



Comprehensive Plan 2018-2020

Introduction

Per First Steps legislation (Section 52-152-70 (A)), each First Steps Partnership Board shall bring the community together to identify the area needs related to the goals of First Steps, develop a strategic long-term plan for meeting those needs, and then develop specific initiatives to implement the elements of the plan while integrating service delivery where possible. The partnership board is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the partnership's comprehensive strategic plan, which shall include direct service provision, contracting for service provision, and organization and management of volunteer programs. In addition, each partnership's comprehensive plan shall include the following core functions:

- a) service 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;
- b) service as a community convener around the needs of preschool children and their families; and
- c) support of state-level school readiness priorities as determined by the State Board.

Needs and Resources Assessment: Each local First Steps partnership undergoes a community needs and resources assessment process every three years, in consultation with its local board, staff, clients and partners. A description of this process can be found online at <http://scfirststeps.com/fy-17-needs-and-resources-assessment/>.

Alignment to State First Steps Priorities: Each local First Steps partnership is a non-profit organization created in legislation in support of the statewide First Steps initiative, which is governed by a state board of trustees and supported by the State Office of First Steps. Each local plan aligns with the priorities of the South Carolina First Steps Strategic Plan, **Vision 2020** (<http://scfirststeps.com/resources-and-state-reporting/>). These priorities are:

- Increase access to quality early childhood programs and resources
- Enhance leadership development and capacity building
- Strengthen interagency accountability and public-private collaboration

Support for First Steps Legislative Goals: The strategic goals of this comprehensive plan support one or more goals of the First Steps initiative, as defined in state legislation (<http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c152.php>):

1. Provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
2. Increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
3. Promote high-quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
4. Provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and
5. Mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed."

Promotion of South Carolina's Definition of School Readiness: The goals and objectives of this comprehensive plan promote one or more descriptions of school readiness (Ready Children, Ready Families and Caregivers, Ready Schools and Educators, Ready Communities) as defined in South Carolina's Profile of the Ready Kindergartner (<http://www.ican.sc>), adopted in 2015 by the South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees and the South Carolina Board of Education as the state's readiness benchmarks.

South Carolina's School Readiness Description (Profile of the Ready Kindergartner)



Profile of the Ready Kindergartner brochure

1 Ready Children

- 1A Approaches to Learning & Inquiry (10)
- 1B Emotional & Social Development (12)
- 1C Physical Development, Self-Help & Motor Skills (4)
- 1D Language & Literacy Development (24)
 - Listening, Speaking and Understanding (8)
 - Early Reading (12)
 - Early Writing (4)
- 1E Mathematical Thinking (9)
 - Number Sense (5)
 - Matching, Sorting, Classifying (4)

2 Ready Families and Caregivers

Ready Kindergartners have the foundation of family and caregivers who:

- 2A Provide safe and loving home environments in which children can grow and develop optimally.
- 2B Ensure that their children's pediatric health and dental needs are regularly addressed.
- 2C Create "language rich" homes in which conversation and written literacy are modeled daily.
- 2D Ensure that their young children receive adequate rest and a healthy diet.
- 2E Expose young children to regular and varied learning experiences in and out of the home.

3 Ready Schools and Educators

Schools and educators for the Ready Kindergartner:

- 3A Understand that each child develops on a unique timeline.
- 3B Are prepared to meet the unique, individual needs of all students.
- 3C Are highly knowledgeable in both child development and the progression of early learning.
- 3D Provide the social, emotional and academic supports needed to advance their students abilities.
- 3E Create emotionally safe and nurturing environments that are free of stress.
- 3F Are equipped to support the needs of their students' parents and caregivers.

4 Ready Communities

Communities that support the Ready Kindergartner:

- 4A Provide access to the resources necessary to ensure good health and optimal physical, social/emotional and cognitive development.
- 4B Create environments in which children:
 - Can grow and develop in the absence of fear, stress, danger and hunger.
 - Have access to needed pediatric, dental and mental health resources.
 - Spend their days in nurturing, language-rich, and developmentally supportive environments (whether a loving home, a high-quality early education setting or both).
 - Are cared for by loving adults attentive to their physical, emotional and developmental needs.

Profile of the Ready Kindergartner brochures are available from each local First Steps office.

