

# Annual Report

## 2019-2020

BAMBERG COUNTY



## THE NEED

### IN BAMBERG COUNTY:

# 700

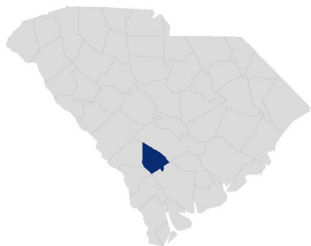
children under age 5

# 72.4%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

# 63.4%

of kindergartners are considered "not ready" for school



### THREE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS:

1. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP - formerly Food Stamps) or Free School Lunches eligibility
2. Single parent household and has need of other services.
3. Exposure to parental/caregiver depression

## OUR MISSION

To ensure that every child in Bamberg County will arrive to the first grade healthy and ready to learn!

## 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

# 465

number of children and adults served by Bamberg County First Steps in 2019-2020

## JOIN US

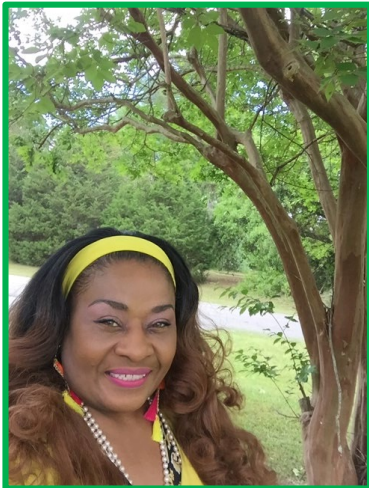
We rely on a community of partners, donors, and volunteers – **people like you** – who believe in a brighter future for children and families in our community.

# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Bamberg County First Steps is proud to serve as a community convener for premiere educational services to our youngest learners and their families. Given these unprecedented and challenging times due to the COVID-19 virus, this county continues to experience many challenges to include the following: As of June 30, 2020 there are 133 confirmed cases of the virus and 4 deaths, a high unemployment rate of 10.4%, 92.9% of children under age five are living in a childcare desert, 72.4% of children under age five are living in poverty, and 63.4 of our youngest learners are testing not ready for the first grade. Given this important data, it is imperative that our First Steps Partnership, in collaboration with our key stakeholders, seek measures to ensure a higher quality of life for our youngest learners.

As a National Blue Ribbon Parents As Teachers Affiliate, Bamberg County First Steps has focused diligently on school readiness, in lieu of the pandemic, by providing the following strategies to young families: comprehensive wrap-around parenting services that include bi-monthly home visits, family group connections and community resources, high quality daycare scholarships to working families, professional training and development to daycare directors and teachers, a health, nutrition and wellness initiative and many other family incentives to include personal care items, food distributions and COVID relief incentives. Bamberg County First Steps would like to thank our State Legislators, the State Office of First Steps, Bamberg County First Steps Board, Bamberg School District One and Two, and our many benefactors, families, businesses, community partners and friends for your many years of support to this important educational initiative. "Bamberg County's children are our greatest and most valuable asset, investing in their lives is pivotal to the future of our county"!



A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Pauletta Plowden".

**Pauletta Plowden**  
Executive Director  
Bamberg County First Steps

# GETTING CHILDREN READY FOR SCHOOL

All children are ready to benefit from a quality kindergarten experience when they are five years old by September 1 of that school year. But kindergarten readiness—the critical stage at which children are prepared for learning and success—is more than a matter of age. For a strong start in school, children need positive relationships and supportive learning environments beginning at birth. At First Steps, we partner with families, caregivers, and communities to ensure that all children are prepared for success.

## South Carolina's Profile of the Ready Kindergartner

Developed by SC First Steps and the SC Department of Education, the state's description of school readiness includes 60 developmental milestones across 5 categories:



**Approaches to learning  
& inquiry**



**Emotional & social development**



**Physical development,  
self-help & motor skills**



**Mathematical thinking**



**Language & literacy development**

In support of the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner, our approach is focused on advancing Bamberg County toward the following strategic goals:

1. "Provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
2. Increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
3. Promote high-quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
4. Provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and
5. Mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed."



## OUR GOALS

# PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Bamberg County First Steps quickly pivoted to provide much-needed support to young children, their families and child care providers.

