

# NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2024 – 2026



# Acknowledgments

Darlington County First Steps would like to thank the community members, stakeholders, partnering organizations, *Parents as Teachers* Advisory Committee members, Darlington County School District *Countdown to Kindergarten* teachers, and the Byerly Foundation for their support, engagement and thoughtful contribution to developing the priority areas as included in the 2024-2026 Needs Assessment.

Additionally, Darlington County First Steps would like to thank the 45 participants who completed the community needs assessment survey to better understand perceptions of needs and assets from community members. Thank you for your time and thoughtful feedback to support the development of priority areas.

Lastly, thank you to the team at Darlington County First Steps who work tirelessly to promote healthier and stronger families in Darlington County. None of this is possible without your commitment, dedication and selfless service.

Funding Acknowledgement: First Steps of South Carolina provided \$1,500 to support the work of developing the 2024-2026 Needs Assessment. Additional costs were supported by private unrestricted funds available to Darlington County First Steps.

# Message from the Executive Director



**DARNELL BYRD MCPHERSON**  
**Executive Director**  
**Darlington County First Steps**

**What? Why? When? How? Who?** As you read through this document, you will be able to answer some of these questions. This document will guide the development of the Darlington County First Steps strategic plan which will answer the remaining questions posed by the five priority areas identified herein. It takes a village to achieve our mission of providing programs, support services, and information to strengthen families and communities of Darlington County. We look forward to having you join us, along with the Darlington County First Steps Board of Directors, on this journey.

We are very grateful to the many persons who took the time to share thoughts, ideas, opinions, and responses which were compiled and synthesized by Dr. Sarah Kershner. We are grateful to Dr. Kershner for managing this monumental task which will inform the development of a long-range strategic plan to support our vision of equipping families and engaging the communities of Darlington County.

Forward in gratitude,

*Darnell Byrd McPherson, LBSW*

# Needs Assessment Process

## CONVENE

Measured perceived needs and assets through an online survey and meetings with community members. Information gathered was used to develop a vision for families and children, and identify the priority areas as included in the Needs Assessment report for Darlington County

October 2022 – February 2023

## PRIORITIZE

Organized the insight gathered from the convenings and data to prioritize the concerns, needs, and gaps the partnership wants to address and formalized Needs Assessment

January 2023 – March 2023



## UNDERSTAND

Reviewed local data and map assets to understand the state of young children, their families, and the early childhood system

October 2022 – March 2023

**“Darlington County would be a better place to raise children if there was more support in parents assisting parents. ”**

-Participant

**“Darlington County needs more areas for children & teens to socialize in a fun safe environment and have more community events to bring families and the community together”** -Participant

**“A vision for Darlington County would include greater opportunities for healthy coexistence for families, promote the importance of values and principles from childhood and adults, and offer practical solutions to families. This would include community leaders to be part of the solutions in the community and to personally contribute to solutions.”**

-Participant

# Needs Assessment Methods



## CONVENE

- I. Facilitated a meeting with ten (10) community members and stakeholders who represented the *Parents as Teachers* Advisory Committee on Thursday, February 16, 2023.
- II. Facilitated a meeting with five (5) Darlington County School District *Countdown to Kindergarten* teachers on Tuesday, February 28, 2023.
- III. Disseminated an online Community Needs Assessment survey to community members, partners, youth-serving agencies, stakeholders, parents and Darlington County First Steps board members from February 5 – February 28, 2023.



## UNDERSTAND

- I. Presented data trends, current health outcomes and relevant measures related to the health and wellness of children in Darlington County to meeting participants. Discussed perceived needs, resources and assets as a group during community meetings (n=2 meetings; n= 15 attendees).
- II. Reviewed and analyzed data obtained from online Community Needs Assessment survey (n=45 participants) and identified common themes in findings.
- III. Using all data obtained from community meetings and online Community Needs Assessment survey, mapped assets to understand the state of young children, their families, and the early childhood system, and identified priority areas with relevant measurable outcomes to be the focus of the Darlington County First Steps strategic planning moving forward.

