 17 southern states and the District of Columbia.

It is gratifying to know that Southern Institute initiatives are making real differences in the lives of millions of lower-income children and families across the country on a range of issues. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I express sincere appreciation to the individuals, corporations, foundations and government agencies that have supported our work to promote the well-being of children and families, and to the individuals and organizations that have participated in our research projects and collaborative initiatives. Together we have achieved improvements in policies, procedures and practices that increased access and promoted administrative efficiency in public programs that support working families.

After 13 years as Chairman of the Board, I have made the difficult decision to step down. I am happy to introduce long-time board member Beegie Truesdale as our new Chairman, and I am confident in placing the Southern Institute's future in her capable hands. It has been my pleasure serving the Board of Directors, the Southern Institute, and most importantly, lower-income families and children across the South and the United States.

Unita Blackwell
Chairman

Photo of Unita Blackwell courtesy of Novia Communications, Inc.

Letter from the President and CEO



Millions of lower-income families throughout our nation work full-time, often juggling multiple jobs, and still live close to or below the poverty level. These families want what we all want - opportunities for our children to develop and prosper - but their wages and benefits are insufficient to provide adequate housing, food, child care, clothing, health care coverage and transportation. Everyday they chase an "American Dream" that implies their hard work will be rewarded, but for most the finish line is not in sight.

The Southern Institute on Children and Families was founded in 1990 to improve opportunities for lower-income families and children. For 15 years we have successfully engaged public and private sector leaders in efforts to better support working families, produced groundbreaking public policy research and directed state, regional and national initiatives that have led to significant improvements in the way public benefit programs are designed and implemented, particularly health coverage for lower-income children.

On behalf of all of us at the Southern Institute, I would like to express sincere appreciation to all of the funding partners that have contributed to our efforts since 1990. Among our founders are the Annie E. Casey Foundation, BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation, Central Carolina Community Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Foundation for Child Development, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Smith Richardson Foundation, Wachovia Foundation, Washington Area Women's Foundation and the National Center for Children in Poverty. Federal, state and local governments and private organizations have supported research projects and initiatives through individual contracts and awards. We also have received contributions from individual and corporate donors concerned with the well-being of children. I also want to take this opportunity to recognize the Southern Institute staff members who understand their work is much more than a job, it is a mission. Their commitment is greatly appreciated.

Our Board Chairman, Unita Blackwell, is stepping down and I want to say that it has been a personal privilege for me to work alongside her. In recognition of her dedicated service and to honor her for her many contributions to improving the lives of disadvantaged children in our region and beyond, the Board of Directors created the Unita Blackwell Fund for Southern Children to support our work on behalf of lower-income families and children.

Fifteen years of improving opportunities for lower-income families and children give us reason to celebrate, but we do so fully aware that we are now seeing some erosion in the gains made in improving access to public benefits that support working families and that encourage their efforts to attain self-sufficiency. It is critical that public and private sector leaders step up and take action on public policies that are counterproductive to the message that working hard is a way to get ahead in America. As a society our overarching goal should be to improve opportunities for lower-income working families to achieve greater economic stability and provide for the basic needs of their children. We pledge to continue pressing on toward that goal. With this in mind, it gives me great pleasure to present the Southern Institute's 2005 Annual Report.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Shuptrine". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sarah Shuptrine
President and CEO

Background and Introduction

In 2005 the Southern Institute on Children and Families commemorated 15 years steadfastly focused on our mission to improve the ability of lower-income working families to meet the basic needs of their children. Since 1990 the Southern Institute has been instrumental in gaining key support from local, state and federal policymakers and administrators, advocacy organizations, foundations and businesses in developing and implementing action strategies that promote the well-being of children and families. We are driven by a belief that public and private sector decision makers will take action to better support working families when they have the information they need to analyze issues and develop solutions. Our understanding of how public policy decisions affect lower-income families and children has enabled us to design research projects, analyze issues and develop action strategies in a way that connects with these decision makers.

The Southern Institute led the southern regional and national movement toward simplification of government eligibility services and enactment of more family-friendly eligibility policies and practices. Our data driven action strategies improved the efficiency and accuracy of public eligibility systems and contributed to a reduction in the stigma that is too often associated with publicly-funded health coverage and other benefits. Our landmark 1994 research report, titled *A Study of the Relationship of Health Coverage to Welfare Dependency*, documented the extent to which lower-income working families were unaware that they did not have to be on welfare to obtain health coverage and other benefits for their children. This cutting edge research led to our development of the nation's first information outreach brochures designed to educate families, community organizations and

employers about public benefits available to lower-income working families. In particular our work in the area of public health coverage for children was instrumental in the national movement to implement more progressive and family-friendly policies and practices that improved access to Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

The Southern Institute has directed three national initiatives to improve access to public health coverage for eligible children and adults, including the nation's largest single effort led by coalitions in every state and the District of Columbia. These initiatives contributed to significant improvements in eligibility policies and processes nationwide and have made it

Since 1990 the Southern Institute has earned a national reputation for:

- engaging public and private sector leaders in examining complicated health and social issues and developing action strategies;
- creating knowledge and leadership to improve access to public benefit programs through the enactment of more progressive public policies, reform of eligibility systems and reduction of the stigma associated with public benefit programs designed for working families;
- developing effective communication strategies to educate families, community organizations and employers about the existence of public benefits that can support the ability of lower-income parents to work and meet basic needs; and
- improving the design and delivery of public programs that benefit lower-income families and children.

possible for millions of lower-income uninsured children and adults to gain access to Medicaid and SCHIP benefits.

We continue to break new ground in improving public eligibility services, including the creation of a revolutionary method to apply theories of lean thinking and continuous process improvement to public benefit programs. The Southern Institute offers a collaborative learning experience and expert consulting services to individual and multi-county, multi-state and multi-disciplinary teams to achieve improvements in public program enrollment and renewal processes. We empower public eligibility agencies, managed care organizations, health care providers and insurers to apply process improvement theories to their environments, which can result in the elimination of unnecessary processes, decreases in costs and increases in the quality of public programs.

