

ANNUAL REPORT 2017



The Future Is Now



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Ken Wingate
Chairman, SC First Steps

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The future is now. A recent analysis by the University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business suggests that South Carolina will lack 115,000 workers with the advanced skills to meet the state's 21st century workforce needs by the year 2030.

What can be done to avoid this cliff and ensure a strong and thriving South Carolina in the decades to come? The answer begins during the years of early childhood.

"Preparing South Carolina's young children for school success is a responsibility we all share"

Science tells us that the first three years of life entail a critical window of brain development, during which one million neural connections are formed every second. These connections, which decrease dramatically after age 5, comprise the fundamental architecture of the brain – shaping not just what children know as they arrive at the school house door, but how they are wired to think and learn. It's no exaggeration to describe the years of early childhood as the most consequential in our lives.

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness exists to help optimize these

critical years: supporting families in their roles as their children's first and best teachers, improving the quality of early childhood settings around the state, and providing high-quality preschool to thousands of South Carolina's most vulnerable children. We invite you to get involved in this important grassroots effort.

As you review the work of First Steps over the pages to come, I invite you to reflect on the things YOU might do to support the school readiness of our state's children. The long term prosperity and well-being of our state and its children depends on our efforts.



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SC First Steps Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees



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Ms. Sue Williams
Children's Trust of
South Carolina

“First Steps often and in many ways reaches beyond a circle of agencies and administrators to engage local community stakeholders such as parents, educators, and the Community of Faith in investing in early childhood, with investments occurring on the family, caregiver, and neighborhood level. It is these investments that often make the difference for at-risk and high-need children, as these children often require attention and support from multiple sources.”

*Compass Evaluation and Research
2014 Evaluation*

Compass Evaluation and Research, 2014

ABOUT FIRST STEPS

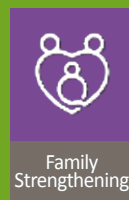
As the state's comprehensive school readiness initiative, SC First Steps helps parents prepare their young children for school and life success.

Why We Need to Start Early

Investing in high-quality early learning experiences for kids makes good sense. We know from brain research that 90% of the brain's full potential is formed by age four. We have a great opportunity to help families and caregivers during this critical window. Studies show that positive early experiences for young children help shape their long-term success, while also saving taxpayer dollars in long-term education and social impact costs.

How First Steps Can Help

In each of South Carolina's 46 counties, First Steps expands early learning services available for young children, their families, and caregivers. These services fall into six important categories.



How You Can Find Us

Each county is served by a local First Steps Partnership, whose local board of directors and staff are in place to meet the school readiness needs of the community. First Steps provides funding and technical assistance to the state's network of independent, non-profit First Steps Local Partnerships so that services are provided to children and families by a convening resource that knows each community intimately.

According to a recent evaluation by Compass Evaluation & Research, through this network "First Steps often and in many ways reaches beyond a circle of agencies and administrators to engage local community stakeholders such as parents, educators, and the Community of Faith in investing in early childhood, with investments occurring on the family, caregiver, and neighborhood level. It is these investments that often make the difference for at-risk and high-need children, as these children often require attention and support from multiple sources."

"Children's academic abilities at kindergarten entry are strong predictors of their success as they progress through school, but not all children begin formal schooling with the skills they need to be ready to succeed. Research suggests that by the time they enter kindergarten, children in poverty can be 12-months behind their more advantaged peers. The gaps in achievement among children from varying demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds at kindergarten entry are both pervasive and persistent: They begin early in life, are sustained as children advance through school, and are difficult to close. Moreover, some research suggests that achievement gaps may increase rather than decrease with time. These gaps in achievement often translate into lower rates of high school graduation, decreased college attendance, and, ultimately, lower wages as adults."

– National Institute for Early Education Research, 2016

RISK FACTORS

A 2007 analysis by the SC Budget and Control Board explored the attributes of South Carolina children experiencing school failure by the 3rd grade (those children scoring in the Below-Basic category of the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test or who had been retained in a grade level).

These findings suggest that a handful of predisposing risk factors are associated with particularly high rates of early school failure.

SC Children Most At-Risk of Early School Failure

Risk Factor	Percentage Failing by 3rd Grade	SC Children (Birth – 6) Possessing Risk Factor
Abuse, Neglect, Foster Care	53%	10,171 3%
Very Low Birth Weight (<3.3 lbs)	52%	7,170 2.11%
Low Maternal Education (< 12th)	48%	81,852 24.1%
T.A.N.F. (50% Federal Poverty)	45%	28,690 8.4%
Low Birth Weight (3.3-4.4 lbs)	43%	9,390 2.77%
Teen Mother (<18)	43%	15,618 4.6%
Food Stamps (130% Federal Poverty)	42%	67,897 20%
Teenage Mother (18- 20)	37%	29,946 8.83%
Low Birth Weight (4.4-5.5lbs)	36%	18,780 5.53%

Dr. Baron Holmes, 2007

MEASURING OUTCOMES

Each of the six color blocks of the First Steps logo represents a core area of service, outlining our comprehensive strategy to prepare children for long-term school success. With measurable outcomes across each of its six school readiness strategy areas, First Steps is getting results.



Healthy Start

We begin with a focus on providing a healthy start to life. This includes prenatal and post-partum services for both mother and baby. In 2007, First Steps collaborated with key philanthropic and agency partners to bring *Nurse-Family Partnership* to SC, having a significant impact on reducing premature births and Medicaid costs.



Family Strengthening

Our home visitation strategies, such as *Parents as Teachers*, *Parent-Child Home* and *Early Steps to School Success*, are helping parents to support the optimal development of their children and understand their roles as their child's first and most important teachers. As a result of First Steps' intervention and parenting supports, 66% of clients initially assessed at "low" levels of parenting have achieved moderate or high levels of parenting skill.



Early Intervention

According to recent federal evaluations, outcomes for clients participating in the BabyNet early intervention program are above national averages. BabyNet matches the special needs of infants and toddlers who have disabilities and/or developmental delays with customized, community-based resources.



Quality Childcare

Quality childcare starts with quality childcare providers. Our quality enhancement and training strategies lead to improved teacher-student interaction, which research shows has a significant impact on a child's development and success in school.



Early Education

Private-public partnerships through First Steps 4K have led to significant cost efficiencies in the delivery of publicly-funded 4K. One recent analysis suggests First Steps is achieving comparable results, without the need for costly capital construction, for 80 cents on the dollar.



School Transition

Each of the corresponding blocks of services leads ultimately to the goal of transitioning children successfully to school. Programs like *Countdown to Kindergarten* and *From Day One to Grade One* are ultimately preparing children for school success.



HEALTHY START

School readiness starts with healthy children. First Steps is the state sponsor of *Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)*, an evidence-based home visitation program matching nurse home visitors with first-time, low-income mothers. A recent birth-outcome analysis conducted by DHEC's Bureau of Maternal Child Health showed low-income mothers receiving this evidence-based nurse home visitation program were:

- 63% less likely to require admission to a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)
- Half as likely to be born pre-term (less than 37 weeks)
- Half as likely to be born at a low birth weight

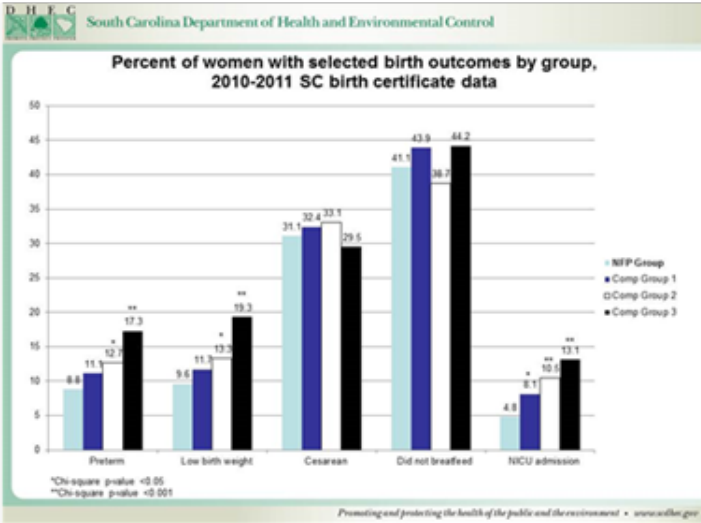
Independent research suggests that 52% of SC children born at an extremely low birth weight fall into one or more categories of school failure (retention, achievement) by the third grade, making preventative programs such as NFP critical to improving early school success.

Brought to South Carolina by SC First Steps and The Duke Endowment in 2008, Nurse Family Partnership has a large collaborative footprint in 2017, serving South Carolina mothers in 32 counties from 10 regionally-based hubs.

Since inception, South Carolina NFP has:

- Served over 5,300 moms and their babies
- Delivered over 80,000 home visits
- Grown from an original client capacity of 600 to over 1,400 families





Conclusions

- NFP participants differ substantially in terms of risk factors compared to potentially eligible non-participants, even in the same geographic areas.
 - DHEC sites, live births in 2010-2011
- After accounting for these differences, these NFP participants have significantly lower prevalence of LBW, PTB, and NICU admissions.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF NFP OUTCOMES: Birth Outcomes for SC NFP Clients Delivering Live Births in 2010-2011 (SC DHEC, Maternal Child Health Bureau – February 2013)

- NFP Group
- Comparison Group 1: All Medicaid Births
- Comparison Group 2: Medicaid Births at Hospitals Where NFP Clients Delivered
- Comparison Group 3: Medicaid Births at Hospitals Where NFP Clients Delivered
 - with Clients Matched on Mother’s Race, Mother’s Education and WIC Status.

Program Model

FY16-17

Nurse-Family Partnership

1,400 families served

10 sites (Greenville, Spartanburg, Anderson, Columbia, Greenwood, Florence, Orangeburg, Conway, Charleston and York) serving the following counties: Abbeville, Anderson, Berkeley, Charleston, Cherokee, Chester, Chesterfield, Colleton, Darlington, Dillon, Dorchester, Edgefield, Florence, Georgetown, Greenville, Greenwood, Horry, Lancaster, Laurens, Lexington, Marion, Marlboro, McCormick, Oconee, Orangeburg, Pickens, Richland, Saluda, Spartanburg, Union, Williamsburg, and York.

Nurses paired with first-time mothers beginning during the second trimester of pregnancy and extending to the child’s second birthday; training, support and referral.

100% of NFP clients are first-time, low-income mothers eligible for Medicaid.

FAMILY STRENGTHENING

As the state sponsor of Parents as Teachers, an evidence-based parent education program, SC First Steps serves as the statewide technical assistance structure to all PAT programs, including those operated independent of First Steps' funding.

In addition, First Steps underwrites additional parenting models including *Parent-Child Home* and *Early Steps to School Success*. Since inception, First Steps has delivered more than half a million parent education home visits to help parents prepare children for school success.

During FY17, First Steps guided 12 affiliate programs through a rigorous self-study as part of Parents as Teachers' national Quality Endorsement process. In April of 2017, each of these programs received notification that they had been awarded Blue Ribbon status, the model's national stamp of quality. The twelve affiliates (Berkeley, Darlington, Lexington1, Lexington 2, Clarendon 2, Lexington 3, Lexington 4, Jasper, Richland, Lexington/Richland 5, York 1, McCormick, and Pickens) join the state's three original Blue Ribbon programs (Beaufort First Steps, Charleston First Steps and Beaufort School District) bringing the statewide total to 15.

- In 2007, the SC First Steps Board of Trustees created comprehensive, statewide program fidelity standards that often exceed those of the national, evidence-based models on which they are based.
- First Steps' Parents as Teachers program has been twice recognized as a finalist for the WhatWorksSC Award by The Riley Institute at Furman University and SC Future Minds.

- Evaluation Notes Significant Improvements in Parenting: In an external evaluation, 66% of parents who initially scored at a low level of parenting skill improved their abilities to moderate or high levels after participation in a First Steps parent education program. (HighScope, Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale Analysis, 2010)
- Evaluation Notes Significant Improvements in Interactive Literacy: Both parents and children participating in First Steps family strengthening programs demonstrate improvements in early literacy, with parents increasing their use/demonstration of key early literacy strategies by 32% (pre to post) and children increasing their own demonstration of these behaviors by 33%. (HighScope, Adult-Child Interactive Reading Inventory Analysis, 2010)



Steps family strengthening

“Under First Steps’ leadership, Parents as Teachers in South Carolina has set the national example in fidelity and accountability. We hold you up to other states doing home visitation as an example of how it can be done right.”

*Scott Hippert, Former CEO
Parents as Teachers National Office*

Home Visitation Includes:

- Personal Visits with Families
- Child Developmental Screening & Assessment
- Community Resource & Referral



Program Model	FY2017
<p>Parents as Teachers (PAT) Parent mentor trained to enhance effective parent-child interaction, developmental parenting skills, and literacy for children 0-5. Developmental screenings, validated curriculum, and assessment.</p>	<p>1,167 families 1,403 children 21,798 visits 32 counties</p> <p>94.8% of First Steps' Parents as Teachers clients possess two or more identified readiness risk factors. 93% of these clients qualify for TANF or SNAP benefits or for free school lunches by virtue of a family income at or below 130% of the federal poverty definition. 60% of these children live in a single parent household and 30% of these children have been born to mothers with less than a high school diploma, 17% reside with a teenage custodial parent and 9% were born at a low birth weight.</p>
<p>Parent-Child Home (PCH) Parent mentor trained to support effective early literacy behaviors in children ages 0-5</p>	<p>142 families 141 children 6,583 visits 3 counties</p> <p>87.5% of First Steps' Parent-Child Home clients possess two or more identified readiness risk factors. 98.5% of these clients qualify for TANF or SNAP benefits or for free school lunches by virtue of a family income at or below 130% of the federal poverty definition. 59% live in a single parent household and 23% of these children have been born to mothers with less than a high school diploma. 5% reside with a teenage custodial parent and 20% were born at a low birth weight.</p>

Save the Children

Early Steps to School Success

Community and school tied to home visiting and literacy activities; assessment, mentoring and group meetings augment this program.

234 families
266 children
3,200 visits
4 counties

85.6% of First Steps' Early Steps to School Success clients possess two or more identified readiness risk factors. 88% of these clients qualify for TANF or SNAP benefits or for free school lunches by virtue of a family income at or below 130% of the federal poverty definition. 63% of these children live in a single parent household and 14% of these children have been born to mothers with less than a high school diploma, 17% reside with a teenage custodial parent and 12% were born at a low birth weight.

Parent Training and Literacy Strategies: Triple P, Incredible Years, Family Lit, Mother Read, Fatherhood

2,029 children
1,807 families
2,349 hours of training provided
14 counties

Additional parent education and family literacy strategies.

10,437 children
9,082 families
17 counties
Local partnerships distributed more than 352,000 books to children 0-5 during FY17





“One of the benefits of [the statewide collaboration] is that you will have multiple state agencies that can touch a child. In many cases, this is not redundant. This is partnering and touching the different pieces of that child’s life, to have the maximum impact in that child’s life, and to maximize the state dollars that are associated with those services so you get the most impact for those dollar spent.”

Dr. Beverly Buscemi, SC DDSN

EARLY INTERVENTION



Finding and serving our state's children with disabilities and developmental delays as early as possible can reduce later remediation and can help children prepare for school success along with their typically developing peers. South Carolina's BabyNet Early Intervention System – an interagency partnership between First Steps, the SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, the SC School for the Deaf and the Blind, the SC Department of Health and Human Services, and hundreds of private education, therapy, and service coordination vendors statewide - provides special education services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays. The program's outcomes consistently meet or exceed national averages on measures of key school readiness skills.

BABYNET OUTCOME SUMMARY STATEMENTS (FFY13-14)	Outcome 1: Development of posi- tive social emotional and relationship skills.	Outcome 2: Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills.	Outcome 3: Use of appropriate behavior to meet needs.
1. Of those children who entered the program below age expectations in [outcome], the percent that substantially increased their rate of growth in [outcome] by the time they exited.	79.6%	80.5%	82.0%
2. Percent of children who were functioning within age expectations in [outcome], by the time they exited.	59.3%	54.5%	57.7%

BABYNET PARENTS SPEAK:

“Our BabyNet service provider is very friendly. She listens, and seems to care about my family. I enjoy when she comes out. She gives me new ideas of things to try to help my son learn, and she helped us enroll in the ABC Child Care program and speech therapy.”

“Baby Net has played an important role in getting my preemie baby caught up.”

“I absolutely love our BabyNet therapist. She has shown that she cares about my son and his future. She has been a great fit for our family and I look forward to the rest of her visits with my son and watching his progress.”

During FY17

- First Steps’ local BabyNet intake offices received and processed 11,743 referrals statewide, a 14% increase since 2016.
- 4,379 children (37% of those referred) were determined newly eligible and began receiving BabyNet services under Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- BabyNet served a total of 9,091 infants and toddlers and their families, an increase of 9.5% since 2016.
- First Steps oversaw an 11% improvement in initial intake responsiveness, reducing the time to initial service provision by one full business week over the 2016 average.





