



2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT



FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Fairfield County First Steps:



530 children

were directly served in Fairfield County



299 parents & caregivers

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



81 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 FAIRFIELD COUNTY

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

1,285

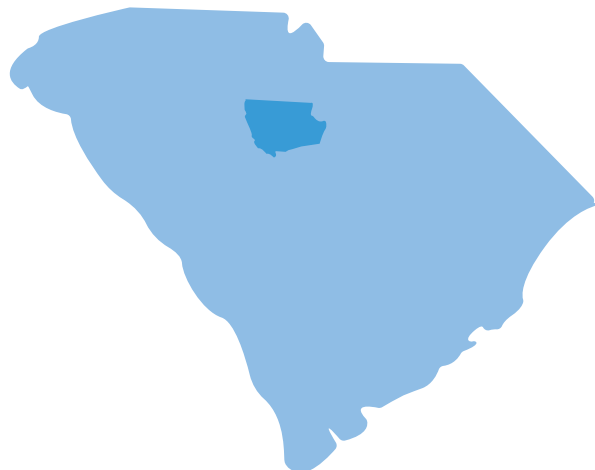
children under 6

61%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

50%

of kindergarteners are considered "not ready" for school



OUR MISSION

To Optimize school readiness for all children by helping those communities to recognize the role and responsibilities families have as the first and most important teacher of children. Motivate individuals and communities to help stabilize, strengthen, and empower families. Enable the communities to successfully accomplish tasks through the coordination of personnel, education, and financial resources.



Patti Wilkes

Executive Director

Hello from Fairfield County First Steps!

We have enjoyed yet another successful year of programming for Fairfield County families.

This year we served 530 children in our various programs. We distributed 2771 books to children under five through our Dolly Parton Imagination Library program, the 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program and our Parents as Teachers program. Twenty-five children were connected to evidence-based DSS Scholarships for childcare. Twenty-four adults took advantage of our local Childcare Training, which is required by SCDSS for all childcare providers. They received fifteen hours of certified training. Sixty-six hours of technical assistance were provided to four local childcare establishments. Materials were purchased for the facilities based on needs shown using an appropriate ERS assessment. We hosted eleven Family Café meetings, serving eighteen families, with twenty-two children. Monthly visits were made to every 4K classroom in the county. Books were left for the class library every visit and the children received take home books four times during the school year. Thirty-seven families were served in our Countdown to Kindergarten and Countdown to 4K programs. This program matches the teacher with the students they will have in their classroom in the coming year. Following the curriculum provided, a relationship is built during the summer visits, allowing for a smooth transition into the school year for both the student and his/her parent.

Fairfield County First Steps hosted a car seat check for the public in front of the DSS/DHEC building in the Spring. We also set up at two different health fairs/community activities distributing information about all of our programs and recruiting families for both the Parents as Teachers program and the Imagination Library program.

With the change of First Steps to a state agency, we have encountered growing pains within as we are now our own payroll and benefits administrator. This has added a lot to my responsibilities, so I have recently resigned as the treasurer for Fairfield Forward, a position I had held for 22+ years. I will continue to serve on the Fairfield Forward board as this non-profit is something I feel is making positive changes within Fairfield County.

We continue to build relationships with families and partnerships. I feel that these relationships are what make our programs the success that they are.



Serving Fairfield County's children birth through age five.

PROGRAMS

PARENTING

Parents as Teachers

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

22

children served

11

group meetings
and events

567

home visits

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

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

245

children served

1,877

books distributed

Library-Based Programs

Connect librarians with child care programs and preschool classrooms, providing books, storytelling, and staff training.

169

children served

Family Café

Parent discussion groups that promote social connections with other parents, support in times of need, learning about parenting and child development, and emotional awareness.

22

children served

18

families served

11

group meetings
and events

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Child Care Scholarships

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

26

children served

25

families served

5

providers served

Quality Enhancement

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

127

children served

4

providers served

66

technical
assistance hours

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

3,118

children served

30

providers served

15

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.

25

children served

3

schools served

145

home/school 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.

12

children served

1

schools served

72

home/school visits

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

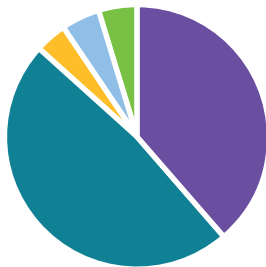


\$1 = \$2.62

Fairfield County First Steps leveraged \$333,755.66 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$1.62 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

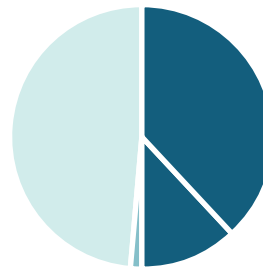
Total: \$564,231.33



- Parenting - \$218,378.90
- Early Care & Education - \$271,854.70
- School Transition - \$21,388.10
- Administrative - \$26,234.22
- Core Functions - \$26,375.41

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$539,465.38



- State Funding - \$205,709.72
- Federal Funding - \$64,892.28
- Private Funding - \$6,638.93
- In-kind Contributions - \$262,224.45

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.



Darreyl Davis

Board Chair

Serving as Chair for Fairfield County First Steps has been a rewarding position. This is my last year serving in this capacity but the good folks on the board did elect me to stay on as part of the newly designed board.

One thing I have worked on this year is getting the board members more involved with the clients we serve. We need to know them to help them. We hosted a hot dog supper at the Farmers Market this year, encouraging board members and members of the community to participate. Although this didn't raise a lot of 'funds', we thought of it as more of a 'fun' raiser, where we were able to get the word out about First Steps. We also had board members volunteer for the meal at one of the monthly parent workshops. I cooked hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill as the clients and staff members took care of their meeting. Board members provided the food and were on hand to interact with the clients while they ate.

This program helps to make sure the children are fully prepared to become the very BEST student possible. As a member of the Fairfield County School District Board of Trustees, this is very important to me. I will continue to work to be sure that we are offering the best programs for the children and families we serve.

Our Local Supporters

- United Way of the Midlands
- Fairfield County First Steps Board Members
- Fairfield County First Steps Staff
- Zuzammen Book Club
- Winnsboro Lions Club
- Fairfield County Farm Bureau

Board of Directors

- | | |
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