# Asset Map



# Asset Map Continued



# Priorities: Summary

## 1. SCHOOL READINESS

As measured by the percentage of students enrolled in Kindergarten in Darlington County School District that are considered ready for Kindergarten according to the School Readiness Survey.

## 2. CHILD-CARE DESERTS

As measured by the percentage of census tracts in Darlington County that are considered “child-care deserts” as measured by data from the Center for American Progress.

## 3. MENTAL HEALTH

As measured by the percentage of children in Darlington County reported as having experienced at least one adverse-childhood experience (ACE).

## 4. REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

As measured by the case rates of Gonorrhea and Chlamydia among teens age 15-19 in Darlington County.

## 5. MEN'S HEALTH

As measured by the cancer incidence case rates among African American men in Darlington County.



# Priority One: School Readiness

## 23.5% of students enrolling in Kindergarten in Darlington County School District are considered ready for Kindergarten

As measure by the Darlington County 2021-2022, SC State Report Card, retrieved at:

<https://screportcards.com/>

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), State Education Agencies are required to prepare and disseminate an annual state report and Local Education Agency (LEA) report card that meet the minimum requirements described in federal law. Kindergarten Readiness Assessment is administered to all students enrolled in publicly funded kindergartens during the first 45 days of the school year. It is a developmentally appropriate instrument that measures a child's school readiness overall and across multiple domains: Social Foundations, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and Physical Well-Being.

Overall Readiness	%
Darlington County School District	23.5%
South Carolina	36.0%

**“Darlington County needs  
Reliable, affordable, beneficial  
educational programs for age  
birth to 5 years old.”**

-Participant

## Priority Two: Child-care deserts

### 37% of census tracts (7/19) are considered childcare deserts in Darlington County.

Definition of a childcare desert obtained from the Center for American Progress, “A childcare desert is any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no childcare providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed childcare slots” at <https://www.childcaredeserts.org/>. Population under age 5 by census tract obtained from the American Community Survey 2016-2020 Five Year Estimates (Table B01001). US Census Bureau. Calculations done by Chelsea Richard of South Carolina First Steps (October 16, 2022).

Darlington County Census Tract	Total population under 6 (% of population under 6 <185% FPL)	Total Providers (including exempt – not licensed)	Total licensed capacity (not including exempt – not licensed)	Childcare desert?
101	211 (80%)	0	0	Yes
102	165 (11%)	1	140	No
103	281 (42%)	2	35	Yes
104	613 (22%)	2	18	Yes
105	110 (58%)	2	231	No
106	359 (69%)	6	270	No
107	310 (91%)	4	367	No
108	176 (44%)	1	201	No
109.01	300 (61%)	1	6	Yes
109.02	191 (77%)	3	396	No
110	189 (38%)	3	117	No
111	190 (70%)	2	204	No
112.01	90 (100%)	1	176	No
112.02	57 (70%)	0	0	No
113.01	74 (100%)	4	50	No
113.02	146 (92%)	0	0	Yes
114	613 (48%)	2	46	Yes
115	222 (20%)	0	0	Yes
116	159 (98%)	3	202	No

## Priority Three: Mental Health

### 59.6% of children in Darlington County reported experiencing at least one adverse-childhood experience (ACE)

ACE data are collected via the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) managed by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). The BRFSS is a cross-sectional, telephone-based survey of health-related risk behaviors, history of chronic health conditions, and preventative behaviors. Children's Trust collected the data through the BRFSS with funds provided through the community-based child abuse prevention funds (2014 and 2015) and the BlueCross BlueShield Foundation of South Carolina (2016-2018.) Data provided by the Children's Trust of South Carolina at: <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/11086-ace-children-who-experienced-at-least-one-adverse-childhood-consequence?loc=42&loct=5#detailed/5/6308-6353/false/1564/5201/21435>.