QUALITY

CHILDCARE

Two-thirds of SC mothers with young children depend on child care providers to help care for their children during the work day. Since a child's brain is forming rapidly during these early years, child care teachers are significant partners to families in helping children develop to be successful in school.

According to an independent analysis by the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, child care providers participating in First Steps' quality improvement programs made statistically significant gains in each of seven domains of quality measured.

During FY17, First Steps:

- Provided quality-enhancement programming in 133 SC child care settings, enrolling 7,464 children. Centers selected for participation in First Steps' quality enhancement programs are identified via competitive application with priority to providers:
 - Participating in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program and documenting that at least 30% of enrolled students qualify for free meals/snacks (130% of federal poverty), - OR -
 - Located within the school attendance zone of (and/or enrolling primarily children attending) an individual elementary school rated "Below Average" or "At Risk" (Unsatisfactory) during the preceding three-year period, - OR -
 - In which 10% or more of enrolled students are SC voucher recipients.
 - Participating in a publicly-funding early care and education program (such as First Steps 4K). *Child-level demographic data is not collected for quality enhancement strategies.
- Made 3,322 on-site, provider visits.
- Provided 1,180 accredited child care training hours to 4,350 child care teachers, directors and staff.
- Provided preschool scholarships to 614 children in 138 qualified private settings. Of these children, 99% possessed two or more identified school readiness risk factors, with 43% qualifying for TANF benefits by virtue of a family income at or below 50% of federal poverty, 21% living with a teenage custodial parent, 20% born to a mother with less than a high school diploma, 83% residing with a single parent, and 17% born at a low birth weight.



Intensive Quality Enhancement Strategies

14	Counties
133	Centers Enrolling 7,464 children
3,322	Technical Assistance Visits Completed
7,005	Technical Assistance Visit Hours
25%	Average Improvement in Center Quality (Measured Pre -Post using the Environmental Rating Scales)



“It takes all of us — those in public agencies, our private partnerships, the faith community, the business community, all of us — working together, because, quite honestly, educators cannot do this all by themselves. And we can’t do it in just a regular school day. Once a child turns four, we have to have after school care and summer learning opportunities for those children who are at-risk. And believe you me, it makes success much easier if those at-risk children have had a strong early childhood development program. “

MOLLY SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

EARLY EDUCATION

Quality prekindergarten can improve a child's success in school, particularly for low-income or disadvantaged students.

South Carolina First Steps partners with high-quality private, community- and faith-based preschools to offer both Early Head Start and full-day four-year-old kindergarten for families of eligible children. First Steps' Early Head Start program currently serves 254 low-income infants and toddlers and their families in 15 locations in 12 South Carolina Counties.

The First Steps 4K program focuses on developmental and learning supports that children must have in order to be ready for school, incorporates research-based curricula, ongoing assessment and parent education.

Permanently codified in June 2014 after eight years as a pilot program, the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP) utilizes a public-private delivery model to expand access to 4K. Families can choose a public school or a community-based program for their eligible children.

Eligible children must be four on or before September 1, reside in one of 64 specified school districts, and qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch or Medicaid. CERDEP is jointly administered by SC First Steps (private and community-based schools) and the SC Department of Education (public schools).



Since the creation of the public-private 4K pilot in 2006-2007, First Steps has served nearly 12,000 four-year-olds in private, community- and faith-based preschool settings.

Public-Private 4K Works for South Carolina Families:

A 2015 analysis by the Education Oversight Committee suggests that students participating in the state's public-private 4K program outperformed a matched control group in Mathematics and English Language Arts in every year examined. [Enrollment in 4K closed 43.8% of the study's measured 6th grade Language Arts achievement gap](#), suggesting significant and lasting benefits of participation.

- During August of 2016, nearly 700 public and private preschool teachers, assistants, and administrators attended First Steps' 4K Academies in Columbia, receiving in-depth professional development on research-based curriculum, early literacy and social-emotional development.

- First Steps' private 4K students are receiving comparable learning experiences for 20% less cost to taxpayers (\$4,690 vs. \$5,812 per child). Funds provided for private 4K service provision are reinvested in South Carolina's economy, benefiting small, often minority-owned businesses who return a portion of this investment back to the state.
- First Steps ensures quality and accountability by making announced and unannounced monitoring visits approximately twice monthly, with 5,041 individual site visits completed during FY17. Participation in First Steps' 4K program, in combination with other quality supports, has positively influenced overall center quality for all children.
- First Steps is leveraging the availability of existing space in private child care centers, with no capital costs to taxpayers.
- 100% of First Steps' 4K students qualify for either free/reduced lunch or Medicaid.
- All First Steps 4K students participate in pre- and post-assessment exceeding the minimum requirements established by the SC Department of Education. Through grant funding from the SC Department of Social Services, all First Steps 4K classrooms are equipped to complete the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment online, documenting student learning throughout the year and accessing specialized instructional supports.

First Steps' 4K Impact:

PROGRAM YEAR	# OF CHILDREN	# OF PROVIDERS
2006-07 (FY 07)	309	40
2007-08 (FY 08)	482	48
2008-09 (FY 09)	459	40
2009-10 (FY 10)	524	39
2010-11 (FY 11)	549	36
2011-12 (FY 12)	577	43
2012-13 (FY 13)	601	42
2013-14 (FY 14)	1,402	93
2014-15 (FY 15)	1,916	151
2015-16 (FY16)	2,434	179
2016-17 (FY17)	2,535	202

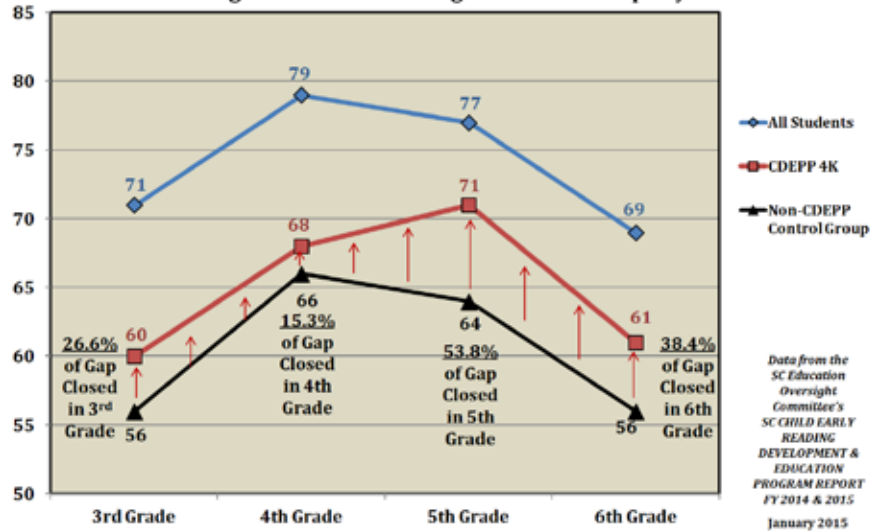
Total since FY07

Students Served 11,788

Closing the Achievement Gap - Mathematics

CDEPP Cohort One (4K in 2006-2007)

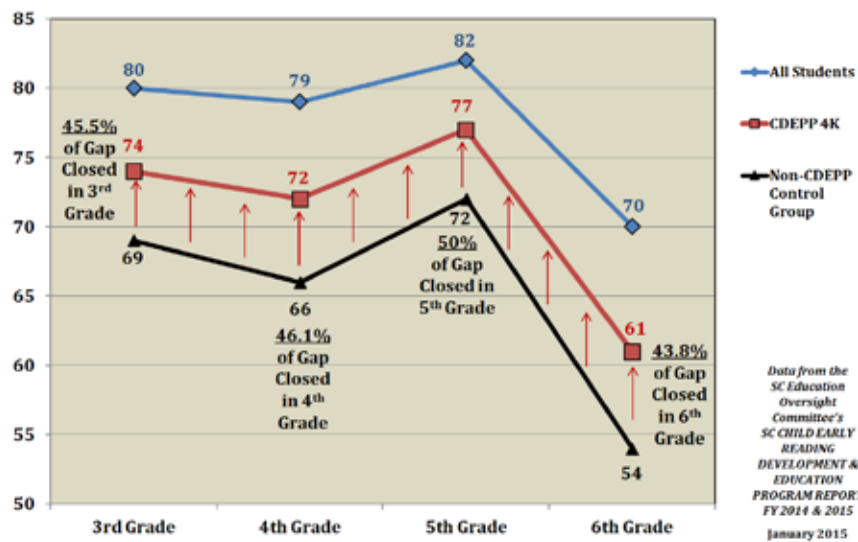
Percentage of Students Scoring "Met" or "Exemplary"



Closing the Achievement Gap - English Language Arts

CDEPP Cohort One (4K in 2006-2007)

Percentage of Students Scoring "Met" or "Exemplary"



In 2007, First Steps' Countdown to Kindergarten program was recognized as a promising state practice by the National Governor's Association in their report, Building the Foundation for Bright Futures.

"Countdown is the greatest thing that's ever happened to children in South Carolina. The relationships built over the summer between the teacher and families created a trust and support that has helped the children blossom in kindergarten. The only way to break the cycle is to model for parents how effectively they can work with their own children through reading and playing and learning with hands-on materials."

**-Gayle Troutman, Kindergarten
Teacher, Burnside Elementary School**

SCHOOL TRANSITION

In 2003, SC communities reported a lack of school transition services for children. In response, First Steps collaborated with local, state and national partners to create **Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK)**. **This home visitation program matches families of high-risk rising kindergartners with their future 5K teachers** during the summer before school entry. Teachers complete six visits with each family, centered on classroom and curriculum expectations.

In 2009 the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation completed an external review of Countdown to Kindergarten, noting the strategy's potential to powerfully shape both subsequent interaction and classroom practice. Researchers noted that:

- “Over 75% of home visitors reported making **some or a great deal of change in their instruction, experiences, practices, activities on the first day of school** and the **methods by which they communicate with parents** as a direct result of their CTK experience.”
- “All participants, whether home visitor or parents, report the **significant impact this strategy has on professional practice, parent-teacher relationships, and parent participation in and child attitudes toward kindergarten.**” (Further Steps to School Readiness- HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2010)
- In a 2013 teacher survey, **100% of participating teachers reported that Countdown to Kindergarten parents were as or more involved than non-participating parents.** This included involvement in activities such as parent/teacher conferences, attending school events and activities, maintaining contact with teachers, and volunteering in classroom or school activities.



During the summer of 2017, First Steps served **1,195 children, 1059 families, and delivered 6,327 Countdown to Kindergarten home visits.** 78% of these children possessed two or more identified school readiness risk factors, with 71% of these children qualifying for SNAP or free school lunches by virtue of a family income at or below 130% of federal poverty, 6% living in a teen parent household, 15% born to a mother with less than a high school diploma, and 10% with an identified developmental delay.

First Steps' School Transition Impact:
12,475 families served since 2004
74,348 teacher visits since 2004



A NOTE ON KID'S COUNT DATA

Children's Trust of South Carolina, the statewide organization working to prevent child abuse, neglect and injuries, annually releases local KIDS COUNT data profiles that rank counties on indicators of child well-being in South Carolina. These profiles provide a data-rich snapshot of life for children in each of the Palmetto State's 46 counties and highlight deficits that, if addressed, could significantly improve future opportunities for children in those communities. This data, which helps to determine the grant allocations of local First Steps partnerships as part of First Steps' state funding formula, is also excerpted in the county profiles to follow.

When children meet educational milestones and live in economically stable homes and supportive communities, they are more likely to grow into productive, contributing citizens. Currently, too many of South Carolina's children live in environments that put them at risk for negative outcomes, including child abuse and neglect.

South Carolina's Top 10 KIDS COUNT counties in 2017 (indicating the best conditions for children) were York, Lexington, Dorchester, Greenville, Pickens, Spartanburg, Berkeley, Beaufort, Richland and Charleston. Marlboro County ranked No. 46, trailing Dillon, Marion, Williamsburg and McCormick counties in the bottom five.

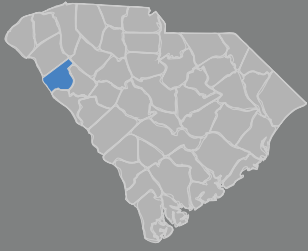
Additionally, for the first time in three years, the Annie E. Casey Foundation released Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children, a 2017 report that shows South Carolina's children trailing national outcomes of child well-being within every racial and ethnic group. There are particularly persistent challenges hindering the success of African-American and Hispanic/Latino children in the areas of economic opportunities and education. Children of color are more likely to live in poverty than their white counterparts, and deep disparities remain in meeting educational benchmarks in eighth-grade math proficiency and fourth-grade reading proficiency.

The complete county data and profile sheets, as well as the Race for Results report, can be found at sc-Children.org/KidsCount.

From The Desk of Sue Williams of Children's Trust of South Carolina



Sue Williams, Chief Executive Officer for Children's Trust of South Carolina, sits on the First Steps Board of Trustees. Sue leads South Carolina's agency working to prevent child abuse, neglect and injury. As an integral part of that mission, Children's Trust is the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT grantee for the state, providing high-quality data and reports on South Carolina's children and families. Using these county profiles, communities can make informed decisions to build greater opportunities for children and families.



Abbeville County

Angela Pruitt Executive Director

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Board Chair: Henry Green



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Abbeville County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,318
Children In Poverty	24.4%	26.2%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	11.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	16.7%

- Since inception, Abbeville County First Steps has leveraged \$1,143,660 from sources outside state government.
- 535 hours of support and guidance were provided to families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 15 hours of training for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 69 hours of Parenting Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 772**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



Our county partnership has had a great year in 2017. Abbeville and Greenwood County First Steps starting sharing office space in March 2011 and this collaborative arrangement continue to benefit both counties. By sharing administrative and programmatic resources across county lines, we have created significant cost savings which ensure more resources for direct services to children and families. We continue to have great relationships with the SC Department of Social Services and the Guardian Ad Litem Programs.

The Real Fathers Are Dads fatherhood initiative continues to grow and gain community support with participants, civic organizations, and churches. Real Fathers are Dads has grown into a Parent Training Program to include Real Mothers are Moms, through which both mothers and fathers now receive services. We also have a great relationship with The Social Change Initiative to make additional parenting services available to our families. We have provided services to over 475 participants since the inception these programs in 2008. The Fatherhood Initiative and Parents as Teachers program work jointly to include the entire family.

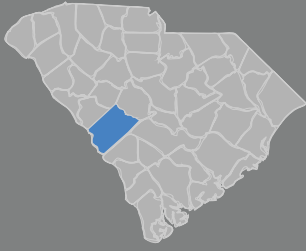
Fathers were a missing component for many years within our programs. By using a holistic approach and working with the entire family, we are now seeing change happen. Other agencies and partners in our community are seeing this change and want to be a part of this initiative. We also continue to partner with Lander University and the Education Department at Erskine College to provide early childhood conferences each year. We were able to provide high-quality child care trainings with certified trainers to 9 facilities and serving more than 694 children.

Community Partnerships are continuing to expand to strengthen services for the most at risk children in Abbeville County.

County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training
Parent Training

State Programs
First Steps 4K
BabyNet

Angela Pruitt
Executive Director



Aiken County

Marcia Nash
Executive Director

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aiken1stepsed@bellsouth.net
www.firststeps.org/aiken

Board Chair: Barbara C. Sanders



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Aiken County
Children Under Five	293,134	9,617
Children In Poverty	24.4%	27.1%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	22%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	17.2%

- Since inception, Aiken county First Steps has leveraged \$2,363,771 from sources outside of state government. That's \$.32 for every dollar received.
- Aiken County First Steps served 109 families and 214 adults.
- 319 total contacts and 359 service hours were provided to 20 families and 25 children in our Parents as Teachers Program.
- 319 total contacts for 359 service hours were provided to 20 families and 25 children in our Parents as Teachers Program.
- 199 total contacts for 372 service hours were provided to 14 child care providers.
- Improved parenting practices through 16 Group Connections.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 880**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



At Aiken County First Steps, it is our goal and mission to prepare EVERY enrolled child for kindergarten! First, we would like to say thank you to our staff, parents, children, volunteers, supporters and board members for another successful year. 2017 has been a year of firsts.

We began the year with a board retreat with training by First Steps and fun-filled - yet engaging - activities. We celebrated one another and learned more about how to engage - not only as a working board - but as a board with long-range goals to improve the quality of care and learning for each child served by Aiken County First Steps. Our programs have continued to grow as we have learned how to become more actively engaged within our communities and our partnerships. We have developed new partnerships and expanded our collaboration with the Aiken County School District and Superintendent Alford.

We are very fortunate to have gained new board members and eager staff who continue to lead the way forward. We are excited to have our first male parent educator, who has already been a positive influence on the children we serve. We also increased the male presence within our board. Our outreach programs also continue to grow. We continue to visit our local hospital to meet with new mothers, and Countdown to Kindergarten continues to grow as we expand to more schools within Aiken County.