Profile of the Ready Kindergartner resources: <http://www.ican.sc/>

South Carolina's Definition of School Readiness (Section 59-152-25 (G))

"School readiness' means the level of child development necessary to ensure early school success as measured in the following domains: physical health and motor skills; emotional and social competence; language and literacy development; and mathematical thinking and cognitive skills. School readiness is supported by the knowledge and practices of families, caregivers, healthcare providers, educators, and communities."



Process of Pickens County First Steps Comprehensive Plan:

While our comprehensive plan is born out of a needs and resources assessment every three years, it is also born out of a dynamic approach to the ongoing needs and partnerships within our community. Over the last several years, our board has continually assessed our current programs to ensure that they functioning properly and meeting the needs of young children and their families in Pickens County. As a convener of the Children's Services Council, we receive monthly feedback from council members on current programs in our county, their needs, and how we can come alongside these programs to equip them with best practices and promote their efforts.

Vision for the next 3 years:

We are more optimistic than ever about our impact on Pickens County over the next three years. Our mission remains the same but we will increasingly target all entities with *The Palmetto Basics* messaging, equipping them to serve the young children and families within their spheres of influence. This includes, but is not limited to: social service agencies, child care centers, the school district, faith communities, local community partners, and most importantly, families. Using social media, local gatherings, toolkits, and one-on-one relationship, we will work to equip all *Palmetto Basics* partners and "Champions for Children" with the resources they need to do the Basics with the children and families they serve.

Finding affordable, stable, high-quality childcare continues to be a challenge, particularly for families who are seeking work and education as a means of financial stability. We will help this need as we enhance our childcare assistance scholarship program. We will equip parents through more frequent home visitation, continuing to use *Ready Rosie* and *The Palmetto Basics* as parenting resources. Participating childcare centers will become *Raising a Reader* sites, thereby providing quality early literacy instruction for scholarship children, as well as the other children they serve.

"Creating a community where children are ready for school" - this remains our central mission. We plan to increase knowledge and parenting skills necessary to promote school readiness throughout our community. While community events such as *Week of the Young Child*, resource fairs, and 4K registration remain an effective way of engaging with families, we will also increase our efforts to meet parents right where they are - on their mobile devices. Using the growing influence of social media, we will equip parents, caregivers, and community members with relevant and engaging early education resources. Tools such as *Ready Rosie* and *The Palmetto Basics* will further enable us to reach families in relevant ways.

School readiness and early literacy go hand in hand. We will increase literacy outcomes in children 0-5 by introducing *Raising a Reader* in local childcare centers in Spring of 2018, enrolling more families in *Ready Rosie*, installing additional Little Free Libraries in locations where families naturally gather, and promoting *Palmetto Basics #5: Read & Discuss Stories* through book distribution, digital and print messaging, parent trainings, and new parent resources.

Finally, we will enhance the relationships we already have with key stakeholders in our community that provide direct services to young children and families. For example, *Parents as Teachers* will actively participate in *Raising a Reader* and their families will receive parent trainings from Pickens County First Steps staff.

Thank you!

We are grateful for the relational atmosphere that exists within Pickens County. Awareness of this unique culture informs everything that we do. Our collaborating partners are many but we want to especially thank the following community partners for their generous and steady support: Parents as Teachers, Safe Kids Upstate, United Way of Pickens County, and each of our local municipalities.

We want to thank our board members are steadfast in their community leadership and support of young children and their families. We are grateful for their forward-thinking commitment to the young children in Pickens County.

Amity Buckner, our Executive Director, is a model of leadership and integrity. Always, she does what is best for children. We are so grateful for her early education experience, commitment to families, community involvement, hard work, and innovation. Over the last three years, she has put together an efficient and experienced staff that has enhanced the services, communication, and community involvement of Pickens County First Steps.

Lastly, we thank the children and families who allow us to step into their lives and offer our support. Each family has a unique story and we want to honor the experiences of others in our language, attitudes, actions, and services. May all of our efforts reflect the real and present needs of Pickens County families.

