



2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT



FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Florence County First Steps:



269 children

were directly served in Florence County



263 parents & caregivers

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



178 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 FLORENCE COUNTY

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

10,031

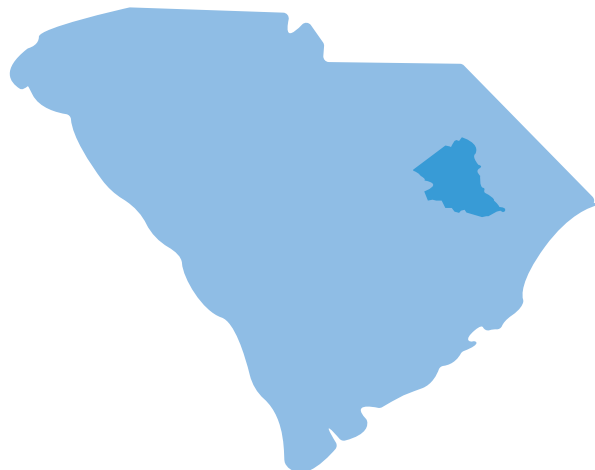
children under 6

49%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

58%

of kindergarteners are considered "not ready" for school



OUR MISSION

Help Florence County 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.



Spencer Scott

Executive Director

First Steps is an integral early care and education support entity, dedicated to supporting our community's youngest learners and families. As First Steps continues to grow, so do the programs we have launched within our community. This is evidenced by the continued growth of our ParentChild+, Countdown to Kindergarten, Countdown to 4k programs, and Scholarship programs. Our Parentchild+ program in collaboration with Florence School District 3 has expanded to serve 76 children who received a total of 1912 hours of home visits. Countdown to Kindergarten and Countdown to 4K respectively served 39 and 41 children, which is a significant increase from the 19 and 26 children served in the previous fiscal year. These programs are continuously growing in popularity, which has allowed us to expand services to more school districts in the community. We have also seen an increase in childcare scholarships provided, with 55 being awarded and families continuing to contact us to apply.

Not only does First Steps remain devoted to assisting our local children and their families, but we also diligently support the continued growth and development of our community's Early Care and Education professionals. Through our Child Care Technical Assistance and Coaching, and Childcare Training initiatives, we have been able to provide 302 hours of technical assistance and 28 hours of certified training to 178 Early Care and Education professionals. This impacts over 960 children in our community.

We remain steadfast with our primary objective: preparing our community's youngest learners for a lifetime of success.

Serving Florence County's children birth through age five.

"Both of my kids were a part of the program. My oldest child is currently in the 4th grade. She has been an A/B honor student since kindergarten.

My second child loves to read the books from the program. Since enrolling, he's proficient in identifying numbers, letters, identifying letter sounds and shapes. He's currently enrolled in preschool. This program is a great way to get an early start on your child's education. Our early learning specialist, Ms. Angela, made our visits fun and educational. I'm a firm advocate of this amazing program and its mission."

Kenisha J
Parentchild+ Program Participant



PROGRAMS

PARENTING

HIPPY

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is a home visiting program that supports parents in their role as a child's first and most important teacher.

23

children served

16

group meetings
and events

624

home visits

ParentChild+

Home visitation for families with 2- and 3-year olds to promote early literacy skills.

76

children served

8

group meetings
and events

3,825

home visits

Raising a Reader - Enhanced

Helps families develop, practice, and maintain home literacy habits.

30

children served

30

families served

4,320

books distributed

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Quality Enhancement

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

474

children served

9

providers served

302.75

technical
assistance hours

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

493

children served

21

providers served

28

certified training
hours

Child Care Scholarships

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

55

children served

55

families served

13

providers served

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.

39

children served

2

schools served

230

home 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.

41

children served

3

schools served

246

home visits

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

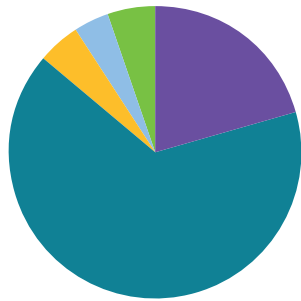


\$1 = \$2.53

Florence County First Steps leveraged \$689,017.74 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$1.53 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

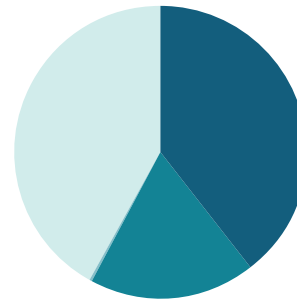
Total: \$1,269,908.96



- Parenting - \$262,915.88
- Early Care & Education - \$832,891.39
- School Transition - \$59,721.19
- Administrative - \$48,247.47
- Core Functions - \$66,133.03

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$1,139,615.66



- State Funding - \$450,597.92
- Federal Funding - \$208,498.90
- Private Funding - \$4,856.25
- In-kind Contributions - \$475,662.59

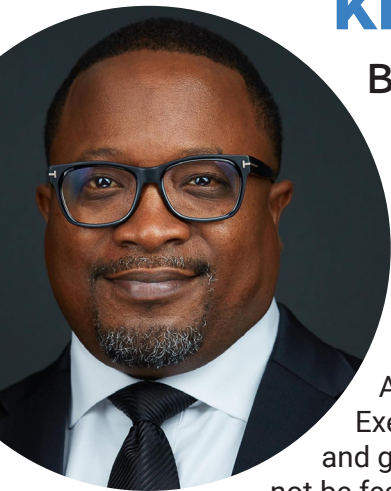
FUNDING SUPPORT BY SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS

State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding
 State READY Funding*
 Federal AmeriCorps Service Site
 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.



Kippie Brown

Board Chair

For the past twenty-four years, South Carolina First Steps has supported Florence County families and educators to ensure children are prepared for kindergarten. I have seen firsthand the positive outcomes and successes of FCFS programs. As an avid community leader in Florence where I serve as a pastor and FCFS board chair, the community speaks highly of FCFS and what this agency means to all of Florence County.

As board chair, I have the honor of working closely with fellow board members, Executive Director Spencer Scott, and his staff. He and his staff are very knowledgeable and go above and beyond to serve families in the community. Successful programs would not be feasible without the bond FCFS staff has built with families, teachers, and directors in the community.

Last but certainly not least thank you, teachers and directors who work tirelessly to fulfill the goal of FCFS—providing high-quality early childhood programs for children and families. We are part of something great!

Our Local Supporters

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Florence County School District 3
Greenville Technical College

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