As Board Chair, it continues to be an honor to work with dedicated, committed, and goal-oriented colleagues who strive to give the children of Aiken County our finest. Our children are the future of Aiken County. "Yes, WE Can so THEY Can!"

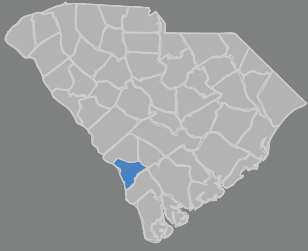
Barbara C. Sanders
Board Chair

County Programs

Parents as Teachers
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships

State Programs

BabyNet
First Steps 4K



Allendale County

Patricia Hall Executive Director

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Board Chair: Tom Carter



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Allendale County
Children Under Five	293,134	428
Children In Poverty	24.4%	50.6%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	52.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	15%

Allendale County First Steps Partnership Board of Directors and staff thank you for your willingness to facilitate the accomplishments of this past year. Your efforts have resulted in successful programs that have brought positive results in our community. These results were possible only through collaboration among partners, teachers, parents, and the community which generously gave of their time, talent, and funds.

- Since inception, Allendale County First Steps has leveraged \$1,096,138 from sources outside state government. That's \$.35 for every dollar received.
- 546 hours of support and guidance were provided to 33 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 20 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 53**

Meanwhile, we are asking you to think of other opportunities to expand services for our community. There is still a dire need for expansion of services and improving upon our success. Currently, we are able to serve twenty (20) children in our Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) program, fifteen (15) families in our scholarship program and thirty (30) families in our Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. With your continued collaborative partnership, we aim to serve at least thirty (30) families in each program.

I do hope that you will continue to embrace and serve the community with the benefit of your expert leadership skills in some capacity. We thank you for generous donation of time, talent and funds. We hope to have many more great years. Again, many thanks.

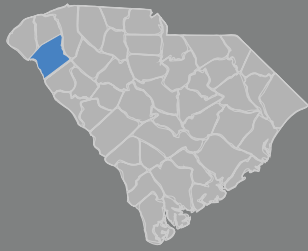
Patricia Hall
Executive Director

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Scholarships

State Programs
Early Head Start
First Steps 4K
BabyNet



Anderson County

Paige Wall
Executive Director

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1stepsac@bellsouth.net
www.scfirststeps.org/anderson

Board Chair: Jackie Blakley



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Anderson County
Children Under Five	293,134	11,627
Children In Poverty	24.4%	25.1%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Anderson 1: 12.6% Anderson 2: 13.8% Anderson 3: 21.2% Anderson 4: 12.7% Anderson 5: 23.4%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	17.8%

- **# of children served: 263**
- # of adults served: 262
- Clients earned 6 GEDs and 12 High School Diplomas; 12 were promoted to the next grade level
- 274 additional families referred for other community services
- Number of Books distributed: 1,017
- 12,980 pieces of educational materials (ex. Child Find brochures, Family Literacy handouts, Book Buddy Bags) distributed through 60 Community Education and Outreach Events/Activities conducted.
- Since inception, Anderson County First Steps has leveraged \$4,650,576 from sources outside state government. That's \$.53 for every dollar received.

Anderson County First Steps Partnership is proud of the following milestones it has achieved during the past sixteen years and its "value-add" to the Anderson community. Our mission could not have been accomplished without the passion, dedication, and support of our community partners:

The Anderson County First Steps Partnership has distributed \$9,739,037 to area providers to support parent and family strengthening programs and services, school transition, 4-K classes for at-risk children; and to improve learning environments through the child care quality enhancement and training programs.

Anderson County First Steps Partnership has increased the quality of services available to children and families, using research and data to improve programs and target the most at-risk children and their families.

In Anderson County, since 2007-2008, 97 adults have received GEDs and 115 teenage mothers have stayed in school and received their high school diplomas through Family Literacy programs; 801 additional children have had access to four-year-old kindergarten; 282 children and their families have received services through the Countdown to Kindergarten program; 19 child care facilities have improved their learning environments; and 628 families and 457 babies have received 9,290 home visits in collaboration with the Anderson County Nurse-Family Partnership.

As a local portal for quality early education and child development services:

12,980 pieces of educational materials (ex. Child Find brochures, Family Literacy handouts, Book Buddy Bags) were distributed through 60 Community Education and Outreach Events/Activities held throughout Anderson County.

Anderson County First Steps Partnership collaborates with community partners to leverage funds that will benefit Anderson County families.

During the past 16 years, \$4,650,576 has been leveraged to provide additional early education services for the most at-risk children and their families. We have strong partnerships with our local funders and service providers including Anderson School Districts One, Two, Three, Four, and Five who have provided \$106,345 annually in matching funds for Family Literacy service; the United Way of Anderson County for Countdown to Kindergarten; The Duke Endowment and The Stevenson Trusts for Nurse-Family Partnership; and Peoples Bank of Iva provides office space and administrative services.

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Family Literacy
Nurse-Family Partnership
Early Education
Countdown to Kindergarten

State Programs
BabyNet
First Steps 4K
Early Head Start

Paige Wall, Executive Director



Bamberg County

Pauletta Plowden Executive Director

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 www.scfirststeps.org/bamberg

Board Chair: Tracy K. Golden



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Bamberg County
Children Under Five	293,134	726
Children In Poverty	24.4%	43.9%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Bamberg 1: 26.5% Bamberg 2: 25%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	15.6%

- Since inception, Bamberg County First Steps has leveraged \$2,221,022.99 from sources outside state government. That's \$.78 for every dollar received.
- 368.24 hours of support and guidance were provided to 21 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 25.5 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Families Served in FY17: 28**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
 Parents as Teachers
 Child Care Training
 Child Care Scholarships

State Programs
 Early Head Start
 First Steps 4K
 BabyNet

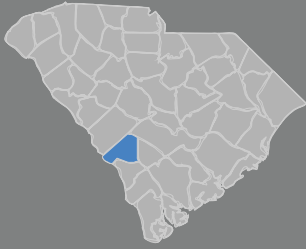
Bamberg County First Steps has demonstrated another important year of successes, in working diligently with our local children, families, and community. There is an important American quote that identifies that "It is better to build strong children, than to repair broken men"! Bamberg County First Steps is in the business of building children, building families, building community partnerships, building collaborations, and BUILDING the FUTURES of our youngest and most precious learners.

Bamberg County First Steps provides a message of hope for our community by affording our children and families educational strategies that focus on Family Strengthening, Healthy Start, Quality Childcare Early Education, and School Transitions. With our best practice strategies, we afford families the Parents as Teachers (PAT) model, an evidence-based early childhood home visitation program that offers that personal touch twice per month from a certified home visitor. Families receive intense training in becoming their child's first and most important teachers. As an addendum to parent training, we provide DSS Child Care Scholarships to high-need families to assist them in completing their education and/or working full time jobs.

While quality child care is essential, it's equally important that our early care teachers are afforded high-quality training and professional development. Therefore, Bamberg County First Steps offers our local teachers certified Childcare Training and Development in the areas of Nutrition, Health and Safety, Curriculum, Child Guidance, and Professional Development. Research indicates that well-trained teachers are the key to promoting a healthy and safe learning environment for our children.

Understanding how the early years impact the lives of our youngest learners, Bamberg County First Steps remains empowered and committed to excellence in ensuring that its mission of helping children during their developmental years of life, to grow healthy and ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow. So, we say "thank you" to our state and local First Steps Boards and, to the many collaborative community partners who have supported us over the past seventeen years, to our legislators who supports the reauthorization of S.C. First Steps.

Professionally Yours,
 Pauletta Plowden



Barnwell County

Doris Mitchell Executive Director

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Board Chair: John Holston



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Barnwell County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,387
Children In Poverty	24.4%	38.2%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Barnwell 19: 42.1% Barnwell 29: 29.6% Barnwell 45: 22.4%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	21.5%

- Since inception, Barnwell County First Steps has leveraged \$1,927,426.42 from sources outside of state government.
- 51 children provided with scholarship assistance so their parents could work or attend school.
- 60 families received 1139 home visits as part of the Early Steps to School Success Program.
- **Total Children Served in FY 17: 111**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



Research suggests that the early years of life are a critical time for the learning and development of children. The brain develops during these early years, so it is critical that we make the most of them. Barnwell County First Steps' mission is to provide early childhood education programs designed to ensure our children arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed.

We understand that this responsibility is not one to be taken lightly, nor can we do it alone. That is why we are so grateful to our community partners (parents, school districts, child care centers, private donors like the Darnell Committee and Axis 1, the YMCA, and Head Start) who work diligently with us to provide programs and services that help children prepare for school success. We believe that it truly does "take a village."

Barnwell County First Steps provides programs designed to promote the holistic success of the child. We not only focus on the child's well-being, but on the family's as well. We provide scholarships for low-income, at-risk children whose parents work or attend school. Our child care centers provide parents with loving, safe, and nurturing places to leave their children. Our home visitors help parents to understand how to be the best role models for their children. The services that are provided through First Steps are changing lives for the good, and are ensuring that our children arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed.

There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One is roots; the other, wings. – *Hodding Carter*

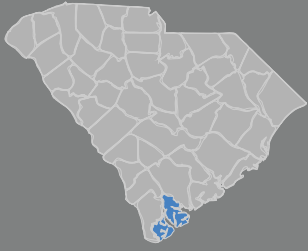
County Programs

Early Steps
Childcare Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten

State Programs

BabyNet
First Steps 4K

Doris Mitchell
Executive Director



Beaufort County

Betty Washington Executive Director

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www.scfirststeps.org/beaufort

Board Chair: Ashley Hutchison



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Beaufort County
Children Under Five	293,134	10,133
Children In Poverty	24.4%	21.3%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	20.4%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	14.7%

- Since inception, Beaufort County First Steps has leveraged \$2,049,445 from sources outside state government. That's \$.30 for every dollar received.
- 433.07 hours of support and guidance were provided to 20 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 398.5 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: Parents as Teachers 28 Quality Enhancement 452**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs

Parents as teachers
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Community Education

State Programs

First Steps 4K
BabyNet

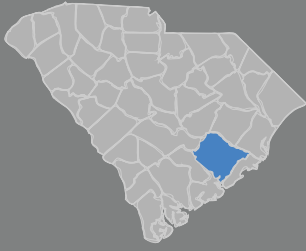
A lot has changed since First Steps was implemented into law in 1999 to address the growing need for quality early childhood services around the state. Beaufort County First Steps is proud to be a part of some of those positive changes. Though much has been done the need is still great.

Some of our programs and services have decreased over the years due to funding, however, Beaufort County First Steps' commitment to the vision of "preparing children for school readiness" remains as steadfast as ever. We believe every child has the right to the best possible childhood. Beaufort County First Steps staff works tirelessly to make everlasting changes to assist caregivers in achieving the social, intellectual, economic, physical and emotional potential for their children. While there has been progress over the years, we believe much more is possible.

Research on brain development is changing how we think about the early years. It has produced new insights on interacting with a child, managing behavior and preparing children to enter school healthy and ready to succeed. First Steps offers a variety of evidence-based programs and provides tools to increase caregivers' knowledge of early childhood development. We continue to collaborate with community partners to address the needs of children and families.

Thank you for being a part of Beaufort County First Steps and for the vital role you play in our work. Your support truly makes a difference!

Beaufort County First Steps Staff
Betty Washington, Executive Director
Betty Ford, Program Assistant/Parent Educator
Lucette Brown, Parent Educator
Sheryl Newton, Early Child Educator



Berkeley County

Adrienne Troy-Frazier Executive Director

Berkeley County First Steps
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(843)863-3030
www.berkeleyfirststeps.org

Board Chair: Brenda Campbell



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Berkeley County
Children Under Five	293,134	13,940
Children In Poverty	24.4%	18.7%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	18.5%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	12.7%

- Since inception, Berkeley County First Steps has leveraged \$2,018,420 from sources outside state government. That's \$.22 for every dollar received.
- 838 Books Provided to Families
- 584 Childcare professionals received 58.4 hours of high quality training to support early care best practices.
- **112 Children Served through Early Head Start and Parents As Teachers**

Berkeley County First Steps was founded on the principle that all children deserve the resources to succeed in school and in life. Since 1999 we've worked to support children by supporting their parents, teachers, child and health care providers by filling the gaps in early childhood systems of care and coordination.

This report tells the stories of a few of the families, educators, and Berkeley communities we have impacted. Please join us as a donor, advocate or volunteer as we continue to develop, expand and implement programs such as Parents As Teachers, Early Head Start, Early Childhood STEAM, and individualized teacher education programs that are proven and effective in addressing overarching issues of endemic poverty that prevent young children from being healthy and ready for success in school and in life.

With the highest hopes for all children,

Adrienne Troy-Frazier
Executive Director

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships

State Programs
Early Head Start
First Steps 4K
BabyNet



Calhoun County

Virginia Newman Executive Director

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Board Chair: Stanley Rivers



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Calhoun County
Children Under Five	293,134	724
Children In Poverty	24.4%	29.4%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	27.9%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	12%

- Since inception, Calhoun County First Steps has leveraged \$808,488 from sources outside state government. That's \$.30 for every dollar received.
- 887 hours of support and guidance were provided to 53 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Improved parenting practices through 12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- 25 rising kindergarteners completed our Summer-2016 school transition program.
- 275 children 0-5 received one age-appropriate book each month for 12 months.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 358**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



Hats off to the United Way of the Midlands (UWM) for its constancy to our county partnership. We have received over \$50,000 in grants and employee's designated contributions over the past five years. The impact of this collaboration has expanded our Parents as Teachers program to fifty families and our Countdown to Kindergarten program to forty rising kindergarteners. Through this collaboration, we have the opportunity to travel around the Midlands sharing our successes through storytelling as we encourage employees to contribute to the UWM.

We also participate in the Calhoun County Library's Summer Readiness program. Each Wednesday during the summer, our PAT-certified parent educators report to the library to lead story time and music activities with parents and their toddlers. This collaboration also affords us the opportunity to register children for our Dolly Parton Imagination Library program.

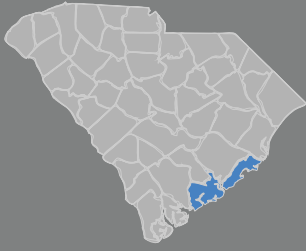
On the first Tuesday of each month, we team up with the Calhoun DHEC-WIC Program to share parenting tips and register children for Imagination Library.

Through the aforementioned collaborations, our partnership has expanded services for children and families, as well leveraging an additional 30 cents on each state dollar received.

Virginia Newman
Executive Director

County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Imagination Library
Countdown To Kindergarten

State Programs
BabyNet



Charleston County

James Ella Collins Executive Director

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Board Chair: Richardine Singleton-Brown



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Charleston County
Children Under Five	293,134	23,915
Children In Poverty	24.4%	22.9%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	20%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	11.7%

- Since inception, Charleston County First Steps has leveraged \$9,795,874 from sources outside state government. That's \$68.34 for every dollar received.
- 2288 hours of support and guidance were provided to 89 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 12 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 11 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 794**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
 Parents as Teachers
 Child Care Training
 Early Head Start
 Parents as Teachers
 Child Care Partnership
 Quality Enhancement
 Raising A Reader
 Trident Literacy

State Programs
 BabyNet

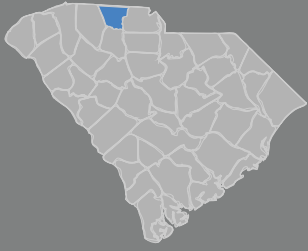
The goal of the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program is to provide parents with child development knowledge and parenting support; offer early detection of developmental delays and health issues; prevent child abuse and neglect; and increase children's school readiness. The PAT model includes one-on-one home visits, monthly group meetings, developmental screenings, and linkages and connections for families to needed resources. Parent educators conduct the home visits using structured visit plans using guided planning tools. Local sites offer at least 12 hour-long home visits annually with more offered to higher-need families. PAT serves families for at least two years between pregnancy and Kindergarten. PAT affiliate programs select the target population they plan to serve and the program duration.

The PAT program teaches parents important skills to practice at home. Reading opens the door to your child's early academic success, imparts a love of learning and leads to higher grades in every subject. Numerous studies have shown that strong oral language skills are the basis for literacy development. When children learn to read at an early age, they have greater general knowledge, expand their vocabulary and become more fluent readers. They also have improved attention spans and better vocabulary concentration. Early readers can recognize a larger number of words by sight, which enables them to learn more from and about their environment.

As parents talk, sing and read to their children, existing links among brain cells are strengthened and new links are formed. At a younger age, learning is faster than it will be as the child grows older. When a child is taught to read, the process of learning has a profound influence on the entire functioning and development of the brain. You can play a critical early role by inculcating not only reading skills and ability but more importantly, instilling a lifelong love of learning and reading.