Our leadership of a region-wide child care and early education initiative involving 17 southern states and the District of Columbia resulted in development of two regional action plans that specify action steps for states, the federal government and businesses to significantly improve access to quality, affordable child care and early education. The Southern Institute has tracked both action plans over multiple years to document actions taken by southern states. This effort has set the standard for a regional initiative that fosters collaboration across states and achieves significant results.

The Southern Institute is nationally recognized for bringing diverse groups together around a common goal to achieve results. Task forces and coalitions are often an important part of our work. We are one of few organizations in the nation with expertise in coalition development and sustainability. We provide specialized expertise to newly formed or longstanding

coalitions to help build capacity, achieve goals and sustain momentum on behalf of lower-income families and children. We also are working to determine the extent to which the faith community can be an effective partner to reach out to eligible, lower-income families within their congregations and communities and help them gain access to public benefits.

The Southern Institute has created an influential council of key business leaders from across the South that is charged with developing and leading bold actions that are mutually beneficial to families, employers and communities. We believe the participation of business leaders significantly elevates the goal of improving opportunities for all of our children. This leadership group will develop an action plan that will engage and empower public and private sector organizations and businesses in communities and states across the South to increase the employment stability of the lower-wage workforce, particularly parents, to bring greater stability to families and to provide greater developmental and educational opportunities for children.

The Southern Institute reached a landmark in 2005 when we commemorated 15 years of service on behalf of lower-income families and children. Since 1990 our reputation for knowledge, leadership and action has taken us across and outside the southern region to perform research and direct multi-state and national initiatives. This report outlines accomplishments and activities over the past year and provides information on our action agenda for the future.

Southern Business Leadership Council

Lower-income parents, particularly single parents, face many barriers that interfere with job stability. Difficulty in securing employment and an inability to retain employment are stressful and disruptive for lower-wage workers, but they aren't the only ones who suffer. Their children, employers and communities all experience the negative effects that come from a lack of stability in the lower-wage workforce. Taking bold actions to improve employment stability will be beneficial across the board.

- **Lower-wage employees** will have improved opportunities for success in the workplace.
- **Working parents** will experience a more stable family economic environment and be better able to meet the basic needs of their children.
- **Children** will have greater opportunities for educational development and achievement.
- **Businesses** will experience reductions in training costs and lost productivity associated with absenteeism and turnover.
- **Communities** will enjoy greater economic security and fewer social problems.

The Southern Institute on Children and Families established the Southern Business Leadership Council (SBLC) in 2002 to engage southern business, community and public policy leaders in the development of comprehensive solutions to societal issues that impede stable employment of the lower-income workforce. The SBLC also supports efforts to achieve greater opportunities for child development. The SBLC is chaired by former United States Secretary of Education, former South Carolina Governor and Southern Institute Board

Member Richard W. Riley. SBLC members represent banking, construction, health insurance, health services, hospitality, information technology, legal, manufacturing, retail, telecommunications and corporate philanthropy, as well as state and national level chambers of commerce.

The SBLC held a retreat in April 2005 at The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation Offices in Atlanta, Georgia. During the SBLC Retreat members agreed to focus their efforts on development and promotion of the *SBLC Employment Stability Action Plan*, a roadmap for business, community and public policy leaders in 17 southern states and the District of Columbia to promote stable employment in the lower-income workforce. A five-member SBLC Steering Committee was established to oversee development and implementation of the three phases of the work plan, which are summarized below.

Phase I-Research

The first phase of the SBLC Employment Stability Action Plan Initiative is focused on research. A body of research is available on workforce stability barriers from the perspective of lower-income employees. There is less information on employer views regarding issues that affect the ability of lower-income workers, especially parents, to be stable employees. In addition to the need to identify the barriers, it is equally important to identify strategies that hold promise in promoting stability in the lower-income workforce. The Southern Institute will seek insight from local employers in communities across the South in three ways: 1) employer surveys; 2) local employer dialogue sessions; and 3) multi-state target industry dialogue sessions.

SOUTHERN BUSINESS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (SBLC)

Richard W. Riley, Esq.: SBLC Chairman
Nelson Mullins Riley and Scarborough, LLP;
Member, Southern Institute Board of Directors;
former Governor of South Carolina;
former Secretary of the US Department of Education

Cindy Cox: Vice President
Business Development and Governmental Relations
BellSouth

John E. Davis: Member
Texas House of Representatives; Manufacturer
Representative, Republic Powdered Metals, Inc.

Anne Doss: Managing Executive
Wealth Management Services, Wachovia Bank

Julio Fuentes: President
Florida State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Rai Glover: Senior Vice President and Market
Development Manager, Bank of America

Linda Jimenez: Vice President for Diversity and
People Development, Accor North America

George L. Johnson: Vice President of Corporate
Communications, BlueCross BlueShield of South
Carolina; Executive Director, BlueCross BlueShield of
South Carolina Foundation

Stephen Jordan: Director of the Center for
Corporate Citizenship, US Chamber of Commerce

Donna M. Klein: President/CEO
Corporate Voices for Working Families, Inc.

Ray Marshall: Professor Emeritus
Rapoport Centennial Chair in Economics and Public
Affairs, University of Texas at Austin; former Secretary
of the US Department of Labor

Donald G. (Ike) McLeese: President
Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce

Penelope McPhee: President and Trustee
The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation

Elaine Mendoza: President
Conceptual MindWorks, Inc.

Paul Montgomery: Director
Communications and Public Affairs,
Eastman Chemical Company

William F. O'Connor, Jr.: President
Results LLC

George Penick: President
Foundation for the Mid South

Diane D. Rath: Chair and Commissioner
Representing the Public, Texas Workforce Commission

Kevin C. Sass, FACHE: Vice President
Professional Services, Columbus Regional
Healthcare System

John Tully: Director
Community Relations, Michelin North America, Inc.

