THE NEED
IN SOUTH CAROLINA:
42%
of people live in a childcare desert, where there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots

53%
of children ages 3 and 4 are not enrolled in nursery school or preschool

IN DORCHESTER COUNTY:
9,797
children under age 5

3,863
of young children live in poverty or low-income households

61%
of kindergartners are considered "not ready" for school

OUR MISSION
To help families and caregivers in our county prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance, and expand high quality early childhood services.

OUR APPROACH
High quality programs and services for children and families
Intensive training, resources and support for childcare providers
Strategic partnerships and community education

OUR IMPACT
3726
number of children and adults served by DORCHESTER County First Steps in 2018-2019

JOIN US
We rely on a community of partners, donors, and volunteers – people like you – who believe in a brighter future for children and families in our community.
OUR GOALS

Based on a county-wide needs assessment, our partnership’s work, in collaboration with state and local partners, is focused on advancing Dorchester County towards the following goals in conjunction with the Profile of a Ready Kindergartener:

- Goal 1- create additional strategies to address the health care of children birth to age 5
- Goal 2- implement training and coaching for child care providers wanting to improve quality
- Goal 3- continue to implement the Parents As Teacher Program and prepare for Blue Ribbon Status
- Goal 4- will increase our visibility with social media
- Goal 5- increase the local Partnership Infrastructure to improve and enhance service and support to families.

Dorchester County is certainly an enigma. The county has two school Districts-2 & 4. District 4 was identified as a CERDEP district according to ACT 284 in 2014 and receives funding to support reading programs for four-year-olds. District 2 is not a CERDEP district and children in DD2 don’t currently qualify. District 2 has ample space to provide programs for “at-risk” four-year-olds, but District 4’s attendance area does not have space. The two child care facilities in DD4 closed this year and the school district does not have any extra space. DCFS’ ED voiced this concern often, wanting to get permission to serve “at-risk” children in DD2 in the DD2 attendance area. Thanks to Georgia Mjartan and the SOFS, a proviso is in place for the FY20 school year to serve all eligible 4-year-olds in both counties. This is a major accomplishment and it allows DCFS to help prepare even more children for school success.

We want to express our deep appreciation to Dorchester County First Steps (DCFS) for their investment in our program. There has never been a time we felt like we weren’t fully supported by DCFS Staff.

Kathy Jones, Director Riverpointe Christian Academy
Parents As Teachers Program Director, Alicia Turner, screens every child whose family calls for support and all potential scholarship applicants. She also helps families navigate the process of applying for needful services and provides support for those who may not qualify for services as well. Our program is blessed to have someone so dedicated.

First Steps’ Early Identification and Referral (EI&R) programs serve families with young children with suspected delays in development, acting as a local portal to connect families to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children. EI&R services include:

- Screenings for children ages 0-5 with suspected delays in development
- Referrals, based on screening results, to appropriate resources and support services
- Patient information including strategies to monitor growth and development

EI&R BY THE NUMBERS 2018-2019

13 children served
18 materials distributed
4 referrals to BabyNet or other local services
Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a home visiting program designed to build strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to succeed. PAT services include:

- Personal visits from a parent educator at least twice monthly
- Monthly group connections with other PAT families
- Screenings and assessments to identify developmental concerns
- Connections to outside resources that families may need to succeed

**PAT IN THE NEWS**

Dorchester First Steps PAT program celebrates the longevity of the families participating. Most of our families are entering into their second year with the program. Additionally, as children age out of the program they are successfully continuing in other services like Pre-K in the school system.

**PAT IN DORCHESTER COUNTY 2018-2019**

- **20** families served
- **287** total home visits

Families receiving scholarships are strongly encouraged to participate in the Parents As Teachers program which provides a true wrap-around and systemic way of monitoring the effectiveness of the program. This process was implemented in FY19.
Developed by South Carolina First Steps – and identified as a promising state practice by the National Governor’s Association in 2005 – Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) is a home visitation program pairing the families of rising kindergartners with their future teachers during the summer before school entry. Teachers complete six visits with each family, establishing strong connections during the summer that facilitate classroom learning throughout the year.