A child who learns to read joyfully at home, at an early age, with a loving parent or caregiver, grows in self-confidence and independence. Reading promotes greater maturity, increases discipline and lays the basis for moral literacy. It sparks curiosity about people, places and things and also satisfies the child's curiosity by providing explanations of how things work. It exposes the child to a range of problem-solving techniques. In addition, early reading ignites the child's creativity and imagination.

James Ella Collins
 Executive Director



Cherokee County

Dorothy M. Priester
Executive Director

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Board Chair: Dr. Ronald Cope



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Cherokee County
Children Under Five	293,134	3,394
Children In Poverty	24.4%	29.7%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	25.9%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	21.2%

- Since inception, Cherokee County First Steps has leveraged \$2,038,753 from sources outside state government. That's \$.49 for every dollar received.
- 2,155 children were enrolled in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
- 24 children received home visits during Countdown to Kindergarten to help them prepare for school.
- 85 unduplicated child care professionals received 25 hours of high-quality training to meet licensing standards.
- 2 community learning events were hosted and we participated in 12 education/ health fairs for the Talk To Me Cherokee Initiative.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 2,179**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Imagination Library
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Training
Talk to Me Cherokee Initiative

State Programs
BabyNet

Cherokee County First Steps continued to place "family first" by focusing on outreach within the community. Attendance at education/health fairs, community events, and home visits helped us to raise awareness of the organization as well as the importance of early education. During FY17, we highlighted Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, the Talk to Me Cherokee Initiative, and Countdown to Kindergarten.

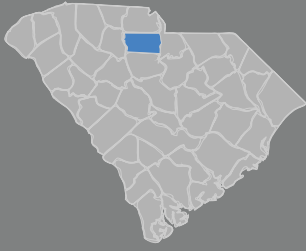
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is one of our primary programs. By providing books to children in their home environment, it allowed families access to books and increased parent-child interactions. It is noteworthy to mention that at the end of June 2017, we had more than 63% of the children within the county under age 5 enrolled in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Another key component to promoting early education, was the Talk to Me Cherokee Initiative. Among the initiative's accomplishments this year was launching the second phase of home visiting using the LENA (Language ENvironment Analysis) system in partnership with Piedmont Community Action Early Head Start program. In January 2017, the First Steps state office provided \$5000 in additional funding to cover the cost of licensing for the LENA system to be used by Cherokee and other counties interested in following their model.

In maintaining the community approach, the Countdown to Kindergarten program was utilized. The summer home visitation model connected rising kindergartners and their families with their teachers. The home visits emphasized the classroom expectations for the 24 families involved.

The remaining program provided by Cherokee County First Steps during this year was Child Care Training. Keeping the child care providers and their staff updated on rules and regulations to maintain licensing was important as the caregivers were an additional element in supporting early education practices. However, attendance numbers decreased this year due to training offered by the SC Department of Social Services.

Dorothy M. Priester
Executive Director



Chester County

Centuria S. Watson Executive Director

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Board Chair: Joni Arrowood



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Chester County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,914
Children In Poverty	24.4%	38%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	30.9%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	23.8%

- Since inception, Chester County First Steps has leveraged \$1,302,444 from sources outside state government. That's \$.43 for every dollar received.
- 628 hours of support and guidance were provided to 34 families in our Parents As Teachers program.
- Childcare professionals received 22 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 9 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 37**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



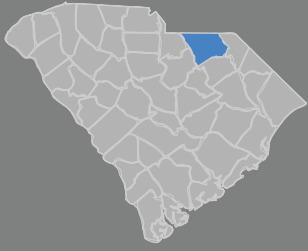
Collaboration has created a network of resources that play a pivotal role in the ability of parents, teachers, other caregivers, and an engaged community to be vigilant supporters of our children's school readiness. In other words, there is a broad spectrum of widespread interest in school success, and a path to lifelong learning. When needs exist there must be systems in place to bring remedies that promote progress. Collaborative relationships allow families to have the support they need to equip their children with tools necessary for learning. Research repeatedly tells us the window of opportunity for capitalizing on brain growth and development is before age four. We would be remiss to sit by while this window closes and not seize every moment possible to advance a foundation for learning.

Sustained partnership with community stakeholders has been paramount for undergirding awareness for the importance of investing in early childhood services and programs. The Chester County Community Coalition, Chester School District, Chester County Library, Head Start, Hazel Pittman Center, YMCA, Chester County Government and Chester Department of Social Services have been unwavering in their support for children and their families. The Chester County First Steps Partnership Board believes each child starting school healthy and ready to succeed is imperative; we must invest today in the children who will lead us tomorrow.

County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training

State Programs
First Steps 4K
BabyNet

Centuria S. Watson
Executive Director



Chesterfield County

Karen Martini
Executive Director

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Board Chair: Amelia Clontz



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Chesterfield County
Children Under Five	293,134	2,668
Children In Poverty	24.4%	33.7%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	32.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	21.7%

- Since inception, Chesterfield County First Steps has leveraged \$2,630,414.37 from sources outside state government. That's \$.80 for every dollar received.
- Improved parenting practices through Incredible Years Parent Workshops.

100% - All reported that the problems that originally prompted them to take this program for their child were either improved or greatly improved.

100% - All found the majority of the Incredible Years techniques to be effective in changing their child's behavior

- **Total Children Served in FY17: 253**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



In Service to Children

In 2016-2017, Chesterfield County First Steps (CCFS) continued to develop and deliver programs and services for young children and their families. Initiating new and expanding established community partnerships, CCFS directly served and effectively connected children and families to resources that are essential to every child's health, well-being and school readiness.

Through our partnerships and collaborations, CCFS solidified existing programs and strategically advanced plans for new programs to enhance early education, child health care and child care in our communities.

The unwavering and increasing support for and engagement in our work for children by the citizens in our communities continues to help drive CCFS's progress. The investment in the future of our children by our business, education and faith community partners does and will continue to determine our ability to achieve our mission. CCFS worked with SCFS state office to help ensure the Partnership's strategic goals, programmatic emphases and operational procedures supported statewide priorities for advancement of South Carolina's early childhood system.

Over the past year, CCFS increased our impact on the communities we serve through successful program delivery, constructive collaborations, dynamic advocacy and effective resource development.

Each of these strategies is crucial to meeting the school readiness of young children in rural communities like those CCFS serves. We look forward to the future.

Karen Martini
Executive Director

County Programs
Incredible Years
Imagination Library
Blessings in a Backpack

State Programs
First Steps 4K
BabyNet



Clarendon County

Sharon P. Williams, MPA
Executive Director

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Board Chair: Tonia M. Smith, GPC



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Clarendon County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,665
Children In Poverty	24.4%	38.1%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Clarendon 1 - 39.7 Clarendon 2 - 35.3 Clarendon 3 - 28.6
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	16.3%

- Since inception, Clarendon County First Steps has leveraged \$1,242,951 from sources outside state government. That's 37 cents for every dollar received.
- Partnered with local school districts to successfully deliver 972 visits to parents and children enrolled in the Parents As Teachers and Countdown to Kindergarten programs.
- Improved parenting practices through 23 Group Connections/Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 382**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



Research clearly and consistently shows that 90% of children's full brain potential is formed by the age of four. That represents a small, yet critical, window of opportunity for us to make a strong and enduring impact on our children. This is why quality early care and education experiences for prekindergarten children matter!

Thank you to our many and diverse partners for recognizing that quality early care and education experiences matter and for doing all you can to help us to implement programs and services conducive to positive and lasting outcomes for Clarendon County's youngest and most vulnerable citizens. Whatever your contribution (i.e., serving on the Partnership Board, serving as a partner in implementing programs and services, referring families with young children, providing funding and/or other resources for programs to be implemented in accordance with best practices and South Carolina First Steps' Standards), please know that the investments you have made today will continue to make a world of difference for all of us in the future.

Your willingness to partner with us enables us to maximize our limited resources so that we can, together, do as much as we can to ensure that Clarendon County's youngest and most vulnerable citizens have the best chance possible of reaching first grade healthy and ready to succeed.

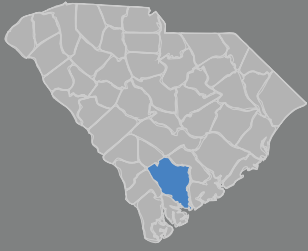
Thank you!
Sharon P. Williams, MPA
Executive Director

County Programs

Parents as Teachers
Imagination Library
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Training

State Programs

BabyNet



Colleton County

Cindy L. Dickerson
Executive Director

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Board Chair: LaToya Lynah



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Colleton County
Children Under Five	293,134	2,232
Children In Poverty	24.4%	36.7%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	33%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	20.5%

- Since inception, Colleton County First Steps has leveraged \$1,795,770 from sources outside state government. That's \$.54 for every dollar received.
- 245 hours of support and guidance were provided to 22 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 52.5 hours of certified training for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 16 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- 6,378 books were distributed throughout the county.

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Scholarships
Parent Training

State Programs
BabyNet
First Steps 4K

Our programs require successful collaboration with community partners. We ask all parents and partners to join us as we launch new programs and continue programs that have proven outcomes. Parents find our programs easy to participate in and appreciate the educational books and materials we supply to enhance their role as their child's first teacher.

The entire Board and staff work, throughout the county with non-profits, faith-based organizations, businesses, and government organizations to implement programs for children pre-natal to 5 years old. One of our outreach programs are books that have been provided to all collaborating organizations by our partnership.

Colleton County First Steps was asked to provide the Christmas "Fill the Stocking" Project for 2016 Christmas Season. Our hope was it would become a community effort and that is exactly what happened. We were amazed at the way the community stepped up and helped us to serve 236 families and 499 children. Many civic organizations and individuals adopted families and contributed to the project and we raised over \$6,000 to help fund the project.

Several of our Board Members attend Presbyterian Churches in Colleton County: Susan Dodd, Janice Young, and Juliette Green. All three of these individuals participate in the above back to school project, Hands of Christ. This program provides school supplies to children in the county, clothing, and bibles. We also provided books this year which were very much appreciated to help the children while they were waiting to be served. We appreciate our Board Members and their service to the community.

Cindy L. Dickerson
Executive Director



Darlington County

Mrs. Darnell Byrd McPherson Executive Director

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Board Chair: Dr. Alvin T. Heatley



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Darlington County
Children Under Five	293,134	3,999
Children In Poverty	24.4%	5,059
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	31.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	20.3%

Indicator	Darlington County
Teen Pregnancy Rate	34.9 (per 1,000)
Repeat Teen Pregnancy Rate	14th highest in SC

- Offered 82 sessions for mothers and fathers in the Diva Den and Dad Cave
 - Parent Counseling
 - Mental Health Wellness
 - Personal Development
- Held 70 community events and trainings for professional development.
- **Served 4,722 families and their children in FY17**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs

- Access Condoms in Darlington County (AC/DC)
- Countdown to Kindergarten
- Diva Den
- Dad Cave
- Motheread/Fatheread
- Men's Health Collaborative
- Parents Are First
- Parents as Teachers
- Reach Out and Read

State Programs

- BabyNet
- First Steps 4K

"Teamwork Makes the Dream Work"

When you hear of great events happening in the world, there is a 99.9% chance it didn't happen because of one person alone. More than likely, there was a team of people working together to reach a common goal. Darlington County First Steps believes in the concept of teamwork which is why we prioritize the relationships we have with our partners and Darlington County community members.

We are housed in the building with Adult Education and S. C. Works, the S. C. Employment service, which gives us additional visibility as a source for services and facilitates connecting our parents with those services. Also, in conjunction with Adult Education, we provide on-site free childcare services and family literacy services, four days and evenings per week at two locations in the county. These services are open to any parent of a preschool aged child who is enrolled in Adult Education or receives any services offered by DCFS or SC BabyNet. The BabyNet Intake Coordinator for Darlington County conducts onsite interviews at our location.

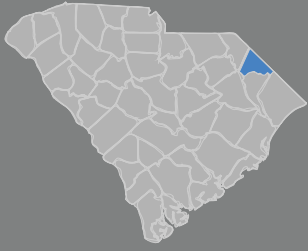
For the fourth year, Darlington County Library System, Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center, and DCFS have successfully continued to distribute Welcome Baby Bags/Literacy Kits to every new parent who gives birth at our local hospital. Bags are filled with information about our services along with information about BabyNet and the Darlington County Library. Parents are provided an invitation to visit our office which gives us an opportunity to present them with another gift and have one-on-one conversations about our programs.

DCFS was invited to serve as a key contributor to the City of Hartsville's "All America City" application. Our work with young mothers and fathers was the focal point, as we are the primary providers of services to this population. It was noted, we created specific spaces for our young parents, the Diva Den and the Dad Cave, where services are provided.

Lastly, we have been engaged in a process of continuous improvement and capacity building under the tutelage of The Weathers Group, located in Columbia, SC. Mr. Charles Weathers has facilitated sessions on board governance, community outreach, community collaboration, program sustainability and most recently, guidance as we updated our vision, values, and mission statements.

This year's annual report reflects not only the services DCFS has provided, but our commitment to excellence: our priority of building relationships with families, our partners, community members as well as our state leadership team and funders.

Mrs. Darnell Byrd McPherson
Executive Director



Dillon County

Shirleen Lewis, MS Executive Director

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Board Chair: Nina Bradley



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Dillon County
Children Under Five	293,134	2,033
Children In Poverty	24.4%	32.9%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	28.6
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	15.7%

- Since inception, Dillon County First Steps has leveraged \$1,249, 254 from sources outside state government. That's \$.47 for every dollar received.
- 759 hours of support and guidance were provided to 34 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 20 hours of certified training to meet annual certification requirements.
- Improved parenting practices through 12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 34**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training

State Programs
Early Head Start
First Steps 4k
BabyNet

Dillon County First Steps (DCFS) Partnership Board and staff are proud to serve Dillon County's youngest children to build a strong educational foundation to ensure Dillon County's children are ready for school.

In 2016-17, DCFS continues the Parents As Teachers (PAT) Home Visitor Program that serves families with prenatal through kindergarten children and Child Care Training and Professional Development that serves child care providers by offering certified training hours to fulfill their yearly DSS credit hours.

Dillon School District Four continues to support DCFS by providing office space, meeting space, utilities, and copying service. A grant from the Dillon County United Way supports the Parents As Teachers program through the purchase of age appropriate books. A grant from South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development supports child care trainings by assisting with presenter fees and advertising. Child Care Resource and Referral provides a trainer for child care training.

DCFS continues to encourage community support through its 9th Annual Community Fundraiser. The fundraiser raises awareness of First Steps and assists with the purchase of needed supplies to enhance all programs.

DCFS will continue to serve high-quality education programs and encourage community support to ensure that Dillon County children have the best possible education. By DCFS and the community working together as a team, we will build a dependable, reliable, and educated workforce in Dillon County.

Shirleen Lewis, MS
Executive Director



Dorchester County

Crystal Y. Campbell
Executive Director

Dorchester County First Steps

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www.scfirststeps.org/dorchester

Board Chair: Ms. Rhonda Robinson



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Dorchester County
Children Under Five	293,134	9,828
Children In Poverty	24.4%	18.8%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	DD2 13.5% DD4 24.7%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	10.7%

- Since inception, Dorchester County First Steps has leveraged \$28.312 from sources outside state government. That's \$.47 for every dollar received.
- 427 hours of support and guidance were provided to 27 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 54 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 9 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 890**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs

- Nurse - Family Partnership
- Parents As Teachers
- Parent - Child Home
- Countdown to Kindergarten
- Child Care Quality Enhancement
- Child Care Training
- Child Care Scholarships
- Early Identification and Referral
- Community Education

State Programs

- First Steps 4k
- BabyNet

It gives me great pleasure to share with you the successes supported by the Partnership Board, and Staff of Dorchester County First Steps. We are in our 17th year of carrying out the mission of "Getting Children Ready for School", and I am honored to be able to lead this marvelous organization. An additional focus this year has been to be more involved in the community. So, the "Do You Like Us Now?" campaign is in full swing.

In FY17, Dorchester County First Steps has invested in many of the core areas of service. We contribute and support the work of the Nurse-Family Partnerships and in so doing have helped to strengthen the overall health and well-being of 27 children. We also support and implement two parenting Programs: Parent-Child Home and Parents As Teachers. In the Parent Child Home Program, housed in both Dorchester 2 and Dorchester 4 schools, we have provided 2424 hours of support and guidance to 49 families.

The Parents As Teachers home visitation program provides quality instruction for 27 families led by Alicia Turner and Kristy Allan. We are also proud to announce that Alicia Turner is a state-wide PAT Trainer as well. We continue to strive to improve the quality of our child care centers by implementing the Quality Counts, continuous quality improvement rating system and we are happy to announce that 2 centers have increased their ratings and are ready to apply for ABC Quality due to the support of Ivory Mitchell, the QE Coordinator. The Literacy Kits, which are housed in both libraries in the County, have been circulated over 881 times. This means that families are using the kits with their children.