Phase II-Preparation and Release of the SBLC Employment Stability Action Plan

The second phase of the Initiative includes preparation of a synthesis of research on barriers and strategies collected from the employer surveys, local employer dialogue sessions, target industry dialogue sessions and additional sources to assist the SBLC in the development of the *SBLC Employment Stability Action Plan*. The Action Plan will identify local, state, federal and private sector policy issues that need to be addressed and will outline promising practices that can be replicated in states and communities across the South.

Phase III-Promotion

The final phase of the Initiative will include high profile dissemination and promotion of the *SBLC Employment Stability Action Plan*. Among the activities planned to promote the Action Plan is development of an SBLC Speaker's Bureau. SBLC members and other speakers will promote the Action Plan within their own industries, at local, state, regional and national business and professional meetings and to local, state and federal policymakers and public agencies. Employers' voices are influential within the business community and also among public policymakers, and they will play a critical role in the adoption of public and private sector policies and practices recommended in the *SBLC Employment Stability Action Plan*.

Phase I of the Initiative began in December 2005. The Southern Institute received grants from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Washington Area Women's Foundation to support the SBLC DC Metro Employer Project, which is the first local employer initiative. The Wachovia Foundation has agreed to partially fund the second local employer initiative in Charlotte, North Carolina. The Southern Institute is engaged in discussions regarding overall support, as well as funding for additional local employer and target industry projects. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provides in-kind support to health coverage aspects of SBLC work.

SBLC members are in the initial stages of development of the *SBLC Employment Stability Action Plan* and are looking forward to its 2007 release and subsequent promotion phase. Involving the business community in issues related to lower-income families is an

area in which the Southern Institute is a leader. Traditionally, non-profits have dealt with business only as a financial contributor rather than engaging business in developing public and private strategies in support of lower-income families and children. Business listens to business, and to get the business community engaged in promoting public and private solutions will be a significant step toward building powerful support to improve the well-being of lower-income families and children. We all experience negative consequences from a lack of employment stability in the lower-income workforce. Working together on the solutions will create greater opportunities for bold and comprehensive actions.

Additional information about the SBLC is available on the Southern Institute Web site at www.thesoutherninstitute.org/sblc.

Process Improvement Center

The Process Improvement Center is a strategic business unit created by the Southern Institute on Children and Families in 2004 that focuses on improvements in eligibility processes in public benefit programs. The Center evolved from the Southern Institute's expertise in the area of public benefit eligibility systems and experience directing multi-state eligibility process improvement initiatives. Quality and process improvement theories and principles are utilized by the Center to offer two major products to government agencies, health care purchasers, health care providers and managed care organizations to help them cultivate a practical skill set and knowledge level to effect process improvements in and among their programs:

- **Process Improvement Collaboratives** are dynamic 12-month engagements between the Center and up to 15 teams of government agencies and private sector organizations that share a common goal of rapidly achieving eligibility process improvements. The collaborative experience consists of pre-work, three learning sessions and two action periods. A collaborative faculty composed of Center staff and experts in application simplification, literacy, policy and process improvement leads each collaborative.

- **Consultation and Technical Assistance** on process improvement is offered on a fee-for-service basis by Center staff.

The Southern Institute led its first Process Improvement Collaborative as part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's (RWJF) *Supporting Families After Welfare Reform* Initiative. Positive results from this experience led to two subsequent Process Improvement Collaboratives as part of the Foundation's *Covering Kids & Families* (CKF) Initiative. Both *Supporting Families* and CKF are initiatives for which the Southern Institute has served as National Program Office. The second CKF Process Improvement Collaborative began in 2004 and concluded in November 2005. Grantee teams from Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah and Wyoming participated.



The Collaborative experience increased the skills of CKF grantees to simplify processes and procedures to make it easier for eligible children and adults to enroll and remain enrolled in Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Programs (SCHIP). For example, the Iowa team tested an automated referral system to reduce the incidence of Medicaid cases being denied or closed without

consistently being referred to SCHIP for eligibility determination. This system increased referrals from Medicaid to SCHIP by an average of 191 percent. The state received a \$3.7 million TANF high performance bonus for being third in the nation for improving SCHIP enrollment in fiscal year 2004, and the Iowa team received the Governor's Golden Dome Award for excellence in state government.

In September 2004 RWJF granted the Southern Institute funding for a Process Improvement Collaborative for children's hospitals to take place in 2005 and 2006. The Center worked with the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions to recruit participants. The six children's hospitals participating in the Collaborative are Connecticut Children's Medical Center (Hartford, CT), Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children (Wilmington, DE), Medical College of Georgia Children's Hospital (Augusta, GA), Columbus Regional Medical Center (Columbus, GA), Riley Hospital for Children (Indianapolis, IN) and the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System (Richmond, VA). Children's hospitals participating in the Collaborative are testing a variety of strategies to improve Medicaid and SCHIP eligibility processes.

Several enhancements were made to the Southern Institute's Web site in 2005 to improve the Center's collaborative experience for participants and administration efficiency for staff. Collaborative participants now benefit from access to an automated, user-friendly data reporting system, a more efficient forum for communication between collaborative participants and leadership and an online registration component for learning sessions.

In addition to the collaborative activities described above, the Center provided consulting

services to individual states, hospitals and a managed care organization in 2005. The Southern Institute is committed to providing an optimal experience for collaborative participants and consulting clients. Center staff built upon their knowledge and experience related to quality and process improvements through training and development activities in 2005. Process Improvement Center Director Vicki C. Grant, PhD, MSW, Southern Institute Vice President for Process Improvement, continued training to become certified as a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt. Dr. Grant has

presented information on the Process Improvement Center at several national conferences. Additional Southern Institute staff have completed or are enrolled in process improvement professional development activities including Certified Quality Improvement Associate training and Lean Six Sigma Green Belt certification.

Additional information about the Process Improvement Center is available on the Southern Institute Web site at www.thesoutherninstitute.org.