Sincerely,

Patti Hunnicutt, Chair

Pickens County First Steps Partnership Board

Vision, Mission, and Values

Source: *Guiding Principles and Best Practices for South Carolina Nonprofits, 4th Edition* (TogetherSC, 2017)
<http://www.togetherSC.org/?page=GPBP>

In order to engage in strategic thinking that steers the organization in a **mission-focused direction**, the local partnership board must clearly define its mission, vision and values and use these statements to guide planning and action.

Mission and vision statements capture the essence of your organization's beliefs and values, and define its place in the world. A **vision statement** explains the overall goal of your organization looking into the future, while the **mission statement** outlines the present plan to realize the vision.

VISION

Communicates the desired future we seek for the community we serve.

SC First Steps Vision 2020 Vision Statement

Every South Carolina child will be prepared for success in school.

- The partnership board adopts the SC First Steps Vision 2020 vision statement for its 2018-2020 Strategic Plan
- The partnership board adopts the following vision statement for its 2018-2020 Strategic Plan:

Pickens County First Steps Vision Statement

Families and early childhood educators are equipped with tools and resources needed to ensure children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

MISSION

Describes the purpose that guides everything we do.

SC First Steps Vision 2020 Mission Statement

Collaborating with other entities, First Steps helps South Carolina families and caregivers prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance and expand high-quality early childhood services.

- The partnership board adopts the SC First Steps Vision 2020 mission statement for its 2018-2020 Strategic Plan
- The partnership board adopts the following mission statement for its 2018-2020 Strategic Plan:

Pickens County First Steps Mission Statement

We will continue to serve as a convener of early childhood champions to coordinate services to measurably improve the early childhood development of all children in Pickens County.

VALUES

Core values and beliefs reflect how our people – and the organization itself – behaves.

SC First Steps Vision 2020 Core Values

The years of early childhood are a critical window of development during which much of human potential is shaped.

Families are the single most important influence on the development of their young children.

The work of supporting families and caregivers is a collaborative effort between state and local stakeholders within the public, private and faith sectors.

School readiness is the result of a child's development in many areas, with each contributing to the child's success.

Services must be individualized and adaptable to meet the unique needs of children and families.

We value, and demonstrate in our collaborative work and advocacy, diverse perspectives in the development of public policy and programs.

To achieve desired results, services must be high-quality and grounded in strong evidence. First Steps operates within a culture of accountability.

- The partnership board adopts the SC First Steps Vision 2020 core values for its 2018-2020 Strategic Plan
- The partnership board adopts the following core values for its 2018-2020 Strategic Plan:

Pickens County First Steps Core Values

Pickens County First Steps Board of Directors and staff recognize the importance of the following values in helping us to achieve our goals:

- Operational and Fiscal Transparency
- Delivering Research Based Initiative
- Convening Collaborative Partners
- Engaging the Community
- Supporting Parents as their child's first teacher

STRATEGIC GOALS

Strategic goals set the direction for how the organization intends to implement its mission and address the needs of its focus population(s) for the duration of the plan.

#	Pickens County First Steps Strategic Goals, 2018-2020	FS Legislative Goal(s) Addressed (abbreviate as Goal 1, 2, etc.)	Profile of the Ready Kindergartner Benchmark(s) Addressed (abbreviate as 1A, 2B, etc.)
1	Integrate the <i>Palmetto Basics</i> messaging into all programs.	1,2,3,4,5	1A,1B,1C,1D,1E,2A,2C,2E,3A,3B,3C,3D,3E,3F,4A, 4B
2	Increase access to high quality, stable childcare environments.	3	1A,1B,1C,1D,1E,3A,2D,3B,3C,3D,3E,3F,4A, 4B
3	Increase knowledge and parenting skills necessary to promote school readiness.	1,2,4,5	1A,1B,1C,1D,1E,2A,2C,2E,3A,3B,3C,3D,3E,3F,4A, 4B
4	Improve literacy outcomes for children 0-5.	1,4,5	1A,1B,1C,1D,1E,2A,2C,2E,3A,3B,3C,3D,3E,3F,4A,4B

Pickens County First Steps Partnership

2018-2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Organized by the partnership’s current and proposed programs and services, as well as the core functions common to all First Steps partnerships (serving as a local portal connecting families of preschool children to services; serving as a community convener in support of the needs of preschool children and their families; and supporting state readiness priorities).