All of these events were created with purpose; to help us attain our goal of "Getting Children Ready for School". Do you like us now?

Crystal Y. Campbell
Executive Director



Edgefield County

Candi Lalonde

Executive Director

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Board Chair: Liz Posey



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Edgefield County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,125
Children In Poverty	24.4%	27.1%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	22.4%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	19.0%

- Since inception, Edgefield County First Steps has leveraged \$1,688,842 from sources outside state government. That's \$.61 for every dollar received.
- 215 home visits provided to 34 families in our Family Literacy and Nurse Family Partnership Programs.
- Childcare professionals received 30 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices. An additional 51.5 hours of certified training was provided.
- Improved parenting practices through 15 Positive Parenting Program workshops.
- Gave 5,061 books to children.
- Provided 30 child care scholarships

Kids Count Data Provided By:



One of my favorite children's books is The Little Engine That Could. In this book, we see the little blue engine do more than she thought she ever could. With the faith of the toys and dolls who believed in her and her willingness to try what she had never done, she worked hard and made it over the mountain.

Edgefield County First Steps is very much like the little blue engine. We certainly are not the biggest entity working for young children; we haven't been around the longest; and we are often asked to do things we have never done. However, we continue to get support from legislators, agencies, grant funders, businesses, groups, and individuals who believe that we can accomplish wonderful things for young children and their families.

It is because of the confidence in our staff and the widespread support of our programs that Edgefield County First Steps had one of its most successful years since our inception 16 years ago. Our first increase in funding in more than a decade allowed us to strengthen partnerships, extend our reach throughout the county, and ultimately serve more families.

We will continue working hard to provide quality services for Edgefield's youngest citizens and their families, all the while smiling and thinking, "I thought I could".

Candi Lalonde
 Executive Director

County Programs

- Positive Parenting Program
- Family Literacy
- Imagination Library
- Nurse Family Partnership
- Countdown to Kindergarten
- Child Care Quality Enhancement
- Child Care Training
- Child Care Scholarships.

State Programs

- BabyNet



Fairfield County

Patti Wilkes
Executive Director

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Board Chair: Rebecca T. Douglas



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Fairfield County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,522
Children In Poverty	24.4%	33.4%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	32.5%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	12.7%

- Since inception, Fairfield County First Steps has leveraged \$1,141,685 from sources outside state government. That's \$.40 for every dollar received
- 397 hours of support and guidance were provided to 17 families in our Parents As Teachers Program
- Distributed over 6500 books to children in our community
- Improved parenting practices through 15.5 hours of group meetings
- **Total families served: 337**
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 588**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parents as Teachers
1000 Books before Kindergarten
Imagination Library
Countdown to Kindergarten
Childcare Scholarships

State Programs
Early Head Start
First Steps 4K
BabyNet

While the office of Fairfield County First Steps saw changes in personnel, the programs did not have any major changes. We continue to serve families through Parents As Teachers, serving 20 families now that we have a full-time Parent Educator. We also offer Imagination Library, 1000 Books Before Kindergarten, Countdown to Kindergarten and Childcare Tuition Assistance programs. Additionally, we partnered with the local DSS office to add a library to their lobby.

As a part of our continued collaboration with the Fairfield Community Coordinating Council, the Council joined forces with the Fairfield Memorial Hospital Foundation, to write a grant through the Duke Endowment. First Steps will receive Needs and Resources information through this grant.

Fairfield County First Steps is now partnering with the Palmetto Project in an effort to increase the number of children receiving books through our Imagination Library program. Any child living in Fairfield County is eligible to receive books through this program until their 5th birthday.

United Way of the Midlands continues to partner with First Steps for our Countdown to Kindergarten program. We employed five local kindergarten teachers for the Summer 2016 CTK program. The Fairfield County School District once again covered the cost of the toolkits for this program. The 50 identified students have been enrolled in the K5 programs across Fairfield County that began August 2016.

In partnership with the Fairfield County Library, Fairfield County First Steps held our Second Annual Literacy Walk. Again the walk was led by Sheriff Will Montgomery. The walk encompassed a short path along the walking trail at historic Mt. Zion through town and finished at the library where families were welcomed to the celebration of the library's Summer Reading kick-off.

Patti Wilkes
Executive Director



Florence County

Spencer R. Scott Executive Director

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Board Chair: Darren McClam



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Florence County
Children Under Five	293,134	8,699
Children In Poverty	24.4%	28.7%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Florence 1: 19.7% Florence 2: 17.9% Florence 3: 35.4% Florence 4: 64.6% Florence 5: 20.2%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	15.1%

- Since inception, Florence County First Steps has leveraged \$2,303,408 from sources outside state government. That's \$.24 for every dollar received.
- 64 Children and 64 families were served through Parenting Programs. The Home Visitors made 2,997 home visits and spent 1,562 hours serving the families.
- Enhancing the Quality of a Childcare facility: FCFS served 6 childcare providers, 140 children 0 - 5 years old and conducted 142 Technical Assistance (TA) visits.
- Childcare professionals received 130.5 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices, 28 early childhood staff with high quality training, 10 hours of certified training for staff to meet annual re-certification requirements and 259 children had access to teachers that were trained through FCFS
- Provided 28 children with scholarship assistance so their parents could work or attend school, supported 13 small businesses in Florence County by subsidizing child care tuition for families who would not otherwise be able to afford quality care, identified and addressed 14 potential developmental delays among scholarship children, made 10 connections for families to services such as Parenting and Medical services, provided 2 hours of training for scholarship parents in topics such as High Quality Child Care.
- **Total Children Served in FY17:225**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parent Child Home
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships

State Programs
BabyNet
First Steps 4K

Spencer R Scott
Executive Director

Unknown Parents Story...

We recently had our first child and she's a beautiful bundle of joy without instructions. We've never been so afraid before in our lives. You see, she was born premature with numerous complications. The day we brought her home, we asked if the nurses could come home with us. Luckily, a friend of ours mentioned a program called Florence County First Steps. She wasn't sure of all the programs but said to give them a call. We did!

We learned that they offer child care scholarships which allowed me to go back to college for Nursing and her father to go back to work (28 children received scholarships). Not knowing anything about childcare facilities, they explained the different levels A, B, and C and Centers versus Family and Groups as well as what's most important to us: location, cost, rating, teacher experience, etc... I didn't know this but they also Trained the Providers in the facilities and offer Technical Assistance with Quality Enhancements Grants to purchase educational items they may need to improve their ECERS Assessment scores (130.5 TA hours). They also contacted Florence School District to get us involved in the Parenting Classes (57 children and families were served). We learned so much from our Home Visitor. We used an assessment tool called Ages & Stages to evaluate our child development. I felt so empowered! We discovered she was a little delayed and they referred us to a program called BabyNet. Babynet sent a different Home Visitor to assess her and created a development plan to address her needs. We were so thankful and felt blessed to have heard about First Steps. Unfortunately, we fell behind on our rent and utility bills. You know they said not to worry because they collaborate with other agencies to address the needs of our family. They referred us to Lighthouse Ministry and Community Action Agency. They quickly address our needs and everything is current.

With the limited resources First Steps receives, every dollar is used for the betterment of our youngest learners. Although, every experience and needs aren't the same, First Steps strive to give every family the best experience possible.



Georgetown County

Carol Daly Executive Director

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Board Chair: Whitney Martin



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Georgetown County
Children Under Five	293,134	2,868
Children In Poverty	24.4%	32%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	23.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	17.2%

- Since inception Georgetown County First Steps has leveraged \$3,198,211.67 from sources outside state government. That's \$.66 for every dollar received.
- Support and guidance were provided to 50 families in our EHS Parenting Program.
- Childcare professionals received 148 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 11 Group Connections Parent Meetings and home visitations to select families.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 261**

It is with great pleasure that I present Georgetown County First Steps Annual report.

Georgetown First Steps shares with other agencies and citizens a common concern for and a commitment to the welfare and future success of our youngest children. As part of a statewide early childhood initiative, Georgetown First Steps serves as a local leader in developing a comprehensive, collaborative approach to serve the needs of all children birth to five in Georgetown.

In our constant pursuit to fund services that support unmet needs in our preschool community we are proud of the following innovative programs:

- Host partnership to the State Early Head Start initiative sponsoring 3 Early Head Start Centers with 40 children and families.
- Employing two Family Advocates providing service delivery to parents in group meetings and home visitations.
- Implementation of a pilot 3K program in strong collaboration with the Georgetown School District and private providers. This is presently the only public/private 3K in the state.

In closing, thank you for your continued support of our programs. I cannot think of a more important or consequential goal than securing the future educational opportunities for our youngest citizens.

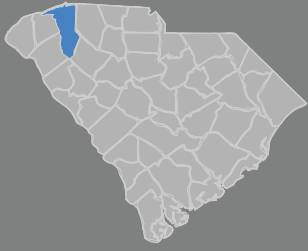
Carol Daly
Executive Director

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Scholarships
Early Identification and Referral

State Programs
Early Head Start
First Steps 4K
BabyNet



Greenville County

Derek Lewis
Executive Director

Greenville County First Steps
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www.greenvillefirststeps.org

Board Chair: Grady Patterson



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Greenville County
Children Under Five	293,134	31,891
Children In Poverty	24.4%	17.7%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	17.7%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	14.7%

- Over the past 10 years, Greenville First Steps has leveraged \$9,436,651 in grants, local funds, and matches to \$10,280,257 in state funds. This is a match of 91% (5 times greater than the amount required by SC First Steps enabling legislation)
- 5,420 home visits were provided to 420 families in our Nurse Family Partnership Program
- Over 100,000 books were distributed to children and families in Greenville County, increasing access to books
- 107 children received access to subsidized, high quality childcare through our scholarship program.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 1,527**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs

- Nurse-Family Partnership
- Childcare Scholarships
- Community Education (Read Greenville and Palmetto Basics)
- Palmetto Shared Services Alliance
- Child Care Training
- Countdown to Kindergarten
- Baby Steps

State Programs

- BabyNet

*Let's get together, yeah yeah yeah
Why don't you and I combi-ine
Let's get together, what do you say
We can have a swingin' ti-ime
We'd be a cra-a-azy team
Why don't we ma-a-ake a scene
Together, oh oh oh oh
- Haley Mills, The Parent Trap*

Greenville First Steps has built its network of partners across Greenville County with the fundamental principle that there is far too much need among our youngest learners and their families for one organization to try and tackle it alone. Every project we undertake is either co-funded, or coordinated by multiple stakeholders- whether that be the joint funding of childcare vouchers through the United Way matching funds, the partnership with the Duke Endowment and Blue Cross Blue Shield to co-fund Nurse Family Partnership or the Palmetto Basics, a county-wide school readiness messaging program.

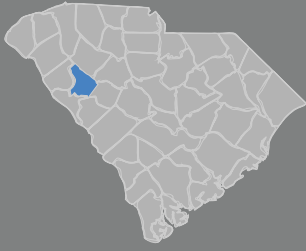
In 2016 we launched another strategic partnership with Christ Church Episcopal Greenville: Read Greenville. The case was simple, First Steps would provide the knowhow to help parents and caregivers learn how to effectively use books in their homes, and secure funding for books if our Christ Church partners would sort and distribute the books. This county-wide reading initiative paired evidenced based training for childcare providers, parents and caregivers with a book warehouse where over 100,000 books were distributed to high poverty homes in less than 10 months.

Christ Church Episcopal Greenville, under the leadership of Frances Poe and John and Kerry Rathbun, has been a dedicated partner, providing warehouse space to store and distribute the books, and providing a loyal volunteer base where nearly 1,500 hours were contributed to sorting and sharing these books.

More than 100 community partners arrived at the book warehouse, astounded at the tens of thousands of books to choose from, and returned to their centers, schools, churches, and neighborhoods armed with children's books to share with their families.

We are so thankful to Frances, John, Kerry, and the volunteers from Christ Church who spent countless hours to help us make this year's book distribution plan a success! We know that on our own, this effort would have taken several fulltime employees an entire year to sort and distribute these books, let alone helping link the books to evidenced based literacy instruction. But because we were able to "get together" we accomplished the unthinkable.

Derek Lewis, Executive Director



Greenwood County

Michael K. Gaskin
Executive Director

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Board Chair: Lark Coleman



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Greenwood County
Children Under Five	293,134	4,399
Children In Poverty	24.4%	26.2%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Greenwood 50 - 26.1% Greenwood 51 - 17.1% Greenwood 52 - 18.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	19.8%

- Since inception, GREENWOOD County First Steps has leveraged \$1,797,602.91 from sources outside state government. That's \$.43 for every dollar received.
- 275 hours of support and guidance were provided to 23 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 65 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 13 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served and/or Impacted in FY17:**
 - o PAT – 28
 - o Child Care Training – 2282
 - o Fatherhood – 32

Kids Count Data Provided By:



Greenwood County First Steps uses an innovative and creative approach to ensure every dollar received by the County Partnership is used to its maximum potential. Getting children ready to learn is an engagement that requires every agency within this County to understand the importance of being not just stakeholders, but passionate, dedicated, and committed stakeholders. The Greenwood County First Steps Full Partnership Board makes "quality" the key word to determine why a program should continue to receive First Steps' funding. The service quality of Greenwood County First Steps' programs grew tremendously with the addition of great local and state partnerships.

The Department of Social Services, Guardian Ad Litem Programs, and the local court systems are also great partners, to reach the most at risk children in the community and assist with preventing child abuse and neglect. Lander University's Education Department is another great partner. Greenwood and Abbeville County First Steps offer two Early Childhood Conferences a year at Lander University. Professors in the Education Department teach the classes as a part of their community outreach, and students assist as room monitors and with registration. These great partnerships are success stories displaying positive impacts in the communities of both Greenwood and Abbeville Counties.

Through these successful partnerships, Greenwood County First Steps offer children and families comprehensive services for school success.

County Programs

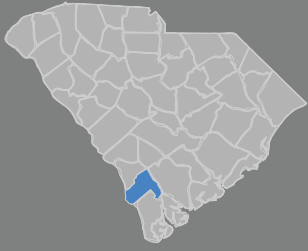
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training
Fatherhood Initiative

State Programs

BabyNet
First Steps 4K

WE MADE A HUGE DIFFERENCE BY BECOMING THE DIFFERENCE FOR GREENWOOD COUNTY CHILDREN!

Michael K. Gaskin
Executive Director



Hampton County

Dwana Doctor Executive Director

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www.scfirststeps.com/hampton

Board Chair: KaKela O'Banner Robinson



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Hampton County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,061
Children In Poverty	24.4%	35.1%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Hampton 1: 28.9% Hampton 2: 43.6%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	15.7%

- Since inception, Hampton County First Steps has leveraged \$759,429 from sources outside state government. That's \$.23 for every dollar received.
- 195 hours of support and guidance were provided to 10 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Improved parenting practices through 15 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 31**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



"There are no perfect parents, and there are no perfect children, but there are plenty of perfect moments along the way."

Welcome to Hampton County First Steps, where we are strong advocates for children and families! We believe that parents are a child's first and best teachers through our Parents As Teachers program. We believe child care staff, teachers and all professionals in early childhood education should have access to high-quality training through our Child Care Training program. We believe our Early Identification and Referral program provides developmental screenings that are intended to produce measurable improvements in infants and toddlers screened for developmental delays. We believe that parents should be able to leave their children in safe, high-quality learning environments while they work or attend school through our Child Care Scholarship program. We believe the physical, social, and emotional development of young children directly affects their overall development. We believe that children are our greatest investment and therefore we do our best to support them and their families.

FY 17 Theme: "We Believe!"

Dwana Doctor
Executive Director

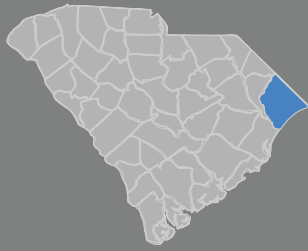
Victoria Powell
Program Assistant
Parent Educator

County Programs

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training
Early Intervention & Referral
Child Care Scholarships

State Programs

First Steps 4K
BabyNet



Horry County

Amy Breault Executive Director

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www.hcfirststeps.org

Board Chair: Mr. Bradley Todd



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Horry County
Children Under Five	293,134	15,978
Children In Poverty	24.4%	29.6%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	16.8%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	16.8%

- Since inception, Horry County First Steps has leveraged \$4,904,074 from sources outside state government. That's \$.53 for every dollar received.
- 388 hours of support and guidance were provided to 37 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 483 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Assisted 77 children in accessing child care so their parent could work and/or continue their education.
- Raising A Reader implemented in Parents As Teachers and throughout child care facilities in Conway. 121 children rotated 1,622 books.

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Scholarships
Raising a Reader

State Programs
BabyNet
First Steps 4K

The Board and Staff of Horry County First Steps are proud to present the accomplishments achieved in another year of successful community impact. Exhibited within this year's annual report are the projects and strategies HCFS supported in 2017 in order to ensure that all children in Horry County enter school on a level playing field, healthy and prepared for success.

