



2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT



FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Aiken County First Steps:



1,193 children

were directly served in Aiken County



408 parents & caregivers

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



417 educators

participated in First Steps training and professional development, benefitting 500+ children

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 Aiken COUNTY

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

11,015

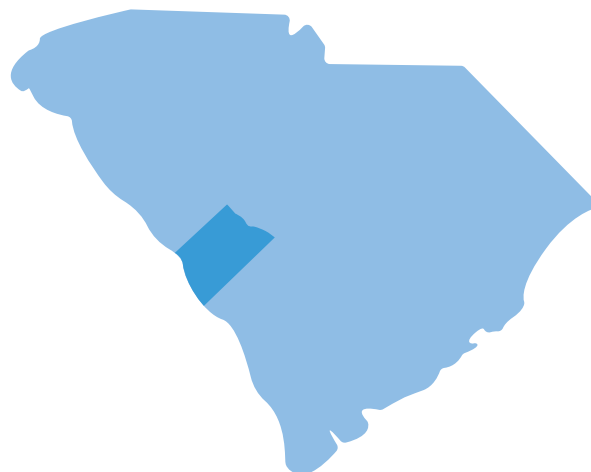
children under 6

40%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

58%

of kindergarteners are considered "not ready" for school



OUR MISSION

Through collaboration, Aiken County First Steps empowers families and caregivers to prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance and expand high-quality early childhood services.



Marcia L. Nash

Executive Director

We will be here to help you work through this, whatever it takes!

Supporting children means supporting the adults that care for them, calling for and investing in coordinated, quality early childhood programs, and lighting the path to a future where all children are given a well-built foundation and an opportunity to meet their highest potential.

As we advance the Aiken County First Steps mission of empowering parents and caregivers to prepare children for school success, we have seen the impact our childcare programs have had and continues to have on all the participating parents and caregivers. Families stay enrolled in the evidence-based program because of the support and care they receive from the ACFS Childcare Technical Assistant/Specialist. 100% of the families have a better understanding of the importance of assessing their children's development and feel supported as their child's first and most important teacher. Without the resources, local supporters, staff, and volunteers, we could not have accomplished these outstanding goals.

Serving Aiken County's children birth through age five.

"I am so thankful that I found First Steps! I never knew that a program like this was provided to families in Aiken County. I have learned a lot since being a part of the Aiken County First Steps program. Being a single/first time parent, I was unsure about knowing how to help with Isaiah's growth and development. First Steps has provided a peace of mind knowing that they are readily available to help in all aspects of our lives. Thank you for everything that you all have done for my family and allowing us to be a part of Aiken County First Steps!"

Adreana Middleton
Aiken 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.

21

children served

26

group meetings and events

318

home visits

HIPPY

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is a home visiting program that supports parents in their role as a child's first and most important teacher.

8

children served

8

families served

13

group meetings

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

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

738

children served

5,008

books distributed

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Quality Enhancement

Promotes quality in child care by providing early educators with one-on-one coaching and support.

50

children served

2

providers served

86

technical assistance hours

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

5,284

children served

55

providers served

67.5

training hours offered

Child Care Scholarships

Eligible children receive tuition-free enrollment at quality child care centers.

33

children served

28

families served

7

providers served

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.

28

children served

4

schools served

168

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.

9

children served

2

schools served

54

home visits

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

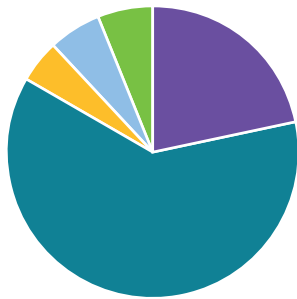


\$1 = \$2.38

Aiken County First Steps leveraged \$299,014.29 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$1.38 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

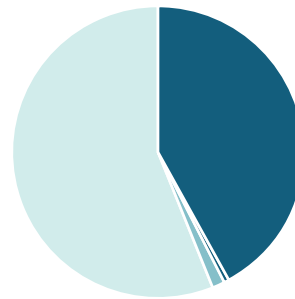
Total: \$658,481.37



- Parenting - \$143,606.34
- Early Care & Education - \$405,860.75
- School Transition - \$32,136.41
- Administrative - \$37,948.87
- Core Functions - \$38,929.00

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$515,776.13



- State Funding - \$216,761.84
- Federal Funding - \$2,756.76
- Private Funding - \$7,470.33
- In-kind Contributions - \$288,787.20

FUNDING SUPPORT

- State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding
- Federal AmeriCorps Service Site
- Federal ESSER Funding*
- State Income Tax Check-off and Private Donations to SC First Steps

**American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, awarded to the South Carolina Department of Education
Federal AmeriCorps funding awarded to SC First Steps from the SC Service Commission at the United Way Association of SC*

Note: Revenue amounts may show a difference between allocations and revenue based on penalties imposed by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees for non-compliance with organizational policies. The figures provided are based on unaudited financial statements and, as such, are subject to change.

Maire Davidsohn

Board Chair



Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success!

The impact of the Aiken County First Steps board of directors' commitment of service continues to provide the stability needed to help us grow and succeed. Local community leaders helped the board achieve its goals by accommodating First Steps with use of space and by inviting First Steps to programs aimed at families. In doing so, families became aware of what First Steps offers to support our youngest community members and their caregivers.

By continuing to advocate the importance First Steps plays in our community, the board will be better able to make decisions that will continue to benefit the organization. The collaboration and communication of community leaders can help the board achieve its goals by continuing to support the agency and its staff to create family-centered learning environments for all.

Our Supporters

South Carolina First Steps
Aiken County School District
United Way Aiken County
Golden Harvest Food Bank
South Carolina Department of
Social Services
Kimberly-Clark Corporation
Betheny Full Gospel #2
Mrs. Shirley von Beck
Mrs. Debbie Williams

Board of Directors

Theodore Barnett
Susan Budney
Gail Diggs
Teresa Lilly
Kayla Scarborough
Shirley Von Beck
David Walker
Natrice Brighthop
Marie Davidsohn
Shadie Hall
Dorothy Hughes
Carsyn Zambrano
Lauren Enter

CONTACT US

105 Gator Lane, Aiken, SC 29801 | (803) 306-1343 | mnash@acpsd.net