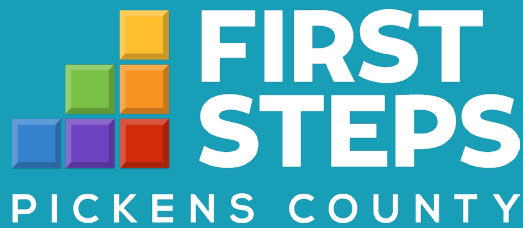


STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026





Mission

Pickens County First Steps will serve as a convener of early childhood champions to coordinate services to measurably improve the early childhood development of all children in Pickens County.

Vision

Creating a community where children are Ready for School and Ready for Life.

Values

Pickens County First Steps Board of Directors and staff recognize the importance of the following values in helping us to achieve our goals:

- Operational and Fiscal Transparency
- Delivering Research Based Initiatives
- Convening Collaborative Partners
- Engaging the Community
- Supporting Parents as their Child's First Teacher

Message from the Executive Director



Amity Buckner
Executive Director
Pickens County First Steps

Pickens County First Steps continues to be an organization rooted in collaboration and partnership. With Pickens County being a very relational county, awareness of this unique culture informs everything that we do. We continue to be grateful for the generous and steadfast support of our collaborating partners that allow us to link arms and work toward solutions for young children and families.

We are grateful for the children and families who allow us to step into their lives and offer our support. Each family has a unique story and we always seek to honor the experiences of others in our language, attitudes, actions, and services. Our hope is that our efforts always reflect the real and present needs of Pickens County families.

Message from the Board Chair



KASEY SWORDS

Board Chair
Pickens County First
Steps

In my career as a Children’s Librarian, I have always been an advocate for early literacy and strong families. It is an honor to serve as the Board Chair of Pickens County First Steps, an organization committed to the literacy, well-being, and mental health of children and families of our county. Through various programs, initiatives, and projects, Pickens County First Steps is actively fighting some of the biggest problems facing Pickens County families, all while honoring and supporting caregivers and their strengths. We, the Executive Board of Pickens County First Steps, are dedicated to this fight and look forward to a stronger and brighter future for all Pickens County as a result.

Strategic Plan Process

CONVENE

Held community convenings to develop a vision for young children and their families

October 2022 – January 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



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



PLAN

Wrote 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



Priority Needs: Summary

Through a series of community convenings, a needs assessment and asset mapping process, the following needs were prioritized for Pickens County. See our full Needs Assessment here:

<https://www.scfirststeps.org/media/ppybgt1/pickens-county-fy24-26-needs-assessment.pdf>

1. Affordable and available childcare.*

Infant care is very difficult to find.

2. More home visitation programs.

Expansion of/capacity increase or sustaining of current programs.

3. Maternal/Infant Mental Health services.

High suicide rate in our county. Parent/caregiver survey revealed mental illness as the top adverse health experience.

4. Lack of Transportation in rural areas.*

Public transportation is available in only one municipality in the county.

*We recognize that these priority needs are system weaknesses and will need to be addressed through large scale efforts.

Objectives

1. FAMILIES WILL LEARN TO *MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS.*
2. CHILDREN WILL *TALK, SING AND POINT.*
3. CHILDREN WILL *COUNT, GROUP AND COMPARE.*
4. CHILDREN CAN *EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY.*
5. FAMILIES WILL *READ AND DISCUSS STORIES.*

Objective One: Families will *Maximize Love, Manage Stress*

STRATEGY 1.1

Increase Maternal Mental Health Services provided to new mothers

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY26, we will have an active Family Connects home visitation program in our county serving at least 50% of live births.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will continue to partner with SC DHEC and our local birthing hospitals as well as local funders to ensure implementation.

STRATEGY 1.2

Bright by Text

SMART GOAL(S)

1. Each year, we will send at least 8 text messaging tips focused on helping families *Maximize Love, Manage Stress* to at least 400 subscribers.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with high intensity programs, such as PAT and NFP to increase local Bright By Text subscribers.

Objective Two: Children will *Talk, Sing and Point*.

STRATEGY 2.1

Home Visitation Programs (PAT, NFP)

SMART GOAL(S)

- Each year, at least 4 home visits will provide specific activities to families that support *Talk, Sing and Point*.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- PAT parent educators, NFP nurses will partner to incorporate *Talk, Sing and Point* into family trainings.

STRATEGY 2.2

Bright by Text

SMART GOAL(S)

- Each year, we will send at least 8 text messaging tips focused on *Talk, Sing and Point* to at least 400 families.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with all programs that serve children and families to increase Bright by Text subscriptions in all populations.

Objective Three: Children will *Count, Group and Compare*.

STRATEGY 3.1

Week of the Young Child

SMART GOAL(S)

- Each year, during WOYC, we will provide at least one activity, as well as resources, that focus on *Count, Group and Compare*.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with Pickens County Library System to provide a sensory activity that focuses on *Count, Group and Compare*.

STRATEGY 3.2

Bright By Text

SMART GOAL(S)

- Each year, we will send at least 8 text messaging tips focused on *Count, Group and Compare* to at least 400 families.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with all programs that serve children and families to increase Bright by Text subscriptions in all populations.

Objective Four: Children will *Explore Through Movement and Play*.

STRATEGY 4.1

Mobile Children's Museum

SMART GOAL(S)

- By FY26, we will have at least 5 Mobile Children's Museum opportunities in various areas of the county.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with School District of Pickens County, Pickens County Library System and another community organizations to provide the Children's Museum experience.

STRATEGY 4.2

Bright By Text

SMART GOAL(S)

- Each year, we will send at least 8 text messaging tips focused on *Explore Through Movement and Play* to at least 400 families.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with all programs and agencies that serve children and families to increase Bright By Text subscriptions in all populations.

Objective Five: Families will *Read and Discuss Stories*

STRATEGY 5.1

Reach Out and Read

SMART GOAL(S)

- By FY26, at least 1 pediatric practice that serves Liberty area families (an underserved, under-resourced area in the county) will become a ROAR site.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with Reach Out and Read, United Way of Pickens County and our Liberty area medical practices provide ROAR services.

STRATEGY 5.2

Dolly Parton Imagination Library

SMART GOAL(S)

- By FY26, at least 50% of Liberty zip code eligible children will participate in DPIL.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with the Cliffs Resident Outreach, other funding partners, and all programs that serve children and families to increase Liberty area participation in DPIL.

Overarching Measure(s) of Success

INCREASE THE REACH OF FIRST STEPS SERVICES

By FY26, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by Pickens County First Steps will increase from 33% to 35%.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful for the participation of the Children's Services Council of Pickens County, our local "What About the Babies" initiative, our partnership Board, and the staff of Pickens County First Steps for their active participation. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the following documents that were also used to inform our county's needs assessment: PAT Parent Survey, SC DHEC data walk, and PDG Parent/Caregiver Survey Report for Pickens County.

Note: This project was supported through South Carolina First Steps by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0080-02-01 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.