**CTK BY THE NUMBERS**

*2018-2019*

- **8** kindergarten teachers trained as home visitors
- **79** children served
- **475** total home and school visits

What Parents have to say about CTK:
“*My son got the chance to meet his teacher before school starts so he will feel more comfortable*” C.H.
“*The best part is the one on one interaction with the teacher in his home.*” M.R.
“I enjoyed seeing the excitement of my daughter while doing her activities. I enjoyed receiving the Parenting Tip pages to help me get a good start with her.” A.V.
High-quality child care hinges on high-quality professional development that meets the needs of the local child care workforce. Our training programs are certified through the SC Center for Child Care Career Development and include topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, professional development and program administration. Our 2018-2019 trainings included:

- Health & Safety
- Curriculum
- Guidance
- Child Growth & Development
- Language & Literacy
- Physical Development
- Professional Development
- Program Administration

**TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS**
**2018-2019**

135 total training attendance
118 child care teachers and directors served
21.5 number of training sessions offered
For many families in Dorchester County, child care is a financial hardship. Yet, the parent must work and/or go to school. Dorchester First Steps provides as many scholarships as possible based on the budget. We really strive to meet this need. DCFS spent 17,500.00 towards the goal of helping families with child care.

Families must qualify for the scholarships following DSS guidelines. Ivory Mitchell, Program Director 2, identifies, screens and reviews all applications. We have a wrap around system with our Parent As Teachers program. Scholarship recipients must participate in PAT in order to receive the scholarship. If possible recipients will attend centers or family child care facilities that are in the DCFS cohort.

SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2018-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>20</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>24</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>number of children served</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of providers served</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of developmental screenings provided</td>
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100% of the money paid to child care providers goes back into our local economy to benefit the citizens of Dorchester County.
South Carolina First Steps provides eligible children with free enrollment in full-day four-year-old kindergarten programs. In coordination with First Steps local partnerships and more than 200 private, faith- and community-based preschool providers, First Steps 4K expands access to quality child care across the state.

**ELIGIBILITY**

To qualify for enrollment, a child must:

- Be 4 years old on or before September 1
- Qualify for Medicaid or a free or reduced-price lunch program
- Live in one of 64 qualifying school districts

**FIRST STEPS 4K IN DORCHESTER COUNTY 2018-2019**

- 3 children enrolled
- 2 participating classrooms

**4K NEWS**

In fiscal year 2019-2020, South Carolina First Steps is launching a pilot program to expand 4K enrollment within underserved communities. Age- and income-eligible children residing in Dorchester 2 and 4 school district may qualify for a slot in a participating center that also serves students from eligible districts.
Dorchester First Steps strives to reach every parent and child in our county who may have need of our services. DCFS’s Executive Director, conducts Positive Discipline for Parents sessions twice a year for 6 weeks each at the Department of Juvenile Justice in Ridgeville. This program helps the teen parents, incarcerated at DJJ, to be the best parents they can and hopefully reverse the trends and help their children be ready for school.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE FOR PARENTS BY THE NUMBERS
2018-2019

60 families served
24 total number of training hours
Dorchester County First Steps’ Family Literacy Kit program fosters a love of learning in both children and parents. The Kits provide the Parents with rich literature, activities and toys to enhance the language and literacy skills needed to support their children’s early development, and children also gain the foundational literacy skills needed to succeed in school.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>LITERACY KITS BY THE NUMBERS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Kits</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of times the Kits have been circulated</td>
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COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Addressing the needs of young children is a shared endeavor. In addition to providing services to families and support for child care providers, Dorchester County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Dorchester County begin school ready to succeed. We serve as a:

LOCAL PORTAL
connecting preschool children and their families to services

CONVENER
of community stakeholders to develop an effective and comprehensive early childhood system

CHAMPION
of the importance of school readiness to our children’s future

OUR PARTNERSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS
2018-2019

10
Community and Similar Agencies that partner with DCS

“Thank you Dorchester County First Steps for walking with us on the journey to becoming the best we can be.”

Kathy Jones, Riverpointe Christian Academy
Dorchester First Steps celebrates every agency and individual who supports us through the year. Through partnerships and collaborations, as well as financial support from grants and contributions, Dorchester County First Steps leverages state dollars to enhance and expand services to children and families.

**FUNDING SUPPORT**

Child Care Career Development, $2000.00
Child Care Training through Eventbrite $1,560.00

**IN-KIND SUPPORT**

Riverpointe Christian Academy, use of meeting space
Dorchester County Library System, monitoring Literacy Kits
Dorchester District 4, $58,000.00
Good Shepherd CDC, use of meeting space

**JOIN US**

For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at:

dorchesterfirststeps.org
**FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

**OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY**
Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type

**ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS**
Since inception, Dorchester County First Steps has leveraged $1,686,118.00 from sources outside of state government.
That’s $0.28 for every state dollar.

**SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY**

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<tr>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>State Funding</th>
<th>Federal Funding</th>
<th>Private Funding</th>
<th>In-Kind Contributions</th>
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<td><strong>$783</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,446</strong></td>
<td><strong>$59,753</strong></td>
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LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rhonda Robinson, Board Chair
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Dr. Crystal Y. Campbell, Executive Director
Alicia Turner, Program Director I
Ivory Mitchell, Program Director II
Kristy Allan, Program Specialist

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