Local Portal			
Pickens County First Steps will connect families of preschool children to services designed to strengthen families and promote optimal child development (State Priority: Core Function).			
Objective	In Support of Partnership Strategic Goal(s) (abbreviate as 1, 2, etc.)	Success Metrics	Action Items
Each objective addresses one or more priorities of the SC First Steps Strategic Plan, <i>Vision 2020</i> : 1) Increase access; 2) Build capacity; 3) Strengthen interagency accountability & collaboration		Evidence for demonstrating progress, or achievement, of this objective (assessments, surveys, evaluations, focus groups, or other documentation)	Major activities to be initiated in support of the objective (to be operationalized by staff and partners)
Strengthen interagency accountability and collaboration, sponsor, co-sponsor, participate in community events that reach our target audience	1,2,3,4	-at least 2 community outreach events a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Palmetto Basics quarterly meetings
Continue to serve as the convener of the Children's Services Council of Pickens County, county childcare centers and other agencies that serve children and families.	1,2,3,4	-meeting held -meetings attended -trainings held	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to hold monthly CSCPC action team ▪ Attend monthly BNCT meetings ▪ Train Child care provider on new ELS
Continue to appropriately screen and refer children with potential developmental delays	1,2,3,4	-number of children screened -number of IDEA referrals -number of referrals qualifying for services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct screenings ▪ Appropriate referral to IDEA agency ▪ Connect family to additional services (enroll in Ready Rosie, etc.)

Community Education and Outreach

Pickens County First Steps will increase understanding in the community of school readiness domains and assessment, and “what works” to help young children succeed, and will make information easily accessible in all communities and for all families. (State Priority: SCFS Strategic Plan)

<p style="text-align: center;">Objective</p> <p>Each objective addresses one or more priorities of the SC First Steps Strategic Plan, <i>Vision 2020</i>: 1) Increase access; 2) Build capacity; 3) Strengthen interagency accountability & collaboration</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">In Support of Partnership Strategic Goal(s) (abbreviate as 1, 2, etc.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Success Metrics</p> <p>Evidence for demonstrating progress, or achievement, of this objective (assessments, surveys, evaluations, focus groups, or other documentation)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Action Items</p> <p>Major activities to be initiated in support of the objective (to be operationalized by staff and partners)</p>
Engage and support community partners in embedding and delivering readiness messaging within their communities	1,3,4	-focus groups -number of Champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social media posts for sharing on weekly basis ▪ Targeting Champion recruitment ▪ Monthly newsletter
Increase outreach and saturation of community-wide messaging (billboards, posters, community events, faith based community)	1,3,4	-Community events -brochures distributed -churches engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monthly newsletter ▪ Board member distribution of poster/brochures ▪ County wide faith based convening
Ensure that every child born in a Pickens County hospital receives information about Palmetto Basics and Ready Rosie.	1,3,4	-PB tri-folds distributed -Ready Rosie information distributed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remain in contact and supply Pickens County Library System with information for Baby Bags delivered to Baptist Easley

Mobilizing Communities on Providing Enhanced Services to Support Families and their Young Children

Pickens County First Steps will serve as a community convener to address the needs of preschool children in the community, in support of state readiness priorities (State Priority: Core Function).

<p style="text-align: center;">Objective</p> <p>Each objective addresses one or more priorities of the SC First Steps Strategic Plan, <i>Vision 2020</i>: 1) Increase access; 2) Build capacity; 3) Strengthen interagency accountability & collaboration</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">In Support of Partnership Strategic Goal(s) (abbreviate as 1, 2, etc.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Success Metrics</p> <p>Evidence for demonstrating progress, or achievement, of this objective (assessments, surveys, evaluations, focus groups, or other documentation)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Action Items</p> <p>Major activities to be initiated in support of the objective (to be operationalized by staff and partners)</p>
<p>Continue to mobilize community by monthly CSCPC meetings</p>	<p>1,3,4</p>	<p>-Actions team meet at least 8 times per year -At least 2 joint meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monthly reminders and agenda ▪ Friends Meeting in Fall and Spring
<p>Build capacity through Ready Rosie sign-up and Palmetto Basics messaging</p>	<p>1,3,4</p>	<p>-increase sign-up by 10% -increase hits on social media by 15%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community events ▪ Blog posts ▪ Social Media post and boosts

Book Flood

Description: Clients participate from September to May based on the school calendar. The students take a book home each night of the week during the months they participate.

