



2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT



FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Cherokee County First Steps:



2,348 children

were directly served in Cherokee County



3,324 parents & caregivers

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



636 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 CHEROKEE COUNTY

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

4,102

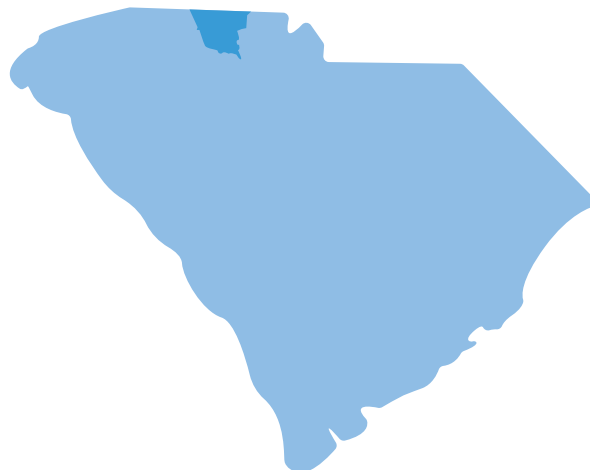
children aged 0-5

59%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

77%

of kindergarteners are considered "not ready" for school



OUR MISSION

Collaborating with other entities, First Steps helps South Carolina 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



Dorothy Priester

Executive Director

This was a rewarding year for the families we served in Cherokee County. Family engagement and outreach were vital components to our plan. We focused on contact with families as well as the public by participating in 77 outreach events, meetings, presentations, education fairs and health fairs. The connections and subsequent interactions allowed staff to serve 9,220 children and adults.

There were 20,544 books distributed to 2,160 children through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Program; Triple P held 245 parenting sessions; LENA/Talk to Me provided 181 parent visits; childcare providers received 20 hours of certified training; and 98 home visits were delivered through Countdown to Kindergarten to families. I express my sincere gratitude to all board members, partners, staff, and families for the important parts you played this year.

We look forward to you joining us next year to assist in preparing the children of Cherokee County for more great success!

Serving Cherokee County's children birth through age five.

We received placement of my partner's three young children. The children came from a challenging background, and there were neglect issues. Our boys were two and three years old and could only speak about five words each. They communicated through grunting and crying. Our little girl was having to repeat Kindergarten. After we participated in Talk to Me, the boys had whole conversations. It was such a blessing to be able to explain situations to all three children and get feedback from them. It also allowed me to be more capable as I do not have to guess their needs. Participation in Triple P has also been beneficial as it gave us multiple disciplinary options with the children. As each child has a very different attitude, it gave us the tools needed to figure out what works best for each one. We understand each other better and are more cohesive as a family. We are truly grateful for the changes that have been made due to our participation in the programs.

Emily J.
Talk to Me/LENA and Triple P Participant



PROGRAMS

PARENTING

Positive Parenting Program (TripleP)

A parenting and family support system designed to prevent – as well as treat – behavioral and emotional problems in children.

28

children served

28

families served

245

number of visits

LENA Home

Uses innovative technology to assess a family's home language environment and boost positive interactions between parents and children ages 0-3.

26

children served

24

families served

181

home visits

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

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

2,160

children served

1,882

families served

20,544

books distributed

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

1,983

children served

61

providers served

20

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.

17

children served

4

schools served

98

home/school visits

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

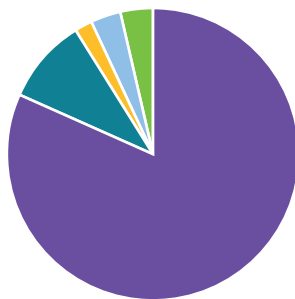


\$1 = \$3.08

Cherokee County First Steps leveraged \$230,000 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$2.08 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

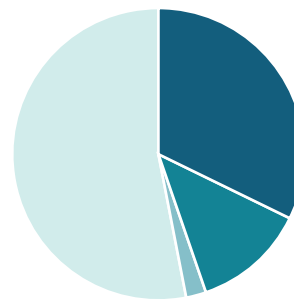
Total: \$743,540.18



- Parenting - \$607,627.96
- Early Care & Education - \$70,560.88
- School Transition - \$15,726.68
- Administrative - \$23,751.48
- Core Functions - \$25,873.18

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$708,051.12



- State Funding - \$230,000
- Federal Funding - \$86,756.06
- Private Funding - \$16,777.94
- In-kind Contributions - \$374,517.12

FUNDING SUPPORT BY SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS

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

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

**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. Arthur L. Brewton

Board Chair

The Cherokee County First Steps Board of Directors supports children, families, and staff in reaching their full potential. We recently implemented new approaches that highlight family engagement and we remain committed to working with partners and parents to find solutions to the issues families are facing. As part of our endeavors, Board Members attended training sessions on board governance and how to effectively implement board policies and agency strategic plans. Further, different board committees received coaching regarding their respective roles and expectations.

Staff members also received training on their duties and how to effectively carry out their responsibilities. These efforts equipped staff with the insight and tools to help families overcome barriers to success. The Cherokee County First Steps Board of Directors, staff, and our partners continue to champion lifelong learning, including success in school and life for the children and families we serve.

Our Local Supporters

- United Way of the Piedmont \$3,300
- SC Endeavors \$2,500
- Limestone Presbyterian Church \$1,264
- Broad River Electric Charities, Inc. \$650
- Ashby & Debbie Blakely
- Sandra Greene-Tucker
- Board Member Contributions
- Cherokee County First Steps Staff
- Allegra Marketing Print
- Dollywood Foundation \$374,517

Board of Directors

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
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CONTACT US

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