Covering Kids & Families

Health insurance is unaffordable for millions of lower-income working families that are employed full time. Even if a health plan is offered through their employer, the cost often places family health coverage out of their reach. Help is available in every state through Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The fact is that most of America's 8.3 million uninsured children are eligible for one of these health coverage programs.

The Southern Institute on Children and Families is the National Program Office for *Covering Kids & Families* (CKF), the nation's largest single effort to enroll and retain eligible children and adults in Medicaid and SCHIP. The national initiative represents a four-year, \$55 million investment by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. CKF operates through statewide projects in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and in more than 140 local communities. State and local projects are guided by coalitions that represent a national network of more than 5,500 member organizations including public officials, health

professionals, educators, businesses, social service agencies, advocates and faith-based organizations.

The CKF Initiative employs three strategies to achieve the goal of reducing the number of uninsured children and adults who are eligible but not enrolled in Medicaid or SCHIP:

- **Outreach** to uninsured, eligible children and adults;
- **Simplification** of policies and practices that act as barriers to eligible children and adults; and
- **Coordination** of policies and procedures that promotes a seamless system and places eligible children and adults in the appropriate program.

An important goal of the CKF Initiative is to build knowledge, experience and capacity to sustain the efforts of statewide and local projects beyond its 2007 conclusion. One strategy the Southern Institute utilizes to promote sustainability is the facilitation of relationship building and collaboration among

CKF grantees and state Medicaid and SCHIP officials, regional and national organizations and policy experts. In September we convened the CKF 2005 Annual Meeting in Washington, DC around the theme of sustainability. A total of 340 participants representing the groups mentioned above attended the meeting.



Continual development of CKF statewide and local coalitions is another strategy to promote sustainability. In 2005 two Southern Institute staff completed Health Partner Fellowships in coalition development and sustainability. They have provided coalition building and strengthening technical assistance to CKF coalition members and others to assist in the development of effective coalitions. The Southern Institute also led a peer-to-peer Coalition Building Technical Assistance Meeting in October in Tampa, Florida for CKF statewide coalitions to share promising practices on developing effective coalitions and increasing capacity for coalition sustainability.

A Hospital-Based Eligibility Seminar was conducted by the Southern Institute in October 2005 in Annapolis, Maryland. The seminar was specially designed for teams of hospital and state/county eligibility representatives with established onsite eligibility processes and teams considering establishing onsite eligibility processes from several communities across the United States. We facilitated discussions on the major barriers and opportunities to implementing and maintaining onsite hospital-based Medicaid, SCHIP or other public health coverage eligibility determination processes.

The Southern Institute's Process Improvement Center conducted the second CKF Process Improvement Collaborative during 2004 and 2005 to help grantees improve the accuracy and efficiency of their state's Medicaid and SCHIP eligibility processes. CKF and Process Improvement Center staff began working towards Lean Six Sigma Green Belt certification in 2005 to gain knowledge and expertise to enhance the experiences of CKF grantees and others participating in Southern Institute Process Improvement Collaboratives. Additional details about the CKF Process Improvement Collaborative appear on page nine.

The Southern Institute developed two publications as part of the CKF Initiative in 2005. *An Introduction to the HIPAA Privacy Rule* was published in January 2005. It explains the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and its limits on how information related to health, health care and payment for health care can be used by CKF grantees within an organization and disclosed to others. *The Health Literacy Style Manual* was published in October 2005 as a resource for developing and improving

applications, notices and other print materials related to public health coverage programs. It includes examples from real programs and can be used to make materials more client-centered, thus increasing consumers' capacity to find and understand health information and services and to make informed health-related decisions.

The Southern Institute actively monitored the performance of CKF grantees and provided significant technical assistance in 2005. Staff conducted a total of 39 site visits to state and local projects to provide policy and program management expertise related to implementing CKF strategies. We also worked with the CKF Communications Team and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to prepare for the annual CKF Back-to-School Campaign, and we participated in the national launch event held in

Washington, DC in August 2005. Staff provided on-going technical assistance via the CKF Announcement listserv, the interactive CKF Talk listserv, e-mails, national conference calls, one-on-one communication and continuous maintenance of the CKF National Web site. Four presentations related to the CKF Initiative also were given at the request of state and national organizations.

Nearly 2 million more children have health care coverage now than in 1998, largely due to increased enrollment in Medicaid and SCHIP. CKF and its vast network of national, corporate and local partners have significantly contributed to this increase. To learn more about CKF visit www.thesoutherninstitute.org/ckf or www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org.

Carolina Nutrition Alliance

No child or adult should have to worry about where their next meal will come from, or worse, if that meal will come at all. Yet millions of Americans, including children in working families, go hungry. The Food Stamp Program was created to address the issue of hunger and improve access to nutritious food by those who might otherwise be unable to afford it. The Southern Institute on Children and Families applied for a Food Stamp grant with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to bridge the gap between the growing need for nutrition services for lower-income families in South Carolina and diminishing state administrative resources to serve them.

In July 2004 the Southern Institute received a two-year grant to increase Food Stamp Program participation through the faith community while improving eligibility processes in three South Carolina Department of Social

Services County Offices. The Carolina Nutrition Alliance (CNA) was formed creating a partnership comprised of the Southern Institute, Agape Ministries of Charleston, the South Carolina Department of Social Services and the USDA to achieve two goals:

- **Goal 1:** Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the eligibility application and recertification process through process improvement in Department of Social Services offices in Beaufort, Charleston and Richland Counties; and

- **Goal 2:** Increase Food Stamp Program participation by eligible, lower-income families and individuals in Beaufort and Charleston Counties through the Lowcountry Faith Participation Campaign and assess the potential role faith-based groups can play in reaching out to potentially eligible populations and assisting them in the application process.