Our work has never been more critical. While children are at low risk for the serious health effects of the virus, the crisis is having a profound impact on their wellbeing and development. For children of color and low-income communities, these impacts are expected to be even more damaging. That is why Bamberg County First Steps is enhancing our efforts to provide parents and caregivers with the services and resources they need to weather this storm.

## IMPACT ON BAMBERG COUNTY

### HEALTH

Through June 30, 2020, Bamberg County had a total of **133** confirmed COVID-19 cases and **4** COVID-19 deaths.

### JOB LOSS

**81.3%**

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

### CHILD CARE

**11.4%**

children under 5 in Bamberg County lived in a child care desert\* before COVID-19

**92.9%**

children under 5 in Bamberg County lived in a child care desert as of May 28, 2020



Bamberg County First Steps supports families during the COVID-19 pandemic with monthly comprehensive parenting services, supplies and many other community wrap around resources.

Shown in the picture is Executive Director Pauletta Plowden and Mrs. Annette Gunnells, a mother of four children and an active First Steps parent for ten years.

\*The Center for American Progress defines a child care desert as a ZIP code with at least 30 children under the age of 5 and either no child care centers or so few centers that there are more than three times as many children under age 5 as there are spaces in centers.



# PARENTS AS TEACHERS



*an evidence-based program*

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 GOES VIRTUAL

Due to COVID-19, Parents as Teachers (PAT) National provided guidance for affiliates to deliver virtual services via interactive video conferencing and phone calls. South Carolina PAT affiliates rose to the occasion by engaging families in creative and meaningful ways while continuing to meet the Essential Requirements of implementing a quality PAT program during the pandemic.

## PAT IN BAMBERG COUNTY 2019-2020

19

families served

371

total home visits

Bamberg County First Step is a National PAT Blue Ribbon Affiliate for Excellence in Evidenced Based Parenting Services. BCFS significantly improves parenting practices, promotes early detection of developmental delays, health issues, abuse, neglect and enhances school readiness success!



Parents as Teachers.  
*Model Affiliate*



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## PARENTING IMPACT STATEMENT

"First Steps is a phenomenal program that has been very beneficial for my family and I. I'd first like to say that Ms. Plowden and her staff are like family to me. They have treated me with the utmost respect, love, care and understanding. I'm a mother of four and this program has provided me with many positive parenting techniques. They've reassured me that I'm doing an awesome job in raising my children. They've provided me with numerous healthier eating ideas, as well as provide us with food items. They've provided my family and I with fun activity ideas when on a budget. I'm very thankful for my parent educator Mrs. Shaniqua, who is very professional. She's very kind, compassionate and I love the way that she interacts with my son. My son loves to read and has received dozens of books that has helped enhance his vocabulary. I'm a person that stays to myself, but I've enjoyed attending the group connection meetings. It has given me a chance to step outside of my comfort zone and interact with other parents and their children, as well as do fun activities together. I have nothing but great things to say about First Steps and I highly recommend this program to other parents."

- The Ellison Family



Parents as Teachers®  
*Model Affiliate*





# CHILD CARE TRAINING



*an evidence-based program*

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 SC Endeavors and include topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, professional development and program administration. Our 2019-2020 trainings included:

- Taking A Closer Look: Social Competence and Emotional Well-Being**
- The Components of Early Childhood Scheduling & Curriculum Planning**
- Encouraging Healthy Habits & Ensuring Children's Safety – Part 1**
- Encouraging Healthy Habits & Ensuring Children's Safety – Part 2**
- Blood Borne Pathogens**
- Marketing Your Child Care Business**

## TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

108

total training attendance

144

child care teachers and  
directors served

5

number of training  
sessions offered

Bamberg County First Steps training classes have been a tremendous help to me and my teachers. We have been attending training for more than twelve years, and are very happy to be able to attend teacher training that's local and we don't have to drive far away to other counties.



The trainer, Dr. Earlene Walker is excellent and we look forward to seeing her each year. Bamberg First Steps has established such a close knit group of teachers and directors from a lot of ties who get to exchange a lot of interesting information, ideas and make connections with each of us have continued to communicate throughout the years as childcare colleagues.

