



FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Richland County First Steps:



679 children

were directly served in Richland County



420 parents & caregivers

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



227 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 RICHLAND COUNTY

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

26,875

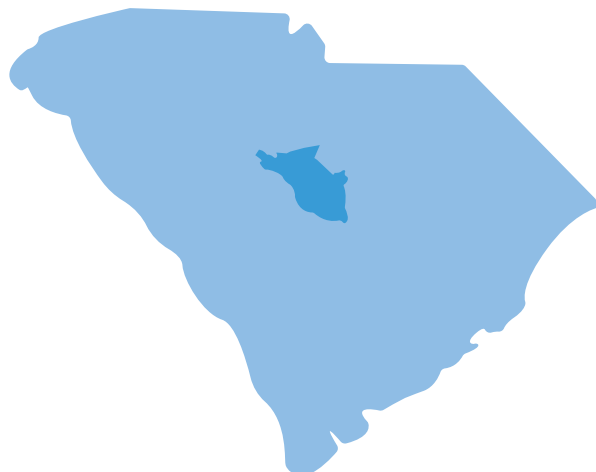
children under 6

42%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

54%

of kindergarteners are considered "not ready" for school



Rachael Fulmer

Board Chair



As we embark on a significant milestone—our 25th year at Richland County First Steps (RCFS)—our board, leadership team, and dedicated staff have focused their efforts on making 2023-24 a year of solid growth and rebuilding. We are thrilled to announce that our programs are operating at full capacity, a testament to the trust and need our community places in our evidence-based services. Whether through home-based or center-based programs, our team is committed to helping families build nurturing relationships and develop crucial skills for their children's growth.

The Board of RCFS has laid out a rigorous Strategic Plan focused on maintaining the highest standards of quality in our programming while aiming for continued expansion.

Each board member is deeply invested in supporting our staff to achieve the ambitious goals set for 2024-25 and beyond. As we celebrate a quarter-century of service, we are reminded of the profound impact our work has had—and will continue to have—on the lives of children and families in Richland County. Together, we are paving the way for a future where every child is poised for success in school and beyond.

Board of Directors

| | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Mary Bailey | Cassandra Legette |
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| Rachael Fulmer | Scott Smoak |
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CONTACT US

1800 St. Julian Place, Suite 406, Columbia SC 29204 | 803-256-7237 | richlandfirststeps.org



2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT

OUR MISSION

From Day 1 to Grade 1, Richland First Steps empowers our community to nurture children, so they are ready to thrive in school.



Ginny Waller

Interim Executive Director

As we reflect on the past year and look forward to celebrating our 25th anniversary, Richland County First Steps (RCFS) continues to be a beacon of hope and a pillar of support for our community's youngest learners. Our evidence-based programs, especially Parents as Teachers, have prepared thousands of children for school and life, fostering environments where they can thrive from their earliest moments. This legacy of impact resonates throughout Richland County, as we witness our program alumni grow into high-functioning, contributing members of society who attribute their early successes to the foundations laid by RCFS.

Despite significant transitions, including shifts in leadership and programming, we embrace change as a catalyst for growth and improvement. These changes are not just necessary; they are opportunities to enhance our reach and effectiveness, ensuring that the next 25 years will be even more transformative. The services we provide are more crucial than ever, with their influence trickling down to improve not only individual lives but also the broader educational landscape. Together, let's continue to empower our children and our community, building a future where every child in Richland County has the best start in life.

Serving Richland County's children birth through age five.

"My name is Sarah, and my daughter Ari has been in the Home Visitation program since she was a baby. We really enjoy all of the activities that our FSA shares with us. Ari has come so far, and her favorite pastime now is reading! RCFS has really shown me how important reading is to Ari. We love all of the books our FSA has given us and read them over and over. The program has helped us tremendously. The activities and material introduce everything she needs to know at her age and more! Ari loves learning new things and she catches on really fast. My FSA really encourages me to be a better parent and spend time with Ari on the things she likes to do. I really feel like RCFS has helped prepare Ari, and myself as a parent, get her ready for school."

Richland County First Steps parent



PROGRAMS

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

301

children served

13

providers served

7

certified training hours

Quality Enhancement

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

986

children served

18

providers served

1,000

technical assistance hours

Early Head Start

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

191

children served

1,074

home visits

1,800+

hours of child care

PARENTING

Parents as Teachers

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

29

children served

60

group meetings and events

654

home visits

Connected Families

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

31

children served

60

group meetings and events

255

home visits

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

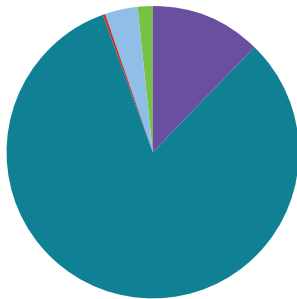


\$1 = \$4.15

Richland County First Steps leveraged \$3,369,264.22 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$3.15 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

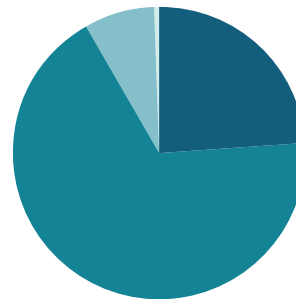
Total: \$4,050,353.01



- Parenting - \$503,305.79
- Early Care & Education - \$3,328,474.20
- School Transition - \$649.14
- Health - \$10,292.00
- Administrative - \$141,517.20
- Core Functions - \$66,114.68

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$4,438,632.22



- State Funding - \$1,069,368.00
- Federal Funding - \$3,004,879.44
- Private Funding - \$345,321.78
- In-kind Contributions - \$19,063.00

FUNDING SUPPORT BY SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS

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

*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

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.