Achieving Goal 1 involves the application of process improvement techniques to increase accuracy and efficiency in public benefit programs, an area in which the Southern Institute is nationally recognized. In 2005 CNA Process Improvement Teams from all three counties conducted small-scale tests in their offices to determine whether their proposed changes might result in increased work flow efficiencies and improved customer service. One example of the process improvement strategies teams tested was mailing recertification forms and/or conducting telephone interviews to reduce denials based on "no shows" for face-to-face interviews. Another example was continuously tracking participants' contact information to prevent undelivered mail, which can result in loss of benefits because they do not receive, complete and return important documents. Beaufort, Charleston and Richland Counties have all implemented improved procedures within current Food Stamp Program policy guidelines as a result of successful small-scale testing by CNA Process Improvement Teams.

CNA partner Agape Ministries coordinates the Lowcountry Faith Participation Campaign in Beaufort and Charleston Counties, which addresses Goal 2 of the CNA. During 2005 Agape conducted advertising and application assistance activities in both counties to reach out to and encourage enrollment of eligible populations in the Food Stamp Program. The Southern Institute assisted Agape by conducting research to help identify categories of potentially eligible individuals not participating in the Food Stamp Program, and these findings were used to build upon the Campaign's outreach and application assistance activities.

In March 2005 the CNA partners hosted a meeting with the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Regional Administrator for the

Southeast Region regarding the project and progress of the Lowcountry Faith Participation Campaign. In September 2005 FNS representatives received an overview of the project and attended a weekly meeting of Richland County's Process Improvement Team where they observed local staff brainstorming strategies, addressing key challenges and formulating recommendations based on county data and team experiences. They also were briefed on the potential for process improvements to help transform the Food Stamp Program eligibility process into a more efficient and effective system.



In order for the Food Stamp Program to meet the needs of hungry children and adults, eligible people must enroll in the program and utilize its benefits. In addition the eligibility offices that administer the program must operate as accurately and efficiently as possible. Through the CNA the Southern Institute and its partners are demonstrating new approaches that can result in mutual benefit to families, administering agencies and communities. To learn more about the CNA, please visit <http://www.thesoutherninstitute.org/cna>.

South Carolina Obesity Assessment Project

Childhood obesity is reaching epidemic proportions throughout the United States. Research indicates that in the past 30 years, the prevalence of overweight has doubled in children ages 2-5 and 12-19, and more than tripled in children ages 6-11. Of serious concern to the Southern Institute on Children and Families is research that suggests overweight is more prevalent in children from families of lower socioeconomic status and those living in the South.

In June 2005 the BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation commissioned the Southern Institute to conduct a South Carolina Obesity Assessment Project (SCOAP) to produce a comprehensive assessment of the issues related to obesity, particularly childhood obesity, in South Carolina. Our primary objective was to identify obesity data, promising programs and practices associated with reducing childhood obesity and the most effective options to address obesity in South Carolina.



The Southern Institute staff contracted with experts to assist with the review of obesity data and existing literature available in the South and the United States. Special attention was given to locating data from South Carolina's school

districts, colleges, hospitals and other sources from within the state. The majority of prevalence information on childhood obesity was found in three national datasets: the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, the National Survey on Children's Health and the Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System. A table comparing information in the three national datasets and describing the prevalence of childhood obesity nationally and state-by-state for the southern region appears on the next page.

A compilation of promising programs and policies related to increasing physical activity, improving nutrition behaviors and addressing obesity prevention and treatment in South Carolina, the South, the United States and throughout the world also was developed as part of the comprehensive assessment. Promising programs and practices were selected based on the current scientific body of knowledge about what is effective in achieving healthy weight in children. An additional set of criteria was used to assure the selected programs and policies are practical, affordable and reproducible. Only those identified as most effective at influencing changes to personal health and nutrition behaviors that have long-term results in weight control were selected.

The Southern Institute prepared a final report for the BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation following the project's conclusion in November 2005. The comprehensive assessment contains 175 pages of data and examples of promising programs and practices that can be used to develop strategic plans to prevent and treat childhood obesity in South Carolina and in other southern states. To download a copy of the *South Carolina Obesity Assessment Project Final Report*, please visit the Southern Institute Web site at www.thesoutherninstitute.org.

Comparison of Overweight and At Risk Children for National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) and Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System (PedNSS)						
	NSCH		YRBSS		PedNSS	
	At Risk	Overweight	At Risk	Overweight	At Risk	Overweight
Alabama	17.9	16.7	14.5	13.5	16.4	14.7
Arkansas*	16.4	16.4	15.9	13.8	14.5	12.2
Delaware	20.7	14.8	16.7	13.5	N/A	N/A
District of Columbia	16.7	22.8	16.8	13.5	14.2	13.3
Florida	18.0	14.4	14.0	12.4	14.8	13.4
Georgia	15.3	16.4	15.1	11.1	14.4	12.4
Kentucky	17.6	20.6	15.3	14.6	17.8	17.2
Louisiana	18.4	17.2	N/A	N/A	15.0	13.3
Maryland	16.6	13.3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mississippi	18.8	17.8	15.7	15.7	N/A	N/A
Missouri	15.4	15.6	14.9	12.1	16.4	13.3
North Carolina	14.7	19.3	14.7	12.5	N/A	N/A
Oklahoma	12.8	15.4	14.2	11.1	N/A	N/A
South Carolina**	17.2	18.9	12.9	11.7	13.5	12.4
Tennessee	15.3	20.0	14.8	15.2	13.8	12.0
Texas	13.3	19.1	16.4	13.9	N/A	N/A
Virginia	16.7	13.8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
West Virginia	15.6	20.9	15.1	13.7	14.5	13.2
United States	15.7	14.8	14.8	12.1	15.7	14.7

Note: YRBSS is missing data for Louisiana, Maryland and Virginia. Grades 9th-12th.
All States 2003 except for *Arkansas 2001, **South Carolina 1999.

Note: PedNSS is missing data for Delaware, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas and Virginia.

Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and Early Education

From 2000 - 2004 the Southern Institute on Children and Families directed the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care to improve access to quality, affordable child care and early education with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. The Initiative was guided by a 24-member Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care composed of gubernatorial representatives from 17 southern states, a mayoral appointee representing the District of Columbia, a representative of the Southern Growth Policies Board and representatives appointed by the Southern Institute. Among the major activities of the Task Force was the development of two action plans representing blueprints for southern states to guide their efforts to achieve action in this important area of child development:

- *Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South* (December 2000)
- *Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education* (October 2002)

The Southern Institute tracked progress on achieving the 10 goals and 52 action steps of the *Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South* for three years (2001, 2002 and 2003). We also tracked actions taken on the seven goals and 39 action steps included in the *Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education* for two

years (2003 and 2004). Annual state implementation reports compiled and published by the Southern Institute from 2001 to 2004 provided information to state and federal officials, advocates and researchers and also gave respondents the opportunity to communicate on challenges, opportunities, progress and retrenchments in the southern states.

Despite the Initiative coming to an end in April 2004, Task Force members urged the Southern Institute not to disband our regional convening efforts, citing that our regional approach is a more effective way to gain momentum, share knowledge and get results than states working alone. At the 2005 Task Force meeting, hosted by the Southern Institute at its office in Columbia, South Carolina, Task Force members encouraged the Southern Institute to explore an awareness campaign to develop and promote effective messaging on the importance of child care and early education that will resonate with decision makers, policymakers and the general public.



Additionally, in 2005 the Southern Institute conducted an analysis of the 2004 *Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education* state implementation survey completed by 15 states and the District of Columbia. State-by-state survey responses and a summary chart comparing actions taken across states were posted to the Southern Institute's Web site. Based on responses to the 2004 state implementation survey, the following results are examples of improvements that have occurred in southern states since the quality action plan was released in 2002:

- Five states initiated a requirement for planning and coordination across Head Start, Pre-Kindergarten, subsidized child care and licensing;
- Five states convened stakeholders to develop strategic plans that include key goals and quantifiable measures of progress and program outcomes for improving quality;
- Seven states established financial incentives that reward completion of approved levels of professional development; and
- Five states established agreements and processes to enable the transfer of credits between and among two- and four-year degree programs.

The Southern Institute's data-driven approach, which led the Task Force's development of the action plans, has received international recognition. In 2003 Southern Institute President/CEO and Task Force Chairman, Sarah Shuptrine, was invited to present at an international conference in New York sponsored by the William T. Grant

Foundation, named "Studying the Impact of Indicators of Children's Well-Being on Policies and Programs: An Expert Working Group." Her presentation focused on the work of the Task Force to demonstrate the impact of using data indicators on a regional level to improve access to quality, affordable child care and early education for lower-income children and families in the South.

Ms. Shuptrine was invited to contribute a chapter to a book being compiled from information shared during the conference. She and Nicole Ravenell, Southern Institute Vice President for Operations, prepared a case study on the Southern Institute's use of regional indicators as part of the Initiative. The book, titled *Indicators of Children's Well-Being: Understanding Their Role, Usage and Policy Influence* will be published in early 2006. It represents a broad range of viewpoints from an international group of researchers and policymakers about how the use of social indicators affects child and family policy, and it discusses the use of indicators as an effective tool to change policy.

Additional information on the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and Early Education, all reports, both action plans and results of state surveys can be found by visiting www.thesoutherninstitute.org.

On the Horizon for 2006

In the year ahead, the Southern Institute on Children and Families will continue to conduct research projects, provide private sector consultation and direct state, regional and national initiatives to improve opportunities for lower-income families and children. The following information provides an overview of new and ongoing activities the Southern Institute will direct in 2006, as well as a glimpse into our development of future research projects and initiatives.

NEW AND ONGOING INITIATIVES FOR 2006

Southern Business Leadership Council

The business, community and public policy leaders that comprise the Southern Business Leadership Council (SBLC) have been charged with development of the *SBLC Employment Stability Action Plan*, a blueprint of public/private actions to improve employment stability in the lower-income workforce. In 2006 the Southern Institute will conduct research to collect insights from local employers in several southern communities and insights from target industries. This research will be included in a synthesis of data the Southern Institute prepares for the SBLC to use in development of the *SBLC Employment Stability Action Plan*, which will include public and private sector actions that are mutually beneficial to families, employers and communities.

Process Improvement Center

In 2006 the Southern Institute's Process Improvement Center will continue directing the Children's Hospitals Collaborative and providing process improvement consulting

services to government agencies, managed care organizations and other health care groups. Center staff will begin a Process Improvement Collaborative in the State of Louisiana to assist county offices in streamlining their eligibility processes, and will participate in ongoing activities to initiate a process improvement project in California.

Covering Kids & Families

The Southern Institute will assist grantees and others working to improve enrollment and retention of eligible children and families in Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) through continued direction of the national *Covering Kids & Families* Initiative (CKF). In addition to monitoring CKF state projects and providing technical assistance, we will conduct the final meeting of the national CKF Eligibility Policy Group, a coalition building seminar, a hospital-based eligibility seminar and partnership meetings in cooperation with governors in the midwestern and southern regions of the United States. We also will compile and publish a promising practices report to share information on strategies CKF state and local projects have implemented during the course of the initiative. CKF statewide grants began to close on December 31, 2005. The Southern Institute will provide ongoing support and technical assistance to current and former CKF grantees in 2006 and until the initiative officially concludes in April 2007.

Carolina Nutrition Alliance

Through the Carolina Nutrition Alliance (CNA) the Southern Institute will continue to provide leadership and direction in three South

Carolina counties to improve access to the Food Stamp Program by eligible, lower-income families and individuals. We will oversee the efforts of Process Improvement Teams to achieve increased efficiencies in county Food Stamp Program eligibility office operations and of the Lowcountry Faith Participation Campaign to conduct enrollment outreach to underserved, eligible populations. The Southern Institute also is developing plans to expand our work with the faith community to increase their effectiveness in outreach to lower-income families and children that are eligible for public benefit programs.

Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and Early Education

Formal funding for the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and Early Education has ended but its guiding body, the Southern Regional Task Force, remains intact. The Task Force has encouraged the Southern Institute to search for support so members can continue to work together to improve access to quality, affordable child care and early education for lower-income families in the South. The Southern Institute is engaged in efforts to identify funding to support this important regional collaboration and to develop effective messaging to build support among decision makers for quality, affordable child care and early education.