Felitti et al. (1998) demonstrated the relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and negative health outcomes. ACEs can contribute to an increased risk for the development of physical and mental health issues later in life, as well as psychological disorders and substance use disorders (CDC, 2021).

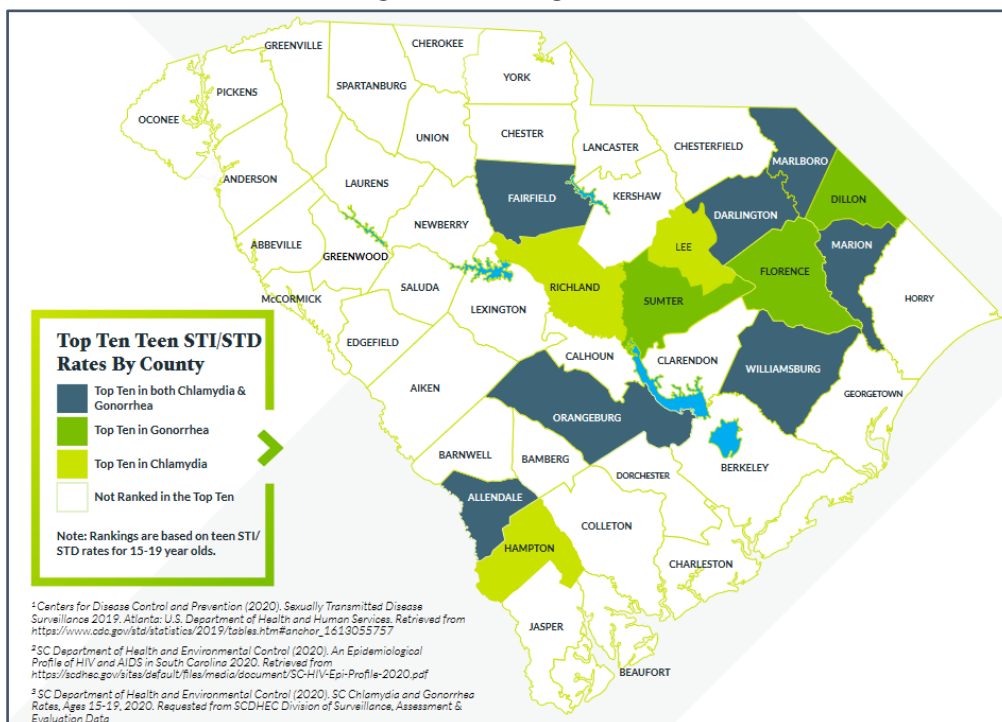


# Priority Four: Reproductive Health

## Darlington County ranks 5th highest in Chlamydia and 3rd highest in Gonorrhea rates among teens age 15-19 in South Carolina.

Case rate is calculated per 100,000 15-19 year olds. Raw data requested from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control Division of Surveillance, Assessment & Evaluation and published in 2020 South Carolina Teen STI/STD Rates profile published by Fact Forward at: <https://www.factforward.org/sites/default/files/2020%20Teen%20STI-STD%20Rates.pdf>.

Adolescent reproductive health is correlated with academic achievement, mental health and future financial stability. Teen parents are more likely to experience health risks, social stigma, and adverse economic impacts for the rest of their lives. Daughters born to teenage mothers are more likely to experience an unintended pregnancy themselves, further perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty. According to the most recent data available (2020), South Carolina ranked 4th highest for chlamydia and 3rd highest for gonorrhea cases among all ages. Darlington County is one of seven (7) counties in the state that rank in the top ten for both Chlamydia and Gonorrhea cases among teens age 15-19.