Integration: All CCS families and contracted child care centers participate. Each book in the program has Palmetto Basics “read and discuss stories” reminder.

Collaboration: The K4 classrooms of the School District of Pickens County and 11 local day care centers participate in this program

<p style="text-align: center;">Objective</p> <p>Each objective addresses one or more priorities of the SC First Steps Strategic Plan, <i>Vision 2020</i>: 1) Increase access; 2) Build capacity; 3) Strengthen interagency accountability & collaboration</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">In Support of Partnership Strategic Goal(s) (abbreviate as 1, 2, etc.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Success Metrics</p> <p>Evidence for demonstrating progress, or achievement, of this objective (assessments, surveys, evaluations, focus groups, or other documentation)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Action Items</p> <p>Major activities to be initiated in support of the objective (to be operationalized by staff and partners)</p>
<p>Increase the number of child care centers participating by 10%</p>	<p>1,2,3,4</p>	<p>-centers participating</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Solicit centers via mail, onsite visit in August ▪ Explain the importance of literacy
<p>Increase knowledge of literacy knowledge in parents</p>	<p>1,2,3,4</p>	<p>-end of year survey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey completed at last home visit

Child Care Scholarships

Description: We provide day care tuition assistance to vulnerable families that fall between the 150%-175% poverty level with the goal of helping them become financially stable.

Integration: All CCS families participate in Book Flood, Ready Rosie and are given onsite training on the Palmetto Basics. Families are appropriately referred to this program from other agencies that participate in the CSCPC.

Collaboration: We partner with 4 high quality child care centers and the United Way of Pickens County's Community Impact Grant.

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<p>Increase number of home visits to 5 per year</p>	<p>1,2,3,4</p>	<p>-home visits entered into data system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent contract will increase number of visits from 4 to 5 per year ▪ Staff will visit families 5 times per year
<p>Participating centers will become Raising a Reader sites</p>	<p>1,2,3,4</p>	<p>-contracted centers participate in RAR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RAR will be added to center contract ▪ PCFS staff will conduct 2 parent trainings per year ▪ Monthly data will be collected

Parents As Teachers

Description: A national best-practice program, that will engage more than 26 vulnerable families countywide with a comprehensive program of weekly home visits, parenting skills, GED/ESOL training.

Integration: Parenting & Family Literacy is contracted with Pickens County First Steps and the strategy is operated in house with Parenting & Family Literacy.

Collaboration: PAT collaborates with Safe Kids Upstate (bicycle helmets, group connections, safe sleep training/pack-n-plays, and care seats. We also collaborate with The Dream Center, local fire department, county library system, Good Will industries, Poison Control, DHEC, United Way, Impact America, etc. for group connections and other services.

<p style="text-align: center;">Objective</p> <p>Each objective addresses one or more priorities of the SC First Steps Strategic Plan, <i>Vision 2020</i>: 1) Increase access; 2) Build capacity; 3) Strengthen interagency accountability & collaboration</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">In Support of Partnership Strategic Goal(s) (abbreviate as 1, 2, etc.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Success Metrics</p> <p>Evidence for demonstrating progress, or achievement, of this objective (assessments, surveys, evaluations, focus groups, or other documentation)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Action Items</p> <p>Major activities to be initiated in support of the objective (to be operationalized by staff and partners)</p>
Continue to maintain Blue Ribbon status with the national PAT office	1,3,4	-yearly evaluation from PAT national	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continued supervision of staff ▪ Monitoring Visits ▪ Monthly data checks
Families will actively participate in Raising a Reader	1,3,4	-monthly reports -end of year survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PCFS staff to conduct 2 parent trainings ▪ PAT staff to change out bags on weekly basis ▪ Action
Parent Educators (PE) will continue to incorporate the Basic messaging into family training	1,3,4	-monthly reports -home visit summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PE will show videos during home visits ▪ PE will design activity to support the Basics ▪ Action
Parent Educators will continue to sign families up for Ready Rosie	1,3,4	-enrollment increase -video views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PE will enroll families in Ready Rosie