Uninsured Children in the South

We are pleased to have support from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation to publish the third edition of *Uninsured Children in the South* in 2006. Previous editions of the report have been well-received by state officials and advocates, and they have served as catalysts for action in several states to improve access to

coverage for lower-income uninsured children. The 2006 edition will provide estimates of uninsured children with age and income breakouts related to Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program for Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. It also will contain data on the number of women who were uninsured at the time they gave birth. The Southern Institute will conclude the report with recommendations on actions states can take to simplify public health coverage programs to allow eligible, uninsured children and pregnant women to access and retain coverage.

DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE RESEARCH PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

In 2006 and beyond, the Southern Institute will develop new research projects and initiatives to promote the well-being of lower-income families and children. We are developing concepts and proposals for future research projects and initiatives around topic areas including child abuse and neglect prevention, childhood obesity, enrollment of eligible pregnant women in Medicaid and the retention of eligible children and adults in public health coverage programs. During the coming year we will pursue opportunities to provide process improvement services and also to provide technical assistance and expertise to newly formed or longstanding coalitions to help them build capacity, achieve goals and sustain momentum.

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Chronology of Major Activities

1990

- The Southern Institute on Children and Families is founded as a non-profit organization dedicated to improving opportunities for children and families in the South with a focus on disadvantaged children.
- The Southern Institute adopts 17 states and the District of Columbia as its region of focus. The states include Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

1991

- The Southern Institute releases a report titled *Major Indicators Impacting Children and Families in the South as Compared to Other Regions of the United States* at the National Press Club in Washington, DC.

1992

- The Southern Institute publishes the first edition of *Uninsured Children in the South*, which contains state-by-state data on uninsured children and opportunities for Medicaid coverage, as well as policy and procedural barriers that impede access to Medicaid coverage.

1993

- The Southern Institute and the National Library of Medicine (NLM) sponsor dialogue sessions in six states to present and discuss the availability of up-to-date biomedical literature for hospitals, health clinics, physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other health professionals in rural areas through an online NLM computer software package called Grateful Med.
- As a result of the state dialogue sessions the Southern Institute publishes *Creating Opportunities in the South to Link Maternal and Child Health Professionals and the National Library of Medicine*, which identifies outreach strategies for establishing effective linkages with health professionals, health organizations and health policymakers.

1994

- The Southern Institute publishes a landmark report titled *A Study of the Relationship of Health Coverage to Welfare Dependency* documenting for the first time the extent to which lower-income families were unaware of benefits available for their children without being on welfare.

1995

- The Southern Institute, in collaboration with the North Carolina Department of Human Resources, conducts 27 focus groups to develop and test the nation's first information outreach brochures to inform families, community organizations and employers about available benefits for lower-income working families.
- North Carolina distributes the three Southern Institute information outreach brochures statewide:
 - *Leaving Welfare for Work Isn't As Scary As it Seems*
 - *Have You Heard About Benefits for Working Families???*
 - *Facts for Employers*

1996

- The Southern Institute publishes the second edition of *Uninsured Children in the South*, which contains state-by-state data on uninsured children and opportunities for Medicaid coverage, as well as policy and procedural barriers that impede access to Medicaid coverage.
- The Southern Institute begins an information outreach project with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services to conduct nine focus groups with families, community organizations and employers to assist in the adaptation of the North Carolina information outreach brochures for use in Georgia. The brochures contain state specific eligibility information and state information line telephone numbers.

1997

- Florida and Tennessee commission the Southern Institute to replicate the information outreach brochures developed for North Carolina and Georgia with state specific information.
- The Southern Institute conducts site visits to 17 southern states and the District of Columbia to hold joint meetings with state officials responsible for Medicaid, cash assistance, Food Stamps and child care. The meetings include identification of barriers and opportunities for improving access to benefits, including outreach and eligibility simplification.
- The Southern Institute also meets with state officials to promote replication of the information outreach brochures in all southern states.
- The Southern Institute holds the Southern Regional Forum on Improving Access to Benefits for Families with Children. The forum was attended by representatives from 17 southern states and the District of Columbia, federal officials and advocates.
- The Southern Institute publishes the *Southern Regional Initiative to Improve Access to Benefits for Low-Income Families with Children*.
- The Southern Institute is named the National Program Office for *Covering Kids: A National Health Access Initiative for Low-Income, Uninsured Children*, with responsibility for the grant application process, overall leadership and direction.

1998

- The Southern Institute continues to direct the *Covering Kids* national initiative.
- *Covering Kids* expands to a \$47 million nationwide program with funding for statewide coalitions in 49 states and the District of Columbia and more than 160 local communities.
- The Southern Institute information outreach brochures are replicated in 12 additional states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.
- The Southern Institute publishes *The Burden of Proof: How Much is Too Much for Child Health Coverage?*, which provides federal responses to specific questions on federal policies related to verification of information submitted by Medicaid applicants. The report shows that most verification decisions reside with state administrators and policymakers.
- The Southern Institute begins preparing Spanish versions of its two consumer information outreach brochures. Because they do not contain any state specific eligibility information, the completed Spanish brochures are suitable for use in any state. The Spanish brochures are made available on disk to southern states, which are responsible for printing and dissemination.

1999

- The Southern Institute continues to direct the *Covering Kids* national initiative.
- The Southern Institute is named National Program Office for *Supporting Families After Welfare Reform: Access to Medicaid, SCHIP and Food Stamps*, with responsibility for the grant application process, overall leadership and direction. Grants are awarded in Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Minnesota, Maine, New Jersey, South Carolina and Cuyahoga County in Ohio.
- Louisiana replicates the SICF information outreach brochures for statewide use making the Southern Institute information outreach brochures available in all 17 southern states and the District of Columbia.
- The Southern Institute publishes *Mayersville, Mississippi: A Study of Improving Access to Benefits and Services for Low-Income Families in the Rural South*, which points out the special need for resources and technical assistance in rural areas in order to assist them in supporting lower-income families striving to work.