This positive impact was achieved by setting a direction, creating alignment and gaining commitment around important early childhood issues within Horry County. This unbridled spirit to serve the needs of children and families was cultivated by a passionate staff, a visioning board of directors, a dedicated team of direct service providers, and a community of committed child care professionals. By being part of this community-centered agency, it is amazing the stories that we hear on a regular basis from parents, child care providers, health professionals and kindergarten teachers regarding the ways in which HCFS projects are making a difference in the lives of children and families. Stories of newly developed parenting strategies, pre-school excitement, successful transition into kindergarten, informative childcare referrals, and renewed excitement in the world of early childhood education.

As HCFS continues to grow, we maintain a focus on collaborating locally so that families' needs are met, overhead is kept low, and quality of services remains high. This forward thinking and big picture approach to service is exciting for all associated with HCFS as it calls for new opportunities to explore, new champions to tell our story and new assets to be mined for the benefit of HCFS and the children and families that it serves.

Thank you, from all of us at Horry County First Steps and from all those whose lives have been touched. As we move towards reaching our mission, we are excited about the future of children and families in Horry County.

Amy Breault
Executive Director



Jasper County

Duchett Polite Hylton

Executive Director

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dpolite@scfirststeps.org

Board Chair: Deloris Dunham



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Jasper County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,685
Children In Poverty	24.4%	40.1%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	53.5%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	27.8%

- Since inception, Jasper County First Steps has leveraged \$1,199,625 from sources outside state government. That's \$.39 for every dollar received.
- 910 hours of support and guidance were provided to 46 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received technical assistance for early care best practices, resulting in 2 facilities increasing ABC quality from Level C to Level B.
- Improved parenting practices through 12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- 16 Little Free Libraries planted within "book deserts" throughout Jasper County.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 574**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs

Parents as Teachers
 Imagination Library
 Countdown to Kindergarten
 Child Care Training
 Child Care Scholarships
 Early Identification & Referral

State Programs

First Steps 4k
 BabyNet

Minds At Work – Learning Under Construction

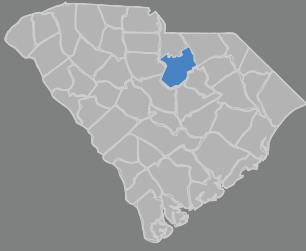
Mission Possible The mission of "getting children ready for school" infuses every strategy we implement. The Ready Kindergartner is our primary benchmark, but the Ready Graduate is our ultimate goal.

Minds at Work Our Partnership strives to foster a varied network of supports within the community to understand and meet the needs of our youngest learners and their families. Through our participation in the Jasper Human Services Alliance, convening of our PAT Parenting Consortium, and the exemplary leadership of our Board, the great minds of community leaders, service providers, and family representatives come together to address the question of what more can we do to positively affect the trajectory of Jasper County's children and their families.

Learning Under Construction Our commitment to continuous quality improvement is evidenced at all levels. In Jasper, learning is under construction. We implement evidence-based strategies proven effective through on-going evaluation. Our staff participate in quality professional development so we can support clients and our community with the best possible resources. Currently all are certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians and can perform car seat check-up to keep young riders safe! We have also extended STEM-based learning through-out our strategies coining the term "STREAM Learning"- Science, Tech, Reading, Engineering, Arts, Math. This will introduce our youngest learners to science, math and literacy concepts in kid-friendly, tangible and challenging applications.

Our mission is definitely possible when we put our minds to work to build a community where learning never stops but is always under construction.

Executive Director
 Duchett Polite Hylton



Kershaw County

Kimberley Jordan Executive Director

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Fax: (803) 432-7756
kjfirststeps@att.net
www.kershawfirststeps.org

Board Chair: Stephen Wilson



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Kershaw County
Children Under Five	293,134	3,763
Children In Poverty	24.4%	23.3%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	21.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	15.4%

- Since inception Kershaw County First Steps has leveraged \$1,520,717 from sources outside state government.
- 437 hours of support and guidance were provided to 31 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 127.50 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 11 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 516**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



Once again we are proud to present you with our latest annual report, covering the period July 2016 through June 2017. The report reflects a tremendous amount of work by community partners working directly or indirectly with young children in every corner of our county. The stories of children and their families dramatically illustrate the difference Kershaw County First Steps makes in their lives on a daily basis. Additionally, the data provides an excellent snapshot of the cumulative impact of our collective work.

This year's report shows the maturation of many of our programs and the ongoing commitment we have to systems change and innovation. Every year Kershaw County First Steps program has a better grasp on where we succeed and where we face challenges. Among the challenges, are the continual efforts to reach families who have a multitude of needs and are subject to many stresses including: economic pressure, the high cost of housing, the difficulty of finding affordable quality child care and disparities in our health delivery system. Other challenges include effecting change in long established systems and nurturing ongoing collaborative efforts.

Thanks to all of the Kershaw County community partners for your ongoing commitment to young children and their families and the passion and skill you bring to your work. None of the results and stories in this report would be possible without you.

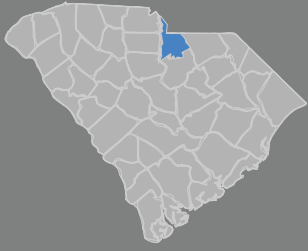
Kimberley Jordan
Executive Director

County Programs

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Quality Counts
Early Identification and Referral
Countdown to Kindergarten

State Programs

BabyNet
First Steps 4k



Lancaster County

Lora P. Bryson
Executive Director

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LC1stSteps@comporium.net
www.lancastercountyfirststeps.org

Board Chair: Dr. Paul N. McKenzie



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Lancaster County
Children Under Five	293,134	5,426
Children In Poverty	24.4%	21.0%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	22.2%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	11.4%

- Since inception, Lancaster County First Steps has leveraged \$7,362,827 from sources outside state government. That's an additional \$1.65 for every dollar received.
- Lancaster County First Steps continued extensive work on a \$6 million grant to implement the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership initiative which will provide nine (9) high-quality classrooms at three (3) local child care centers.
- Lancaster County First Steps always strives to use resources wisely. In 2016-2017, our organization reported an administrative cost of only 1.48%.
- **Over 16,000 books were provided to children all across Lancaster County during FY17.**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs

Countdown to Kindergarten
Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership
Early Identification and Referral
Dolly Parton Imagination Library
Incredible Years Parenting
Step by Step Resource Center
Weekend Backpack Feeding Program

State Programs

BabyNet

"There are only 2,000 days between the time a baby is born and when that child begins kindergarten. Experiences during that time have a lasting impact on later learning, health and success." (<http://www.first2000days.org>)

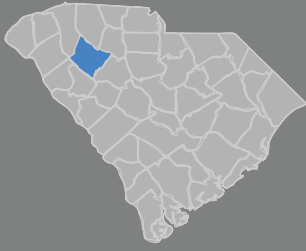
It is remarkable to consider that before birth, a child's brain grows more significantly in size and function than at any later stage of development. Even with that growth, the brain is one of the only organs not fully developed at birth. During the first years of life, amazing things happen in the brain; seven hundred new neural connections are made every second as the mind integrates the vast range of a child's experiences. Much like lumber is the raw material for framing a house, neurons are the raw material of the brain. A child's earliest experiences and interactions help build the frame and foundation for all that will come in the future. That is why Lancaster County First Steps invests in children from birth to the age of five and their families. High-quality early learning experiences in the very first years of life have long lasting impacts on later learning and health.

In this report, you will see the diverse ways we provide excellent early education opportunities that offer a continuum of comprehensive programs, services and initiatives so that children and families thrive in Lancaster County. For FY17, we are especially proud to report that for every state dollar we have received we have raised an additional \$9.79. In April 2015, we received approximately 6 million dollars to implement a federally-funded community-based program for low-income families with infants and toddlers. We have partnered with three (3) local child care centers to provide children from ages 6 weeks through their third year with a high-quality Early Head Start education designed to enhance growth and development. The Springs Close Foundation provided funds to serve 425 children with the Weekend Backpack Program at Clinton Elementary and Brooklyn Springs Elementary and provided partial funding to serve 100 Countdown to Kindergarten children across the county. Our local United Way provided the additional funds for this program as well as the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program which provides developmentally appropriate books each month.

Lancaster County First Steps serves as a local portal connecting families of preschool children to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children. We act as a community convener serving the needs of our youngest citizens and their families; a county-wide needs assessment is conducted every three (3) years to assure that our goals are meeting the needs of the most at-risk families in Lancaster County.

In the scheme of things, 2,000 days is a very short time to accomplish so much important work for early childhood education and school readiness.

Lora P. Bryson
Executive Director



Laurens County

Rosemary C. Patterson
Executive Director

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Board Chair: Linda Wessel



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Laurens County
Children Under Five	293,134	3,744
Children In Poverty	24.4%	30.7%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Laurens 55: 29.8% Laurens 56: 31.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	23.9%

- Since inception, Laurens County First Steps has leveraged \$2,415,195 from sources outside state government. That's \$.49 for every dollar received.
- 275 home visits & 24 hours of support and guidance through group connections were provided to 12 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 36 hours of training in early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 17 PAT & CCS; 61 EHS; 39 CTK; 23 NFP**

100% of the families that we serve in Laurens County have 2 or more risk factors as defined by the First Steps standards. Our in-house child care scholarships match at risk children with child care centers that participate in our Child Care Training and Professional Development program. All of our scholarships are connected to our Parents As Teachers program. The families work with a Parent Educator a minimum of twice monthly and meet with other parents in Group Connections a minimum of four times annually.

Every family receives age appropriate books to help them build a home library with quality children's literature. Even though LCFS does not directly fund the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, we register all of our clients so that all families receive the books. In order to support quality child care at centers in our county, we provide center staff with professional development hours required by DSS. All of our training is based on a needs survey and is provided free to all staff who work in Laurens County.

We provide follow-up visits and feedback to teachers after training sessions. We also help to train public school 4K teachers from both county school districts.

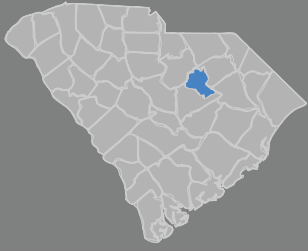
Rosemary C. Patterson
Executive Director

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships
Countdown to Kindergarten

State Programs
Early Head Start
First Steps 4K
Nurse Family Partnership
BabyNet



Lee County

Alexis D. Pipkins, Sr. Executive Director

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www.scfirststeps.org/lee
alexis.pipkins@aol.com or
lee1steps@gmail.com

Board Chair: Rev. Archie S. Temoney, Sr.



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Lee County
Children Under Five	293,134	893
Children In Poverty	24.4%	38.6%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	45.6%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	21.6%

- Since inception, Lee County First Steps has leveraged \$2,994,116.70 from sources outside of state government. That's \$.71 for every state dollar received.
- 56 children served by parenting
- 21 children received child care scholarships
- 30 hours of child care training were provided

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs

Early Steps to School Success (Save the Children)
Parents as Teachers (Kershaw)
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships
Strengthening Families Program

State Programs

BabyNet
First Steps 4K

Lee County First Steps increases the quality of services for children 0-5 and their families.

2016-2017 Fiscal Year has been a successful year for Lee County First Steps (LCFS). The partnership board has managed to sustain partnerships which made it possible to continue providing already established services. LCFS has continued to provide the following support with limited funding and staff: child care scholarships; center staff training; and professional development to both early care professionals and parents. Also, Lee County continues to implement parenting programs (Parents as Teachers and Early Steps to School Success). LCFS provided support for 4K Assessment with the DIAL-3, and the PPVT-3. LCFS and RLI-Lee County continues its work through the SC Healthy Initiative Grant from SC DHEC and SC Tobacco Collaboration to focus on the health and well-being of Lee County's children and their families.

LCFS continues to work hard to expand services throughout the community and across county lines, if necessary, to reach families and children who are in dire need of these services. LCFS received funds from SC Children's Trust to expand the Strengthening Families Program to serve families in the Darlington and Florence County areas.

The value-add LCFS has on the local community is that we continue to serve as a visible advocate for the children and parents of Lee County. Although local resources are limited, LCFS is still passionate about its commitment to help children and their families strengthen their relations, and to enhance collaborative efforts with the Lee County School District, Head Start, private child care, and other partners in the local and regional community. LCFS has maintained its focus on addressing parenting, home visiting, quality child care with limited child care scholarships, child care training, and professional development opportunities.

Alexis D. Pipkins, Sr.
Executive Director



Lexington County

James H. Riddle, Jr.
Executive Director

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Board Chair: Jennifer Felkel



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Lexington County
Children Under Five	293,134	17,047
Children In Poverty	24.4%	19.1%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Lexington 1 - 14.0% Lexington 2 - 29.8% Lexington 3 - 25.8% Lexington 4 - 47.2% LexRich 5 - 12.2%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	13.7%

Since 2001, Lexington County First Steps has been defined as filling gaps, enhancing and enlarging services and serving the most at-risk children through the collective wisdom of collaborations and partnerships across Lexington County. Parents as Teachers (PAT), is an evidenced-based home visitation model used by Lexington County since inception of First Steps. It is the flagship of our county services and is the largest PAT program in South Carolina partnering with each of the five school districts' Parent Centers. (CTK), an in-home summer visitation program serves as transition for children entering 5K who often have had little, if any, prior preschool experience. Lexington County has the largest CTK program in South Carolina.

- Since inception, Lexington County First Steps has leveraged \$8,946,464 from sources outside of state government. That's \$.64 for every state dollar received.
- Implemented the largest Countdown to Kindergarten program in the state, with 215 children served from 24 schools with 40 teachers.
- Served 158 children in Parents as Teachers, making gains in parenting skills and interactive literacy skills..
- Supported 114 early childhood staff with 13 sessions of quality training.

Child Care Quality Enhancement Grants were awarded to three Centers in Lexington County with monitoring provided by a credentialed Technical Assistant and grants for equipment and supplies. Child Care Provider Training continues to be a hallmark service coordinating with Midlands TEC (MTC), Childcare Resource & Referral (CCR&R), Richland County First Steps and the Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD). With minimal hourly rates, this service continues to be financially self-supporting.

James H. Riddle, Jr.
Executive Director

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training

State Programs
BabyNet
First Steps 4K
Early Head Start



Marion County

Spencer R. Scott Executive Director

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www.scfirststeps.org/marion

Board Chair: Victoria Belin



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Marion County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,999
Children In Poverty	24.4%	41%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	48.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	20.5%

- Since inception, Marion County First Steps has leveraged \$692,415.87 from sources outside of state government. That's \$.16 for every dollar received.
- Budget: MCFS received \$200,000 from SC First Steps, raised \$4,100 and In-kind match of \$30,388 for a total of \$234,388.
- 27 children received Scholarships and attended 6 different facilities. We Identified and addressed 9 potential developmental delays among scholarship children and made 24 connections for families to services such as BabyNet
- Two new facilities joined the Literacy program and increase total number of children served to 733 along with 7 parenting meetings.
- MCFS doubled the number of training hours provided to childcare providers and significantly increased the number of childcare providers in attendance at childcare trainings.
- Assisted local childcare facility, Ms. Lil's Daycare with in-depth TA along with materials and supplies after her childcare facility was destroyed during Hurricane Matthew.
- Total Children Served in FY17: 782

Program Summary

Facility Quality Enhancement, Childcare Training, Childcare Scholarships and our newly added Literacy program were all implemented successfully, as each program met all South Carolina First Steps Standards of enhancing childcare programs through regular technical assistance, affordable monthly training, affordable childcare to at-risk, impoverished children and their families and improving Literacy in Marion County.

Collaborations with childcare providers, knowledgeable instructors, DSS, local churches and businesses made all of the above possible.

Annual Celebration

Our Annual Celebration proved to be successful again this year with more than 400 people in attendance which included the MCFS Board Members, the children we serve, childcare providers, vendors, county and state partners and last, but not least, parents, grandparents and guardians.

This year, we even had a special appearance from the one and only Christmas Mickey! Both children and adults laughed, danced and took memorable photos with the world famous Mouse.

All persons and organizations who were instrumental in our success were recognized, including Reverend A. C. Robinson, Pastor of Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist and Center Director, Ms. Jean Pearson. They allowed us to use their fellowship Hall for the Annual Celebration at no charge again this year.

Spencer R. Scott
Executive Director

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships
Literacy Program

State Programs
Baby Net
First Steps 4K



Marlboro County

Randall S. Johnson
Executive Director

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Board Chair: Shirley Jones



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Marlboro County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,498
Children In Poverty	24.4%	40.8%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	35.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	29.5%

- Since inception, Marlboro County First Steps has leveraged \$867,280 from sources outside state government. That's \$.29 for every dollar received.
- 373 hours of support and guidance were provided to 19 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- MCFS collaborated with S.C. Child Care Resource & Referral Network to provide 4 quality trainings for our Early Education providers
- Total Children Served in FY17: 97

The Marlboro County First Steps (MCFS) Partnership continues to be a quality contributor to the Marlboro Community. This can especially be noticed in terms of childcare and parenting. This past year, we worked with 19 families who may not receive other parenting services. MCFS continues to be the lead county agency that works with childcare facilities throughout the community. We stress quality and efficient learning centers as opposed to babysitting services.