The First Steps training is very affordable and professional. Ms. Plowden and Ms. Smith go out of their way to make sure that we have nice snacks and lunch! We always get our certificates

and leave the training knowing that we can apply what we've learned back at our centers. Whenever, I need any assistance or support with my center's issues or problems, the ladies are always there for me and my staff. Bamberg County First Steps training is very valuable to our community!

Karen Jennings, Little Rascals Daycare





# CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS



*an evidence-based program*

For many families in Bamberg County, the cost of quality child care is significantly out of reach and unaffordable. Our scholarship program makes payments to child care providers to care for children from low-income families so their parents can return to school or work.

Bamberg County First Steps offers scholarships to families enrolled in our Parents As Teachers Parenting program, as well as income-eligible children whose parent attends school or works at least 20 hours per week.

## SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

7

number of children  
served

2

number of providers  
served

30

number of  
developmental  
screenings provided



Bamberg County First Steps is always eager to assist First Baptist Church Daycare with any questions we have. I always tell parents when I find out that their vouchers go through Bamberg First Steps, that I am so glad because it takes weeks and weeks to get through with other vouchers through DSS, but always a simple process when I have to contact the ladies at First Steps in Bamberg. Erica Smith and Pauletta Plowden go above and beyond with our daycare and in their care and concern for the children.

Thank you  
Lynn C. Bessinger, Director

# 4K

## FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN



*an evidence-based program*

South Carolina First Steps provides eligible children with free enrollment in full-day four-year-old kindergarten. In coordination with First Steps local partnerships and more than 230 private, community and faith-based preschool providers, First Steps 4K expands access to quality early education across the state.



### ELIGIBILITY

To qualify for enrollment, a child must be:



4 years old on or before September 1



Eligible for Medicaid, SNAP or TANF, experiencing homelessness or transiency, or in foster care

### FIRST STEPS 4K IN BAMBERG COUNTY 2019-2020

# 34

children enrolled

# 3

First Steps 4K providers

### PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When schools closed due to COVID-19, First Steps 4K classroom converted to distance-learning, with teachers creatively supporting their young learners through video chat, take-home materials, and hands-on projects that caregivers could facilitate at home.





## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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Addressing the needs of young children is a shared endeavor. In addition to providing services to families and support for child care providers, Bamberg County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Bamberg 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

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## OUR PARTNERSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

29

Local Portal and  
Convener  
Meetings and  
Events

46

School Readiness  
Partnership  
Collaborative  
Engagements

### The Beauty of Books

As an avid reader, I very much wanted to instill a love of reading in my son. I was thrilled when we joined First Steps and he started receiving books every month. It has been a joy to read with him at bed time. It's given us a special bond and quality cuddle time.

As the Branch Manager of one of the local libraries, I have been blessed to see kids from the program come in and check out books, sometimes at levels above where they should be. It's all thanks to the beauty of books. I am always encouraged by the enthusiasm kids show when they find a new book to read. I often ask questions when they check them out and when they return them. The way kids eyes light up when they share about the adventures the books take them on, reinvigorates my own love of reading!



K. Autry



## OUR SUPPORTERS

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Through partnerships and collaborations, as well as financial support from grants and contributions, Bamberg County First Steps leverages state dollars to enhance and expand services to children and families.

### FUNDING SUPPORT

State of South Carolina: \$200,000 (through SC First Steps)

Bamberg County Recreation Grant: \$682.89

City of Bamberg: \$100

A.J. Cann: \$1,000

Tri-County Community Foundation: \$750

United Way Association: \$5,966

Virgie Bamberg: \$300

Cindy Hurst: \$450

Senator Brad Hutto: \$100

Bamberg Family Practice: \$1,000

Paul Plowden: \$100

Phoenix Specialty Manufacturing: \$200

Awena Hurst: \$150

Peggy Faust: \$75

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (Eta Nu Chapter): \$100.00

Greenville Technical College Training Grant / SC Endeavors: \$2,000



## JOIN US

For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at  
[www.bamberg1.net/firststeps](http://www.bamberg1.net/firststeps).



