



2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT



FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Lancaster County First Steps:



3,116 children

were directly served in Lancaster County



1,136 parents & caregivers

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



348 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 LANCASTER COUNTY

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

6,367

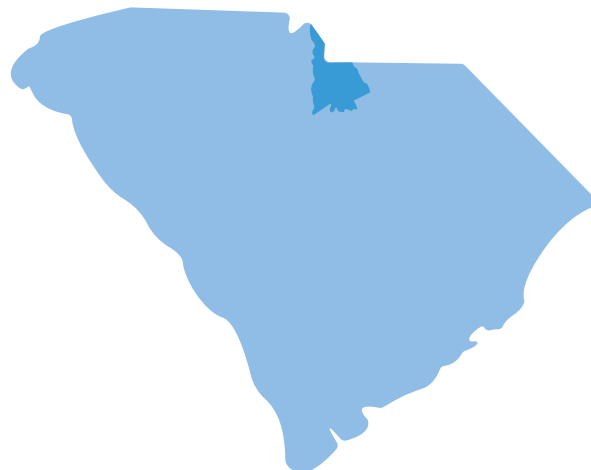
children under 6

40%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

60%

of kindergarteners are considered "not ready" for school



OUR MISSION

Collaborating with other entities, Lancaster County First Steps helps Lancaster County 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.



Tomeiko Wright Executive Director

“We Are Lancaster” is a common slogan that rings out through our community!

As a person who was born, raised, and educated in this great county, I take pride in having the opportunity to give back in such a way that has a huge and lasting impact on our community. It is with great pleasure that I serve as Executive Director of Lancaster County First Steps and can be a part of something bigger than I am. We have made remarkable strides and achieved some amazing goals this past year. We have been and will continue to be active in the community and to serve and partner with other community agencies. Our assignment is to ensure that we are helping families to see their full potential and that they can obtain the resources that are available to them to ensure success and create a sense of empowerment in theirs and their children’s lives. I understand the task at hand and hold steadfast to the following quote from Martin Luther King, “Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Serving Lancaster County’s children birth through age five.

“Clyburn Early Childhood Center is a good school. My daughter is comfortable going there. My girls don’t really like to be around people, but the teachers made her feel comfortable and made her feel like family. My daughter Ryann had an opportunity to go to another program, but we thought Clyburn was a better fit for her because everything is nice and set up right for the kids and they enjoy themselves.”

Patrick Clyburn, Parent of Ryann Clyburn



“My child Peyton loves Clyburn Early Childhood Center. She is always happy to come the next day! Never a dull moment with her after leaving school! She’s learned so much since she’s been attending Clyburn.”

Carbonarra William Max

“Our Family chose Lancaster County First Steps Early Head Start program because it provides a safe and clean environment for my children to attend school. The program allows the children to attend school for free, which is saving us money to help provide more for my children. My children have learned so much since they enrolled in the Early Head Start program, and it was the best decision we could have made for the entire family. The staff has been helpful since we have been a part of the Lancaster County First Steps EHS family to ensure that the entire family’s needs are being met. All the staff from family services and the teachers have taken the time to explain the program and work with my family. There is truly a big difference between Early Head Start services and attending a regular daycare. Early Head Start Works!”

Alberto Contreras-Ramirez, Early Head Start participant



PROGRAMS

PARENTING

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

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

1,655

children served

15,386

books distributed

Incredible Years

12-week group support for parents for their child's social and emotional development and behavior.

48

children served

57

group meetings and events

Parents as Teachers

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

51

children served

12

group meetings and events

339

home visits

HEALTH

Weekend Backpacks

Provides preschool children with nutritious, kid-friendly meals on weekends and holidays when school meals are not available.

497

children served

15,904

meals distributed

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Early Head Start

A federally funded program that provides family-centered services to infants and toddlers under age 3, pregnant women, and their families.

62

children served

62

families served

77

home visits

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

72

children served

7

providers served

24

certified training hours

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.

78

children served

11

schools served

486

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.

70

children served

11

schools served

444

home visits

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

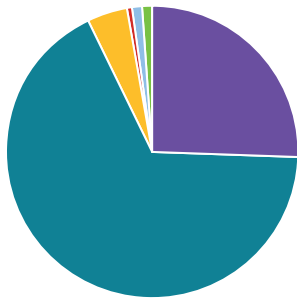


\$1 = \$11.12

Lancaster County First Steps leveraged \$2,641,389.43 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$10.12 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

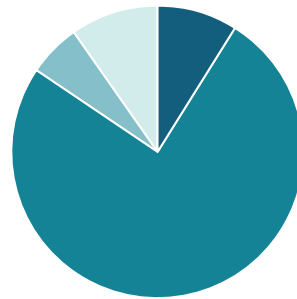
Total: \$2,743,095.44



- Parenting - \$704,887.48
- Early Care & Education - \$1,847,150.99
- School Transition - \$117,350.38
- Health - \$19,008.34
- Administrative - \$28,449.73
- Core Functions - \$26,248.52

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$2,902,295.88



- State Funding - \$260,906.45
- Federal Funding - \$2,191,371.40
- Private Funding - \$169,033.25
- In-kind Contributions - \$280,984.78

FUNDING SUPPORT BY SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS

State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding
 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*

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.



Dr. Paul McKenzie

Board Chair

The board, staff, and stakeholders in Lancaster County are proud of the continued efforts to improve school readiness and make a measurable improvement in the quality of life for children and families in our community. We believe in the value of partnership, data driven decision making, adherence to evidence-based programming, and openness to input from our constituents throughout Lancaster County.

Our board and agency have plans to expand and enhance the work described within the report throughout the next five years, with an effort to ensure that every child in our community tests ready for school, supported by strong parents and families, and served by a rich range of community resources.

Our Local Supporters

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Dollywood Foundation

American Endowment Fund on
behalf of Dr. and Mrs. Marvin
Lymberis

Carolina Pharmacy

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CONTACT US

3901 Lancaster Hwy, Lancaster SC 29270 | 803-286-8000 | scfirststeps.org/Lancaster