Marlboro County First Steps increases the quality of services for children 0-5 and their families. We collaborated with the Marlboro County School District Family Literacy for our Parents As Teachers parenting program. Through this program as well as our childcare scholarship program, we have been able to assure that some of the families with the greatest needs in Marlboro County receive help that they may otherwise not get. Also parents are required to be actively involved with their children.

Randall S. Johnson
Executive Director

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships

State Programs
Baby Net
First Steps 4K



McCormick County

Ruth Detrick Executive Director

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mccormickcountyfirststeps.com

Board Chair: Pamela Turman



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	McCormick County
Children Under Five	293,134	292
Children In Poverty	24.4%	35.2%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	34.8%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	16.1%

- Since inception, McCormick County First Steps has leveraged \$2,312,557 from sources outside state government. That's about \$.82 for every dollar received.
- 639 hours of support and guidance were provided to 83 families in our Parents As Teachers and Nurse Family Partnership Programs.
- Improved parenting practices through 60 Group Meetings, trainings, activities and events.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 196**
- **Total Adults Served in FY17: 83**
- 3516 Books given to children to take home and keep

Our McCormick partnership has had an exciting and fulfilling year. Our child care center, working hard and partnering with the Department of Social Services, earned an A+ rating. This indicates that we are a center that provides the highest quality experiences for the children we serve.

We also found out this year that we will be awarded an Early Head Start Federal Grant. For most of the year we have had a waiting list of approximately a dozen children, who wanted and needed child care that we were unable to provide. This grant will offer us two more child care rooms, to serve sixteen more children, ages birth to three. We are excited and anxiously awaiting the start-up of these classrooms.

We provided Triple P—Positive Parenting Training this year to 24 adults. The training was well-received, with parents agreeing to try the new skills they learned with their children.

We continue to collaborate with McCormick School District, Carolina Health Centers, Head Start, the Lutheran Church by the Lake, and many other local groups and organizations. This collaborative effort allows us to provide services, at the least possible cost, to the children in our programs.

We are proud of the programs we offer and the benefits we can provide to pre-school children and their families.

Pamela Turman
Board Chair

Kids Count Data Provided By:

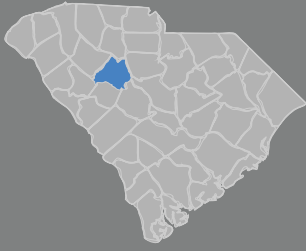


County Programs

- Parents as Teachers
- TripleP—Positive Parenting Program
- Other Family Literacy—Reach Out and Read
- Library Based Literacy
- Nurse Family Partnership
- Early Education for Children Under 4
- Child Care Scholarships

State Programs

- BabyNet



Newberry County

Patricia H. Caldwell
Executive Director

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Board Chair: Elizabeth Bozard



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Newberry County
Children Under Five	293,134	2,287
Children In Poverty	24.4%	28.5%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	25.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	24.2%

- Since inception, Newberry County First Steps has leveraged \$1,113,228.30 from sources outside state government. That's \$.36 for every dollar received.
- 550.5 hours of support and guidance were provided to 25 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- We served 603 children in our library-based literacy program, giving children 5,271 books.
- Total attendance for our quality childcare training program was 484.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 758**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Library-Based Program
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten

State Programs
Early Head Start
First Steps 4k
BabyNet

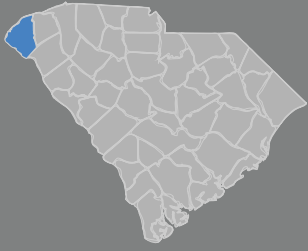
Newberry County First Steps targets children 0-5 years of age. Our programs are designed to achieve results through partnerships at state and local levels, among public and private entities. County-level partnerships – with their unique ability to identify local needs, resources and collaborative opportunities – are designed to efficiently focus program efforts and reach children where they live.

There has been a strong collaboration with the School District of Newberry County, the Newberry Library, child care centers, faith based and other local non-profits, Newberry public housing, local government, and other county partnerships to maximize our resources and ensure that all families know where to go to receive assistance.

Each year our programs show evidence of improvement: nationally recognized programs, Parent as Teachers, Library-Based program (children's literacy), Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) – where we reached forty-seven children throughout the county – and Child Care Quality Enhancement/Child Care Training where we served seventy one teachers and directors. All centers have quality programs and one center has an A+ rating. We are in the 2nd year of Early HeadStart which serves 16 families and children 0-2 years old. The First Steps 4K program serves 32 children.

Newberry First Steps will continue to work with our partners as we focus on making sure that all children are healthy and ready to experience the success needed to create the motivation and engagement that sustains learning.

Patricia H. Caldwell
Executive Director



Oconee County

Marie M. Dunnam Executive Director

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 Board Chair
 Stacie Powell
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Board Chair: Stacie Powell



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Oconee County
Children Under Five	293,134	3,916
Children In Poverty	24.4%	25.1%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	21.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	17.3%

- Since inception, Oconee County First Steps has leveraged \$3,605,888 from sources outside state government. That's \$1.02 for every dollar received.
- 256 home visits and 256 hours of service were provided to 25 first time, low income mothers through the Nurse Family Partnership Program.
- 569 home visits; 831 hours of support and guidance; and 273 books were provided to 19 families with 26 adults and 38 children through the POPS/PAT Program.
- Childcare professionals received 57 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 36 Group Connection Meetings.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 3,744**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs

Parents as Teachers
 Child Care Training
 Child Care Scholarships
 Countdown to Kindergarten
 Community Education
 Nurse Family Partnership

State Programs

First Steps 4K
 BabyNet

OCFS Works for our Children, Parents & Taxpayers

Oconee County First Steps remains alive and well as we continue our work toward fulfilling our Vision Statement: "All children in Oconee County will have the care they need to grow & develop to their full potential."

For FY 16-17, we focused much time on our new Community Education & Awareness Strategy and used the **{I CAN}** Theme in conjunction with the **Profile of the Ready Kindergartener** in everything we did. **The following were among our major projects:**

August 2016: "Back Packs/Books /Parent Education Packets" for all 400 SDOC 4K and PIP children.

October-December, 2016: "Warm a Child for the Winter" Project—our most successful one thus far.

February 2017: Collaborated with United Way of Oconee County for its "Read Across America" Project.

April 2017: Parent/Child Health & Education Showcase in Collaboration with Heath's Haven; followed by our sponsorship of the "Pin Wheel Garden" Project, which energized our entire county.

This is my last annual report cover letter, as I am retiring at the end of the calendar year. Thank you for the privilege of serving as a voice for our county's youngest learners since October 1999.

Best regards, Marie M. Dunnam, LISW-CP
 Founding CEO/Executive Director



Orangeburg County

LaMyra Sanders
Executive Director

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www.orangeburgfirststeps.org

Board Chair: Dr. Reginald Williams



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Orangeburg County
Children Under Five	293,134	5,144
Children In Poverty	24.4%	36.8%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Orangeburg 3: 44.3% Orangeburg 4: 40.9% Orangeburg 5: 41.6%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	17.2%

- Since inception, Orangeburg County First Steps has leveraged \$1,601,162 from sources outside state government. That's \$.25 for every dollar received.
- 365.6 hours of support and guidance were provided to 20 adults and 20 children in our Early Steps to School Success.
- Childcare professionals received 58 Hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 3 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Served in FY16: 104 Adults and 1017 Children**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



Early childhood education remains the foundation of the successful student in Orangeburg County, just like in South Carolina, the United States and around the world. Consequently, the Orangeburg County First Steps Partnership Board strives to ensure that each receives developmentally appropriate child care and education.

REMEMBER that Orangeburg County First Steps seeks to ensure consistent quality care for children by supporting early education and fortifying while expanding the good work of center-based programs throughout the county.

REMEMBER that the success of children depends on the community stakeholders, local politicians, school district experts, the faith based organizations, business owners and the entire community. All entities must do their best to provide human and financial scaffolding to supplement the aims and programs of the county partnership.

REMEMBER that advocacy for quality, affordability and accessibility in early education rests with the voice of those most essential to children which are: parents, families and teachers. Orangeburg County First Steps is committed to helping their voices be heard in order to make a difference so that flexibility and funding can continue to guarantee these ideals for proper policy become the standard not only in Orangeburg but throughout the State of South Carolina.

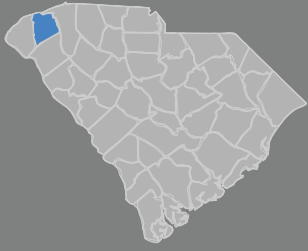
Dr. Reginald Williams
Board Chair

County Programs

Countdown To Kindergarten
Child Care Training
Early Steps to School Success
Imagination Library
Child Care Scholarship
Quality Enhancement Program

State Programs

Early Head Start
First Steps 4K
BabyNet



Pickens County

Amity Buckner Executive Director

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Board Chair: Lyle Jacks



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Pickens County
Children Under Five	293,134	6,021
Children In Poverty	24.4%	19.4%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	18.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	15.9%

- Birth to age 5 Children Served 1,467
- Families Served 1,540
- Books Distributed 2,200

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Book Flood
Child Care Scholarships
Early Identification and Referral
Parents as Teachers
Community Education

State Programs
BabyNet
First Steps 4K

Eighty percent

Why is that so important? Because we know that 80% of brain growth happens in the first three years of life! These early years provide us with opportunity. Each child, from every background, is born with enormous potential to be successful and to enter school ready to learn.

Our goal at First Steps has always been to create a culture of school readiness—a community that values education from the moment a child is born. How exactly do you create that culture? In August of 2016, Pickens County First Steps and Greenville First Steps partnered with other early childhood stakeholders to find the answer. We knew creating this culture wasn't by giving parents and caregivers more brochures about standards and milestones.

After several months of breaking standards down and creating flip charts, the answer became clearer. School readiness is simple, but we have made it complicated. We needed to get back to the basics – the basics of parenting. In May of 2017, the Palmetto Basics was born.

The Palmetto Basics—five fun, simple and powerful ways to give every child a great start in life—provide us with a common early childhood message for our community. The Basics is taking root and will continue to inform all of the work that we do in Pickens County.

We know that we can't do it alone. We need you! Join us and help spread the word about the Palmetto Basics. Who in your life needs to know about the 5 fun, simple and powerful ways to help ALL children become the happiest and most successful they can be? To learn more, visit www.palmettobasics.org.

Thank you for the continued privilege of serving as a voice for the least of these.

Amity Buckner
Executive Director



Richland County

Rick Noble
Executive Director

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Board Chair: Penny Dininny



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Richland County
Children Under Five	293,134	23,743
Children In Poverty	24.4%	22.3%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Richland 1: 31.1% Richland 2: 21.6% Lex/Rich 5: 12.2%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	11.3%

- Since inception, Richland County First Steps has leveraged \$15,338,223 from sources outside state government. That's \$.99 for every dollar received.
- 3,676.83 hours of support and guidance were provided to 112 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 2,449 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Parenting practices were improved through 59 Group Connections Parent Workshops.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 1,161**
- Books distributed to families and child care centers: 2,728

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Early Head Start

State Programs
First Steps 4K
BabyNet

"Well, that's another year in the books."

At Richland County First Steps FY17 it has indeed been another good year.

We continue to benefit from our 17 years of relationship building with local agencies and organizations. Our network of partners continues to grow and ideas for increased services as well as new services abound. No surprise that adequate financial resources are the number one constraint.

This year's top highlights, which receive further elaboration in this report, include:

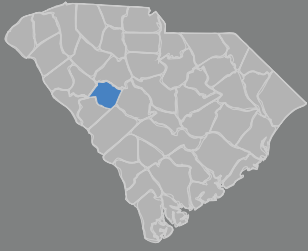
- * A new Strategic Plan for 2017-2020 was adopted by the RCFS Board (see below)
- * ExCEL: We were able to fill a TA vacancy and add another TA bringing the team to 4 which has enabled us to serve more centers on a weekly basis
- * Home Visitation: In Lower Richland we bid farewell to long time parent educator, Deloris Flemming, who retired after 16+ years of dedicated service on behalf of RCFS
- * Early Head Start: Both of our centers, Ridgewood and Union Street, attained A+ ratings from ABC Quality.

As FY17 ended and FY18 began, RCFS moved its offices 2 miles outside of central Columbia to Middleburg Park which is home to a number of community nonprofits and state agencies working on various issues around children and families.

FY18 holds many challenges including RCFS' implementation of a 4K classroom at our Union Street location

It has been an honor to serve as RCFS' founding CEO/Executive Director. I will be retiring in July of 2018, therefore this is my last annual report message. With a strong board and staff, Richland County First Steps has a bright future ahead.

Rick Noble
Chief Executive Officer



Saluda County

Deborah Padgett

Executive Director

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Board Chair: Allyson Bartley



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Saluda County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,254
Children In Poverty	24.4%	29.6%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	30.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	35.1%

- Since inception, Saluda County First Steps has leveraged \$1,604,733 from sources outside state government. That's \$.49 for every dollar received.
- Childcare professionals received 65 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 13 Positive Parenting Group Workshops.
- Provided 338 hours of adult education through the Family Literacy Program.
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 130**

"A child is a person who is going to carry on what you have started. He is going to sit where you are sitting and when you are gone, attend to those things which you think are important."

- Abraham Lincoln

A very wise person reminded me that the quality of our early education program directly impacts high-school graduation rates. I strongly feel that the quality of early care and pre-school education programs directly impacts the quality of the early education program in our schools. I am thankful to be part of an organization that truly focuses on the well-being, care and education of our youngest children.

A review of this report will demonstrate the wonderful things we are doing to enhance early care and pre-school education programs in Saluda County. With your help, we can do more. Through your donations and volunteer time, we can prepare our youngest children to carry on the good things we have started, and to improve the quality of life for those that come after them.

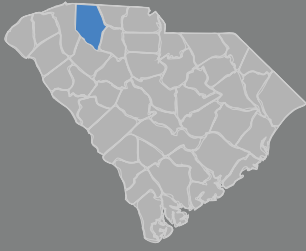
Deborah Padgett
 Executive Director

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
 Parent Training
 Family Literacy
 Countdown to Kindergarten
 Child Care Quality Enhancement
 Child Care Training
 Child Care Scholarships

State Programs
 Early Head Start
 First Steps 4k
 BabyNet



Spartanburg County

Carolyn Brooks
Executive Director

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Board Chair: Wanda L. Fowler



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Spartanburg County
Children Under Five	293,134	18,222
Children In Poverty	24.4%	21.5%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	Spartanburg 1: 16.2% Spartanburg 2: 16.8% Spartanburg 3: 19.3% Spartanburg 4: 22.2% Spartanburg 5: 20.4% Spartanburg 6: 29.3% Spartanburg 7: 28.9%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	15.9%

County Statistics

- Since inception, Spartanburg County First Steps has leveraged \$34,553,500 from sources outside of state government. That's \$2.54 for every state dollar received.
- Spartanburg County First Steps Quality Counts Program works with 52% of the child care centers in the county to improve the quality of early education for young children during FY17.
- First Steps successfully managed the EHS and CCP grants at full enrollment in the 2016-2017 program year.
- Since 2009, over 500 Spartanburg County vulnerable first-time mothers and their babies received services from Nurse Family Partnership.

Our Results

- Early Head Start #'s - 200 enrollment slots awarded!
- Quality Counts #'s - 38 programs are enrolled more than 2400 children benefit daily from quality care.
- Nurse Family Partnership #'s - Serves 200 first time pregnant moms and children

Wanda Fowler has been associated with education, either attending, teaching or serving in leadership most all of her life. After graduating from Boiling Springs High School in 1967 she became the first student to enroll in the University of South Carolina Spartanburg, at the time, now USC Upstate. Her list of professional accomplishments in teaching at Boiling Springs High School, USC Upstate and as Executive Director of Middle Tyger Community Center is nothing short of "Awesome."

In the year 1999, South Carolina First Steps became the state's comprehensive early childhood education initiative. Each South Carolina county is home to a First Steps partnership responsible for meeting local needs and identifying collaborative opportunities to help our state's youngest learners.

Spartanburg County, with the help of many, has supported early education with outstanding Board Leadership over the past 17 years. Each of the seven Spartanburg County School Districts has a representative position on the First Steps Board. Wanda was appointed to the Spartanburg First Steps Board by Dr. Sid Crumpton, Superintendent of Spartanburg County School District Five. Wanda has served on the First Steps board for seventeen years.

Wanda has recently retired from the Middle Tyger Community Center in District Five, and is retiring from the First Steps Board this year. Her guidance, leadership, friendship, understanding and love of education is a gift to the children of our County and State.