## OUR SUPPORTERS

### FUNDING SUPPORT

Mary Jane's School of Dance: \$50

Brooker's Hardware: \$30

Bamberg Special Needs & Disabilities Board: \$100

Brabham Oil Company: \$100

Ernestine Barnwell: \$50

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church: \$50

Vaughn Electronics: \$30.00

Carol Watson: \$50

Linda Fair: \$25

Patricia Harley: \$25

Janet Jones: \$100

Gwendolyn Folk: \$50

Gaines & Gail Presley: \$50



### IN-KIND SUPPORT

Bamberg School District One

DSS – ABC Child Care Scholarships

Wilson Law Group, LLC

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. - Eta Nu Chapter & Nu Tau Omega Chapters

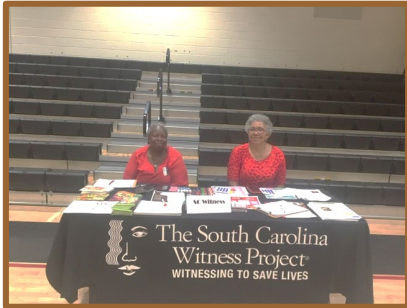
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## OUR SUPPORTERS



### IN-KIND SUPPORT

Bamberg House of Pizza

Evelyn Smith-Smart

Jake Gallop

SC Thrive

OCAB Head Start/ Early Head Start

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. – Denmark Alumnae Chapter

SC Witness Project

Southeastern Housing & Community Development

Family Solutions of the Low Country

Healthy Blue

SC Department of Health & Environmental Control

Absolute Total Care

WelVista

CASA Family Systems

Bamberg Department of Social Services

G.A.M.M. Showcase

Progressive Family Life Center

Toys for Tots



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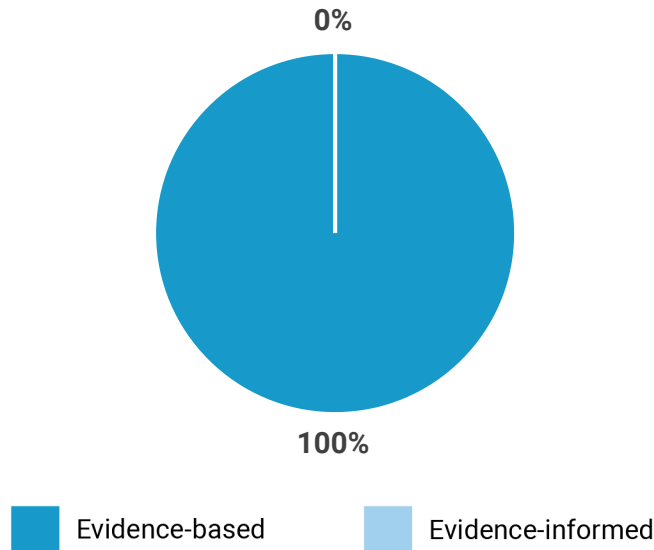
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## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

### OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

#### Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



### ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Bamberg County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,703,598** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.81** for every state dollar.

## SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$101,212	\$483	\$2,233	\$132,605	\$236,532
Scholarship Initiatives	\$31,378	\$0	\$0	\$8,411	\$39,789
Child Care Training	\$28,909	\$0	\$1,217	\$3,558	\$33,684
Partnerships & Community Education	\$23,506	\$1,173	\$4,403	\$5,891	\$34,973
Administrative Support	\$17,645	\$0	\$26	\$3,372	\$21,043
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$202,650</b>	<b>\$1,656</b>	<b>\$7,879</b>	<b>\$153,837</b>	<b>\$366,021</b>





## LEADERSHIP

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Kristine Autry, Board Co-Chair**

**Patricia Harley, Asst. Secretary**

**Ernestine Barnwell**

**Larry Haynes**

**Ann Boykin**

**Ciscily Irons**

**Linda Fair**

**Tarea Grimes Mason**

**Johnell Gaines, Secretary**

**Lorraine Peeples**

**Sheryl Gardener**

**Kevin Sprague**

**Loretta Glasper**

**Shanquita Youmans**

**Tracy Golden, Board Chair**

### STAFF

**Pauletta Plowden, Executive Director**

**Erica Smith, Program Manager/Parenting Supervisor**

**Actavia Bowers, Parent Educator**

**Shaniqua Burch, Parent Educator**

## CONTACT US

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