



FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Pickens County First Steps:



2,599 children

were directly served in Pickens County



799 parents & caregivers

received services and support to be their child's first and most important teacher



Kasey Swords

Board Chair

In my career as a Children's Librarian, I have always been an advocate for early literacy and strong families. It is an honor to serve as the Board Chair of Pickens County First Steps, an organization committed to the literacy, well-being, and mental health of children and families of our county.

Through various programs, initiatives, and projects, Pickens County First Steps is actively fighting some of the biggest problems facing Pickens County families, all while honoring and supporting caregivers and their strengths. We, the Board of Pickens County First Steps, are dedicated to this fight and look forward to a stronger and brighter future for all Pickens County as a result.

PROVEN RESULTS

A 2019 study found that children who received First Steps local partnership services were:



74% more likely

to score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment



34% less likely

to be chronically absent in kindergarten

THE NEED PERSISTS IN PICKENS COUNTY

First Steps works but we need to expand our reach to ensure that all children are ready.

7,227

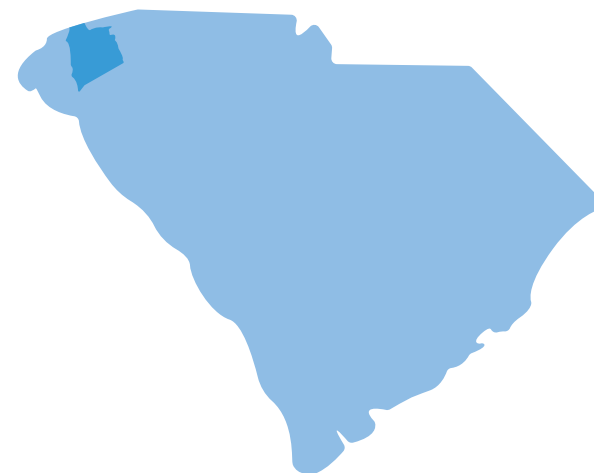
children under age 5

36.5%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

62%

of kindergarteners are considered "not ready" for school



Our Local Supporters

School District of Pickens County
Prisma Health System
Cliffs Resident Outreach

Board of Directors

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Clif Alexander | Liz Rampy |
| Heather Blackwell | Melissa Sanders |
| Allison Cawley | John Schafer |
| Meredith Dickens | Katrice Seawright |
| George Hicks | Kasey Swords |
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CONTACT US

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2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

OUR MISSION

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.



Amity Buckner
Executive Director

Through the spirit of collaboration and innovation, Pickens County First Steps continues to serve as a convener of early childhood champions in our county. We equip families and early childhood champions with the basics they need to give every child a great start in life! Existing strong relationships with community partners have allowed us to collaborate in the crucial work of strengthening families, promoting early literacy and school readiness, and caring for the whole child. We are proud to share just some of these highlights:

- We are one of nine counties in the state that has a partnership with DSS to support families in crisis with our Parents as Teachers program.
- We worked with multiple community organizations to provide Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to every zip code in our county. By the end of the year, 44% of eligible children were registered, thereby receiving quality, age-appropriate books to help promote early literacy and positive interactions with parents and caregivers.
- Reach Out and Read ensures that health care providers will reinforce the importance of reading and equip the families they serve with quality books and tools for maximizing read-aloud time.
- Through our alliance with United Way of Pickens County, we provide Bright by Text, a free service that provides age-specific texts on everything from managing stress and behavioral challenges, to well-visit reminders and community events and resources.
- We are encouraged by our school district's deepening awareness of the importance of early experiences through the expansion of 3K and 4K classes, Countdown to Kindergarten, regular Preschool Pages programming at our elementary schools, and the Resilience documentary.

As we know, recovery from the Covid crisis is far from over and young children and families are among those who have suffered most. We have prioritized linking arms with others, educating them about the ongoing ripple effects and working toward solutions.

We are grateful for our board's forward-thinking commitment to the young children in Pickens County and their support of meeting parents where they are through technology such as Bright by Text and an updated, user-friendly website. Most importantly, we are grateful for the families and children that allow us to step into their lives and offer support.

We all have an important role to play in getting children ready for school and for life! Whether you're a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle, teacher, coach, neighbor, friend, or volunteer, know that anything you do to encourage and support caregivers and children goes a long way to strengthen families and positively impact the next generation.

Serving Pickens County's children birth through age five.

"Who told Dolly that my daughter LOVES horses? When she found her new book in the mailbox and saw the pictures on the front cover, she immediately sat down and began to "read" it. Thank you for this special gift!"

Pickens County First Steps parent



PROGRAMS

PARENTING

Parents as Teachers

Offers research-based curricula that help families raise children to be healthy, safe, learning, and ready for school.

28 children served 31 group meetings and events 500 home visits

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Free, high-quality books mailed to the home of children from birth until age five.

738 children served 738 families served 2,677 books distributed

Connected Families

Prevents the unnecessary removal of young children from their homes by providing parents and caregivers with voluntary, coordinated services.

7 children served 161 home visits

Nurse-Family Partnership

Home visitation for first time mothers, from pregnancy until the child turns two.

44 children served 53 families served 559 home visits

Reach Out and Read

Site visits for home child care providers to encourage developmentally appropriate practices.

1,708 children served 3,417 book distributed

SCHOOL TRANSITION

Countdown to Kindergarten

Supports transitions into kindergarten by connecting incoming students, their families, and their teachers in a series of one-on-one sessions during the summer.

51 children served 4 schools served 305 home visits

Countdown to 4K

Supports transitions into pre-kindergarten by connecting incoming students, their families, and their teachers in a series of one-on-one sessions during the summer.

13 children served 4 schools served 77 home visits

HEALTH

Early Identification & Referral

Providing developmental screenings and referrals to other services.

3 children served

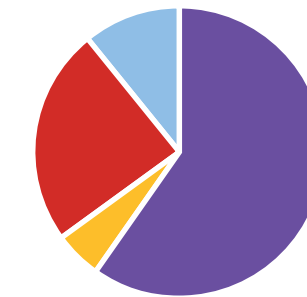
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

\$1 = \$2.62

Pickens County First Steps leveraged \$335,939.83 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$1.62 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

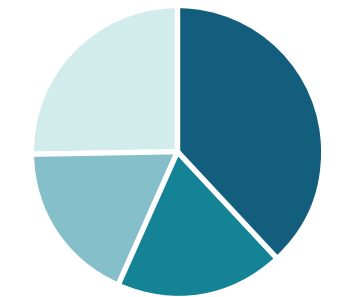
Total: \$1,200,050



- Parenting - \$331,980.06
- School Transition - \$28,800.18
- Health - \$135,256.03
- Administrative - \$58,666.08

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$1,200,050



- State Funding - \$207,516
- Federal Funding - \$101,933
- Private Funding - \$97,705.09
- In-kind Contributions - \$136,301.74

FUNDING SUPPORT BY SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS

- State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding
- State READY Funding*
- Federal Preschool Development Grant Funding**
- Federal ESSER Funding***
- The Duke Endowment & Doris Duke Foundation
- State Income Tax Check-off and Private Donations to SC First Steps

*Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) Proviso 1.105

**Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0080-01-00 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, awarded to the South Carolina Department of Social Services, Division of Early Care and Education

***American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, awarded to the South Carolina Department of Education