Thank you, Wanda Fowler, for giving your gifts, graces and advice! We are all the better for your leadership and I am honored to think of you as a sister and friend.

With a heart full of thankfulness, love and admiration,

Carolyn Brooks
Executive Director

Kids Count Data Provided By:



County Programs
Early Head Start
Quality Counts
Nurse Family Partnership

State Programs
Baby Net
First Steps 4K



Sumter County
Julia A. Nelson, MPA
Executive Director

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 www.scfirststeps.org/sumter

Board Chair: Walter Newman



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Sumter County
Children Under Five	293,134	7,370
Children In Poverty	24.4%	29.8%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	30.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	13.5%

- Over 240+ children impacted through Parents As Teachers; Childcare Scholarships; Dolly Parton Imagination Library and Childcare Training for Childcare Providers
- Over 218 childcare providers/directors and 18 childcare centers have benefited from our childcare training program. SCFS offered 25 master level training hours; and 5 training sessions.

Kids Count Data Provided By:



Sumter County First Steps (SCFS) has concentrated on strategies that will increase the likeliness of children being prepared to successfully enter school ready to learn.

SCFS is providing a home visitation program to help train parents on how to be their child's first and best teacher. We have chosen Parents As Teachers (PAT) as a strategy to assist with this goal. PAT is a national model, which is an evidence-based early childhood home visitation program. PAT will increase a parent's knowledge of child development and improves parenting practices.

SCFS is also providing childcare training to childcare providers and Scholarships/SC Vouchers for quality childcare. Quality childcare is a research-based determinant of school readiness. When you think about the number of hours children are with child care providers, you can understand the importance of quality.

We also support our families with Dolly Parton Imagination Library to develop an environment, which has a love for reading. An age appropriate book is mailed to the child each month up until their 5th birthday.

SCFS is very appreciative for its collaborations with area partners in early education to include, Early Head Start, Head Start, Sumter School District, Child Find and Child Find Interagency Team. Together we're making a measurable difference.

Julia A. Nelson, MPA
 Executive Director

County Programs

Parents As teachers
 Imagination Library
 Child Care Training
 Child Care Scholarships

State Programs

First Steps 4K
 BabyNet



Union County

Laura Wade Executive Director

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Board Chair: Connie Springs



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Union County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,561
Children In Poverty	24.4%	33.8%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	23.5%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	18.5%

- Since inception, Union County First Steps has leveraged \$1,144,580 from sources outside state government.
- 959 hours of support and guidance were provided to 65 families in our Early Steps to School Success program
- Childcare professionals received 13 hours of instruction for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through 12 Parent/Child Group Activities
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 994**

Kids Count Data Provided By:



Lots of exciting things are happening at Union County First Steps! Our partnership added another parent educator during the 2016-17 year. Thanks to our partnership with Union County Schools, Parent Educators are now located in three elementary schools (Buffalo, Foster Park, and Monarch Elementary). This has allowed our services to be offered to 20 more families in the county!

Countdown to Kindergarten served 20 children through our partnership with Union County Schools. This program is designed to strengthen the transition to kindergarten for children and their families.

Our partnership with United Way of the Piedmont has allowed us to register 895 children in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program. This program allows children to receive a free book in the mail every month until their 5th birthday!

Union County First Steps is very appreciative of our partnership with the Union County Carnegie Library. The two agencies have collaborated on projects (such as summer reading events and weekly story times) to further the reach of children and families receiving our services.

Our partnership with Spartanburg Community College and the City of Union have allowed us to offer quality instruction to local childcare workers at no cost to them.

Again, lots of exciting things are happening through Union County First Steps, and we look forward for lots more to come!

Laura Wade
Executive Director

County Programs

Early Steps to School Success
Child Care Training
Imagination Library
Countdown to Kindergarten

State Programs

Head Start
First Steps 4K
BabyNet



Williamsburg County

Felicia Patrick
Executive Director

Williamsburg County First Steps
500 North Academy Street, Building A
Kingstree, SC 29556
Phone: (843) 355-1031
[http://www.wcsd.k12.sc.us/
pages/WCSD/Department/First_Steps](http://www.wcsd.k12.sc.us/pages/WCSD/Department/First_Steps)

Board Chair: Ophelia McClary Starks



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Williamsburg County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,678
Children In Poverty	24.4%	43.3%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	38.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	14.6%

- Since inception, Williamsburg County First Steps has leveraged \$2,129,296 from sources outside state government. That's \$.43 for every dollar received.
- 718 hours of support and guidance were provided to 38 families in our Parent-Child Home Program.
- Parents and Childcare professionals received 7,800 books across the county to share and read with children.
- Improved parent awareness of kindergarten expectations through 120 hours of home visits through the Countdown to Kindergarten Program.
- Total Children Served in FY17: 634

Kids Count Data Provided By:



Williamsburg County First Steps (WCFS) Partnership Board is proud of the many successes we have attained and collaborative partnerships established to serve children and their families more efficiently and effectively in Williamsburg County. These collaborative efforts are reflected in our programs to include Parent-Child Home, Imagination Library, Countdown to Kindergarten and Child Care Training. These programs provide services to children and assist parents in getting their children ready for school. Imagination Library provides free books to children from ages 0 to 5. Donations from our partners have made it possible to place over 5000 books in the hands of children in fiscal year 2016-2017. County Council annually underwrites the WCFS annual meeting, which provides children, parents and WCFS staff an opportunity to recognize the good work that is being done by WCFS.

Additionally, Williamsburg County First Steps has increased the quality of services available to children and families using research and data. Independent reviews show that 66% of parents who work with First Steps programs show significant improvements in skills after participation in a First Steps parent education program. Similar results are shown for child care providers participating in First Steps quality enhancement efforts in all domains of quality.

Williamsburg County First Steps will continue its efforts to provide high quality services to children and their families so that all children will reach school healthy and ready to succeed.

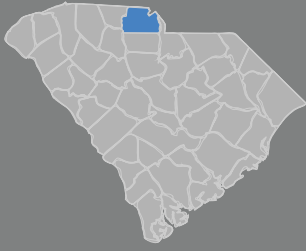
Felicia Patrick
Executive Director

County Programs

Parent-Child Home
Imagination Library
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Training

State Programs

First Steps 4K
BabyNet



York County

David W. Lisk, Sr.
Executive Director

York County First Steps
2631 West Main Street
Rock Hill, SC 29731
Phone: (803) 981-5780
Fax: (803) 981-5784
dlisk@scfirststeps.org
www.YCFirstSteps.com

Board Chair: Cindy Hunt



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	York County
Children Under Five	293,134	15,991
Children In Poverty	24.4%	17.1%
3rd Graders "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	York 1: 31.5% York 2: 9.5% York 3: 24.6% York 4: 7.2%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15%	12.0%

- Since inception, York County First Steps has leveraged \$4,841,383 from sources outside state government. That's \$.66 for every dollar received.
- 908 hours of support and guidance were provided to 54 families in our Parents as Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received 102 hours of certified training for early care best practices including our Annual Early Childhood Conference where 200 Childcare Professionals attended.
- Provided 133 rising kindergarten children with Countdown to Kindergarten providing 780 home and school visits.
- Served 31 at risk first time mothers through our Nurse-Family Partnership Program.

Kids Count Data Provided By:



Critical Need for Early Interventions

James Heckman, recipient of the 2000 Nobel Prize for Economics, has focused his skills and attention on the need for early childhood interventions. In his book, *Giving Kids a Fair Chance*, he begins with the following observations, "The accident of birth is a principal source of inequality in America today... The powerful impact of birth on life chances is bad for individuals born into disadvantage. And it is bad for American society." He continues to make his case that high quality programs and positive parental experiences make the most sustainable investments in our collective future.

York County First Steps strives to be on the front line of the efforts to help at risk children receive high quality interventions. We target our interventions to reach families as early as possible to help mitigate the potential disadvantages of birth circumstances. A common misperception is that systemic poverty is self-inflicted and impossible to break. Each year we can see the evidence that this is untrue. High quality programs that engage both child and parent can transform lives. Hopelessness and feeling overwhelmed can be turned into opportunities and brighter futures not only for the immediate family but also for the child's future success. We thank our many community partners for their efforts with us to serve York County. We welcome you to review our Annual Report and learn about our Program achievements this past year. We also commit to renewing our passion to serve for the upcoming year.

County Programs

Nurse-Family Partnership
Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training

Child Care Quality Enhancement
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Scholarships

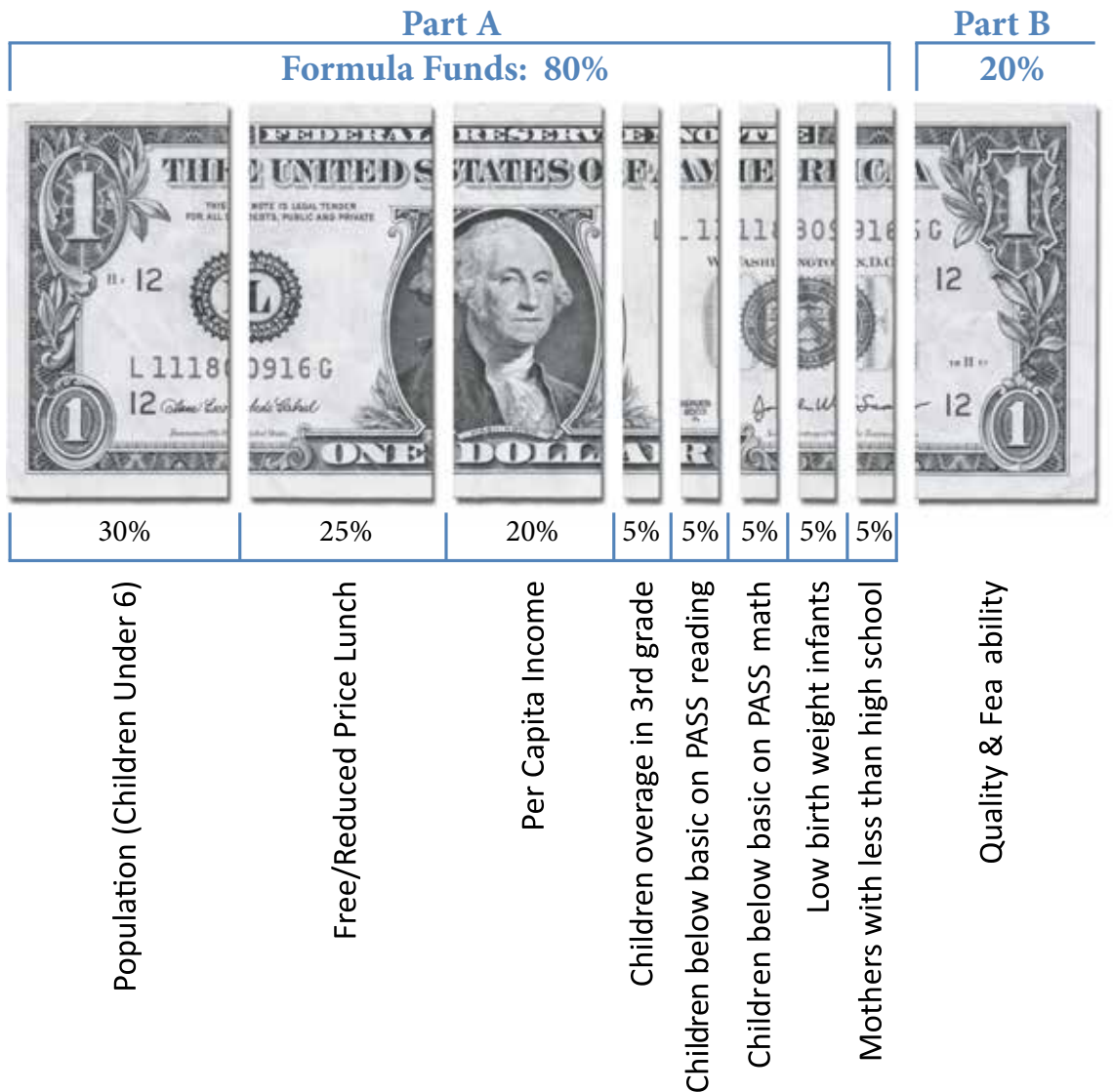
State Programs

Early Head Start
First Steps 4K
BabyNet

David W. Lisk, Sr.
Executive Director

ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

The First Steps Board of Trustees funds the operations of local First Steps Partnerships through an annual grant process. The amount of funding provided to each county is determined via the funding formula, which takes a variety of demographic and economic risk factors into account.



SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS

STATEMENTS OF ACTIVIES

	<u>2107</u>
Program Revenues	
Federal Grants	\$13,904,691
Medicaid Reimbursements	\$273,540
Local and Private Grants	<u>\$395,227</u>
Total Program Revenues	<u>\$14,573,458</u>
General Revenues	
State Appropriations	\$41,804,568
Interest Income	<u>\$1,257,762</u>
Total General Revenues	<u>\$43,062,330</u>
Total Revenues	<u>\$57,635,788</u>
Expenses	
Allocations To Other Entities	\$32,043,605
Contractual Services	\$8,976,041
Salaries	\$5,015,811
Employer Fringe Benefits	\$2,279,360
Rent and Leases	\$606,537
Materials	\$2,919,080
Travel	\$623,557
Depreciation	<u>\$166,948</u>
Total Expenses	<u>\$52,630,939</u>
Increase (decrease) In Net Position	\$5,004,849
Net Position Beginning Balance	\$123,388
Net Position Ending Balance	<u>\$5,128,237</u>

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

2017 has been a terrific year for First Steps, as South Carolina's early childhood initiative has continued to focus on improving school readiness outcomes for the state's 336,000 children under five.

Equity and diversity have been a special focus for us during 2017. During the past year we have laid the foundation to benefit our children and staff in important ways as we enter 2018. Some of our equity-related accomplishments, initiated as part of the State Board's Vision 2020 Strategic Plan, included:

- Formation of a Diversity and Equity Working Group with a goal of increasing awareness and understanding throughout First Steps. Representatives from the State Board of Trustees, staff and local partnership Executive Directors have all volunteered to participate.
- Held diversity training in February and May 12 featuring a variety of topics including implicit bias, tolerance vs. acceptance, sensitivity, communicating within diverse teams and avoiding stereotypes.
- Participated in the webinar series Advancing Race Equity and Inclusion co-sponsored by partners including The Children's Trust, Sisters of Charity, the Alliance for a Healthier South Carolina, Eat Smart-Move More, the Palmetto Association for Children and Families, and First Steps.
- Participating in a three-year, national Equity Leaders Action Network project

designed to build leaders for inclusive and diverse early childhood systems.

- Hired multi-lingual staff fluent in Spanish and Chinese and increased the number of men employed. Hired a diverse staff to better serve the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership infants and toddlers and their families.
- Scheduled the 2017 Chairmen's Summit on Early Childhood: Equity Begins Here, which will include two keynote speakers who are experts on the inequities present in our nation's education system, starting in early childhood. The Diversity and Equity Workgroup will host a resource area with books, articles, web links to videos, equity tools and other information to display and share.
- Scheduled a planning retreat for the Diversity and Equity Workgroup in January 2018, to prepare for an "Equity Organizational Self-Assessment" for all parts of First Steps – from local partnership boards, staff and programs to state-level programs such as 4K and Early Head Start, along with state-level staff and the state board.

Elsewhere, the Local Partnerships, with the support of the state office technical assistance team, worked to expand a local focus on evidence-based programs as mandated by our legislation. Our largest investment is in Parents as Teachers (PAT), a nationally recognized, evidence-based home visitation model, which is widely implemented by local partnerships.

First Steps also serves as the State Office for PAT. 12 PAT affiliate programs completed and submitted their self-study for the model's national quality endorsement in April and received Blue Ribbon status, a national stamp of quality. This self-study is a yearlong process and each program was thoroughly reviewed by a team at Parents as Teachers National this summer. Combined with our 3 existing Blue Ribbon programs, SC now has 15 Blue Ribbon affiliates.

The First Steps 4K Program continues to grow with service in more than 200 private, community- and faith-based settings. During 2017-2018 we are pleased to offer four program model choices with support from the General Assembly. These models allow programs to choose extended day, extended year and summer program choices to best meet the needs of enrolled families.

There is also growth in First Steps' Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Program which received a second grant this year from the federal Office of Head Start to serve an additional 162 infants and toddlers across 13 SC counties. With this expansion grant, work is underway to add child care partners who will ultimately serve 416 infants and toddlers.

We are thankful for all of our partners and staff who have worked so hard to serve the children and families of South Carolina, including BabyNet staff recently transitioned to the SC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). I thank the Board of Trustees for providing me with the amazing opportunity to serve as First Steps' Interim Director since December of 2015 and welcome to Georgia Mjartan, our new Executive Director.



Julia-Ellen C. Davis

Julia-Ellen Davis
Interim Director