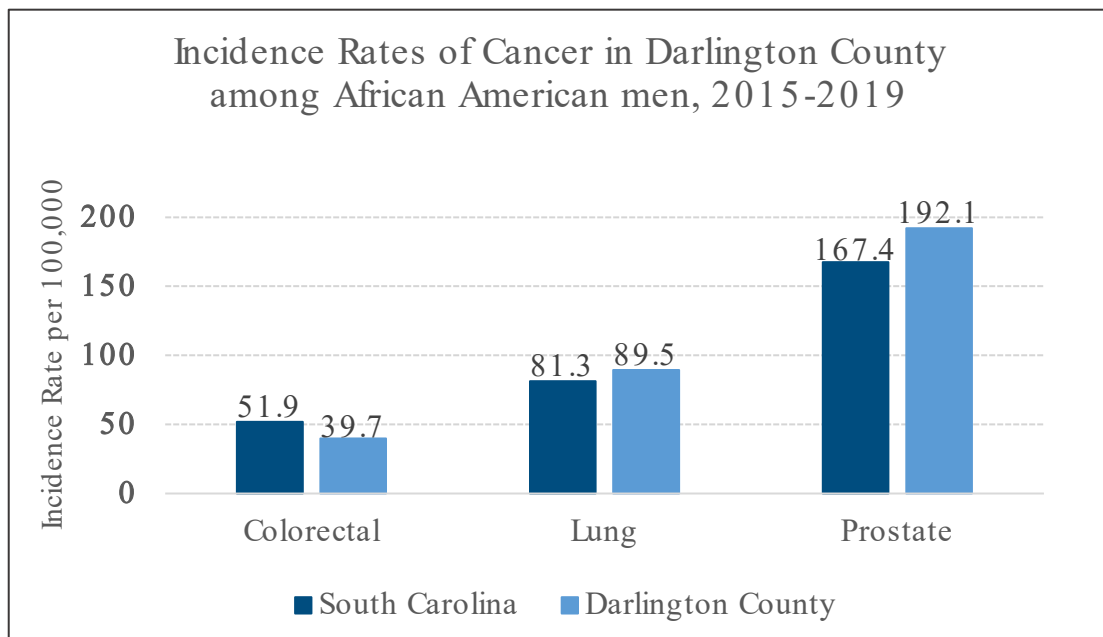


# Priority Five: Men's Health Disparities

## Darlington County ranks 28th highest in cancer incidence among African American men in South Carolina.

Incidence case rates are 5-year rates (2015-2019) per 100,000 age-adjusted to the 2000 US standard population. Data retrieved from SC DHEC Darlington County Cancer Profile at: <https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Darlington%20County%20Cancer%20Profile%202022.pdf> and county case rates by cancer type retrieved at: <https://statecancerprofiles.cancer.gov/incidencerates/index.php?stateFIPS=45&areatype=county&cancer=001&race=28&sex=1&age=001&stage=999&year=0&type=incd&sortVariableName=cirank&sortOrder=asc#results>

Healthy children require healthy families, and health disparities among men are significantly impacting the health of families. African American men in South Carolina suffer disproportionately high rates of lung cancer, prostate cancer and colorectal cancer compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Darlington County ranks 28<sup>th</sup> in the state in cancer incidence case rates among African American males across all types of cancer. In Darlington County, the incidence rate of lung cancer is 60.6, prostate cancer is 31.8 and colorectal cancer is 22.3 per 100,000 among African American men. African American men in Darlington County experience a 509.5 incidence rate per 100,00 for all types of cancers.



# Next Steps

## PLAN

Write the partnership's three-year Strategic Plan using the Needs Assessment

March 2023 – May 2023



## APPLY

Utilize the Strategic Plan to inform the partnership's Annual Formula Funding Grant Application

May 2023, May 2024, May 2025



## IMPLEMENT

Execute the programs and services outlined in the Strategic Plan

July 2023 – June 2026



## MONITOR

Track the partnership's progress on implementing programs to fidelity and on achieving the Strategic Plan

July 2023 – June 2026