2000

- The Southern Institute continues to direct the *Covering Kids* national initiative. An additional state is awarded a grant bringing the total number of *Covering Kids* grants to 50 state projects and the District of Columbia.
- The Southern Institute continues to direct the *Supporting Families After Welfare Reform* national program.

2000 (continued)

- The Southern Institute establishes the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care to be led by a Task Force composed of members appointed by governors in 16 southern states and the Mayor of the District of Columbia, with six additional representatives appointed by the Southern Institute and the Southern Growth Policies Board.
- The Southern Institute publishes *Sound Investments: Financial Support for Child Care Builds Workforce Capacity and Promotes School Readiness*.
- The Southern Institute releases the *Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South* developed by the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care.

2001

- The Southern Institute continues to direct the *Covering Kids* national initiative and the *Supporting Families After Welfare Reform* national program.
- The Southern Institute continues to direct the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care.
- The Southern Institute is named National Program Office for *Covering Kids & Families*, the next phase of the *Covering Kids* initiative, with responsibility for the grant application process, overall leadership and direction.
- The Southern Institute holds the First Annual Southern Regional Forum on Child Care.

2002

- The Southern Institute continues to direct the *Covering Kids* initiative and the *Covering Kids & Families* and *Supporting Families After Welfare Reform* national programs.
- Three additional projects receive funding to participate in the *Supporting Families After Welfare Reform* program: Nassau County (New York), San Bernardino County (California) and Los Angeles County (California).
- The Southern Institute continues to direct the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care.
- The Southern Institute conducts the 2nd Annual Southern Regional Forum on Child Care.
- The Southern Institute releases the *Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education* developed by the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care.
- The Southern Institute establishes the Southern Business Leadership Council (SBLC) to help bring visibility and achieve action that will mutually benefit families, employers and communities.
- The Southern Institute publishes the second edition of the *Chartbook of Major Indicators: Conditions Placing Children in the South at Risk*.
- The Southern Institute publishes the first status report on state implementation efforts to enact the *Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South*.

2003

- The Southern Institute continues to direct the *Covering Kids & Families* and *Supporting Families After Welfare Reform* national programs.
- The Southern Institute continues to direct the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care.
- The Southern Institute holds the Southern Regional Forum on Collaboration and Coordination Across Early Care and Education Programs.
- The Southern Institute publishes a second status report on state implementation efforts to enact the *Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South*.
- The Southern Institute creates the Eligibility Process Improvement Center.
- The Southern Institute publishes *A Profile of the Southern Economy: Living Standards, Economic Structure, and Lower-Income Workers* to assist the Southern Business Leadership Council in examining workforce, income and benefit issues affecting lower-income working individuals and families.
- The Southern Institute publishes *The Supporting Families Story: The Movement Toward Quality Improvement* outlining accomplishments of the *Supporting Families* initiative, with a focus on the process improvement breakthrough collaborative involving state and local eligibility officials from project states.
- The Southern Institute publishes two reports on collaboration across early care and education programs as part of the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care:
 - *Collaboration in Southern Regional Early Care and Education Systems*; and
 - *Southern Regional Forum on Collaboration and Coordination Across Early Care and Education Programs*
- The Southern Institute publishes the second edition of *The Burden of Proof: How Much is Too Much for Health Care Coverage?*, which updates information contained in the 1998 edition of the publication on federal responses to specific questions on federal policies related to verification of information submitted by Medicaid applicants. The report shows that most verification decisions reside with state administrators and policymakers.
- The Southern Institute unveils a new visual identity.

2004

- The Southern Institute continues to direct the *Covering Kids & Families* and *Supporting Families After Welfare Reform* national programs.
- The Southern Institute continues to direct the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care.
- The Southern Institute initiates the Carolina Nutrition Alliance project to improve participation in the Food Stamp program in South Carolina with a process improvement initiative at three DSS county offices and a faith outreach partnership in two of the project counties.
- The Southern Institute releases the third edition of the *Chartbook of Major Indicators: Conditions Placing Children in the South at Risk* at a news conference in Atlanta.
- The Southern Institute publishes the third status report on state implementation efforts to enact the *Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South*.

2004 (continued)

- The Southern Institute publishes the first status report on the status of state implementation efforts to enact the *Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education*.
- The Southern Institute names former US Secretary of Education, former South Carolina Governor and SICF Board Member Richard W. Riley as Chairman of the Southern Business Leadership Council (SBLC).
- The Southern Institute publishes *Child Care Survey Results on Funding and Related Policies in the Southern States*.
- The Southern Institute publishes the final project report of the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care.

2005

- This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Southern Institute's founding.
- The Southern Institute continues to direct the Carolina Nutrition Alliance in three South Carolina Counties.
- The Southern Institute continues to direct the *Covering Kids & Families* national program.
- The Southern Institute tracks the status of state implementation efforts to enact the *Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education* for the second year. State-by-state survey responses and a summary chart comparing actions taken across states are posted on the Southern Institute Web site.
- The Southern Institute initiates Southern Business Leadership Council (SBLC) development of the *SBLC Employment Stability Action Plan*, which will include public and private sector action steps and promising practices that can be implemented in states and communities across the South to mutually benefit families, employers and communities.
- The Southern Institute's Eligibility Process Improvement Center initiates a Process Improvement Collaborative involving six children's hospitals from five states.
- The Southern Institute receives international recognition for collecting and displaying regional data indicators and achieving results as part of the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and Early Education. The Southern Institute's use of data indicators on a regional level was published in a book, titled *Indicators of Children's Well-Being: Understanding Their Role, Usage and Policy Influence*.
- The Southern Institute initiates and completes the South Carolina Obesity Assessment Project to identify international, national and state obesity related data and examples of promising programs and practices that will be instrumental in development of a strategic action plan to decrease the incidence of overweight and/or obese children and adolescents in South Carolina.
- The Southern Institute establishes coalition building and strengthening technical assistance and consultation services.

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