

# Annual Report

## 2019-2020



## THE NEED

### IN BEAUFORT COUNTY:

**9,966**

children under age 5

**48.3%**

of young children live in poverty  
or low-income households

**68.0%**

of kindergartners are considered "not  
ready" for school



### THREE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS:

1. TANF Eligibility (50% Federal Poverty or below)
2. Single parent household and has need for other services
3. Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP-formerly Food Stamps) or Free School Lunches eligibility

## OUR MISSION

To help families and caregivers in Beaufort 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

**2,275**

number of children and adults served by  
Beaufort 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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**Betty Washington**

Executive Director  
Beaufort County First Steps

***"For it is easier to build strong children, than repair broken men." – Frederick Douglass***

The Beaufort County First Steps Partnership works to support the development of young children and families in Beaufort County through evidence-based and evidence-informed programs focusing on family support, health and quality education. Our goal is to implement programs that help prepare children ages birth to five years old for school success and beyond. The reach of our work is perhaps a bit more challenging due to the continued spread of COVID-19, but this has not changed our purpose to fill the gap in early education.

Beaufort County First Steps staff continue to find innovative ways to support families by adapting to new ways of working remotely. We continue our mission of providing infrastructure, guidance, and resources to help families and service providers to transform programs and continue to offer parenting information and resources during this stressful time. Additionally, we provide continued support for the early childhood professionals in their role of educating children during their most formative years.

As we move forward, we are eager to explore new and exciting ways to partner with other agencies to provide the best investment opportunities for our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betty Washington".



## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

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**Julia Burnes**

Chair

Beaufort County First Steps Board of Trustees

Greetings,

During these unprecedented times, Beaufort County First Steps continues to connect and meet the needs of families, children, and early childhood educators. This success can be attributed to the very dedicated and capable staff members who execute the wishes of the Board of Directors. On behalf of the BCFS Board of Directors, I extend gratitude for your commitment and applaud your accomplishments in spite of COVID-19.

Respectfully,

Julia M. Burnes

# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

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**Anita "Lynn" Singleton**

Chairperson (July 2020 to present)  
Beaufort County First Steps Board of Trustees

Greetings!

Research has consistently shown that children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, benefit from participating in an early learning program. The impact of high-quality early learning programs on students is an even stronger predictor of a student's future success in school. The existence of COVID-19 has altered the educational landscape in many ways. The results of the pandemic have been far reaching. While initially many learning centers were closed, some have gradually opened back up, serving a dual role of providing childcare and also assisting older students with the virtual learning platform assigned to them from the school level. However, some learning centers are still closed.

Educators all over the world have executed alternate ways of connecting with students and their families because we know that teaching and learning must continue. Despite all of the challenges, childcare providers and other educators have risen to the occasion. Due to the guidelines regarding social distancing, virtual instruction, virtual home visits, virtual group connections, and virtual trainings now take the place of things that are normally conducted in person.

Now more than ever, early learning matters. It is imperative that funding and resources for early learning programs be a priority at the local, state, and national levels of government.

As the leading agency for ensuring students are school-ready, First Steps is ready, willing, and able to lead the way in this "new normal".



# 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**



## OUR GOALS

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

- To increase the reach of First Steps program services for children and families throughout the community.
- To identify and recruit board members who are committed to the mission and vision of the organization
- To increase community presence as a local portal for early childhood services as measured by connections made to referral agencies.
- Locate additional resources to meet the needs of at-risk children and families in our community.

# PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Beaufort County First Steps quickly pivoted to provide much-needed support to young children, their families and childcare 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 Beaufort 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 BEAUFORT COUNTY

### HEALTH

Through June 30, Beaufort County had a total of **1,271** confirmed COVID-19 cases and **23** COVID-19 deaths.

### JOB LOSS

**184.0%**

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

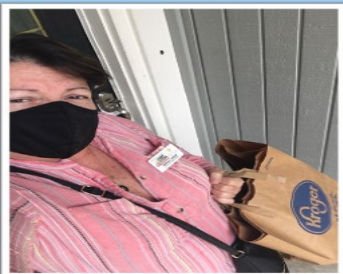
### CHILD CARE

**44.7%**

children under 5 in ABC County lived in a childcare desert\* before COVID-19

**81.4%**

children under 5 in ABC County lived in a childcare desert as of May 28, 2020



Solimar Abbott, Community Health Worker with Beaufort County First Steps/PASO's making a special "no contact" delivery to family during the pandemic to assist them with food and other much needed products during the crisis.

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





## EARLY IDENTIFICATION & REFERRAL



*an evidence-based program*

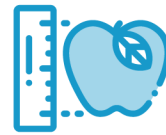
First Steps' Early Identification and Referral (EI&R) programs serve families with young children with suspected delays in development, acting as a local portal to connect families to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children. EI&R services include:



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 2019-2020

**81**

children served

**32**

materials distributed

**18**

referrals to BabyNet or other local services



“Experiences that occur during the earliest years of life critically impact children’s abilities to learn, move, and interact with others. This is especially true for children with severe sensory and multiple disabilities, for whom physical, communicative, cognitive, social, and emotional developmental domains are deeply intertwined.”





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 BEAUFORT COUNTY 2019-2020

10

families served

168

total home visits



Thank you for your time, I appreciate the First Steps program along with you (Ms. Brown) for making the load easy this school term.  
-N. Grant



Parents as Teachers.



# COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN



*an evidence-informed program*

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 2019-2020

4

kindergarten teachers  
trained as home visitors

14

children served

84

total home and school  
visits



How can we improve the Countdown to Kindergarten experience in the future?  
“Encourage more parents to meet with the teacher before school to build a relationship. The program was very successful.”

“I was a little hesitant in the beginning because I didn’t know what to expect. Me and my son had a good experience with Countdown to Kindergarten. The teacher shared lots of good information to help him stay on task. I would recommend this program to families.”

COUNTDOWN to  
KINDERGARTEN

SOUTH CAROLINA





## CHILD CARE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT



*an evidence-based program*

Many private child care centers strive to provide high quality care but lack the resources often available to publicly-funded early childhood programs. Our Child Care Quality Enhancement (QE) program aims to produce measurable improvements in the quality of care provided to young children.

Our services include:



Rigorous quality assessments



On-site technical assistance at least twice monthly



Funding for equipment and materials



Training and workforce development



Coordination with community partners

### QE BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

7

child care providers served

141

number of TA visits provided

406

number of children 0-5 enrolled in provider classrooms

“First Steps has been an incredibly valuable partner to The Children’s Center because of the numerous resources they provide. The Quality Improvement Program has trained teachers on a one-on-one format, providing a platform that is informational.”

Jody L Levitt  
Executive Director, The Children’s Center, Inc.



## 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:

**Recognizing and Responding to the Development of Preschoolers**  
**Teaching Infants and Young Toddlers Through Experience & Exploration**  
**Interviewing Techniques Before, During & After**  
**Core of Understanding: Intentional Teaching**  
**Advertisement & Client Intake**  
**Developing and Sustaining Employee Engagement**  
**Physical Core**  
**The Art of Business Budgeting**  
**Health and Safety (First Aid, CPR, Bloodborne Pathogens)**  
**Core of Language**

### TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

**539**

total training attendance

**114**

child care teachers and  
directors served

**22**

number of training  
sessions offered

“Everything we do as teachers must ensure that the child’s inherent desire to learn is kept alive.”  
– Robert John Meehan

# 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 ABC COUNTY 2019-2020

# 7

children enrolled

# 1

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.





**PASOs**  
Educate. Connect. Advocate.

PASOs helps build a stronger South Carolina by supporting Latino communities with education, advocacy, and leadership development. PASOs has been designated as a “Best Practice” for PASOs Health Connections by the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP)

## **PASOs Program BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020**

**84**

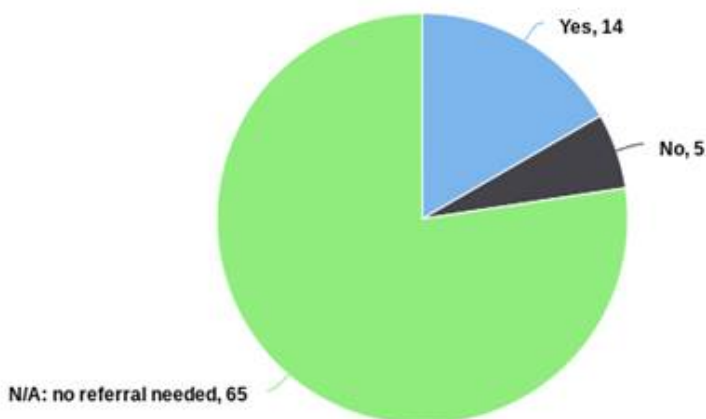
number of families  
served

**100%**

Received materials  
(toolkit)

**19**

Number of referrals  
made



“ I thought that everything was fine with my daughter, but after answering the ASQ questionnaire, I realized that I needed professional help, so I am grateful for the help that you gave my daughter who is receiving the necessary therapies and now walks without falling and says clearer words. ”



## EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM

### Supporting Care Providers Through Personal Visits

Parents as Teachers supports all types of care providers with mentoring visits and tools that provide a structure to pass on knowledge to parents of the children in their care.

Parents as Teachers brings information that is relevant and tailored to the needs of the care provider into the care setting.

Beaufort First Steps has added this curriculum as part of its service offering.

### Supporting Care Providers **BY THE NUMBERS** 2019-2020

18

children served

2

providers served



“ It has been a rewarding experience having Ms. Brown and First Steps’ support and guidance here at Helping Hands with Love childcare home. Our children are reaping the benefits of assistance with instruction and materials to develop and stimulate learning. ”





## PUBLIC AWARENESS



Community events are done in collaboration with other local organizations. First Steps staff help to provide parents resources, education, and other early education materials for young children. Some examples include:

- Car Seat safety check*
- Back-to-School Expo*
- Community Baby Shower*
- Community Health Fair*
- Community Resource Fair*
- PASOs Outreach*

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## COMMUNITY EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

**1557**

materials  
distributed

**67**

events held

**473**

total event  
attendance

**Stronger Together**



## 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 childcare providers, Beaufort County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Beaufort 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

340

Adult Family  
Members served

1000

Materials  
distributed

“Through community partnerships, Beaufort county First Steps works collaboratively with organizations that support positive family and child outcomes. These organizations include libraries, health centers, schools, community colleges, human services agencies, faith-based organizations, businesses, and others.”



## OUR SUPPORTERS

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

### FUNDING SUPPORT

SC First Steps: \$432,993

Greenville Tech/SC Endeavors: \$2,000

Coastal Community Foundation: \$10,000

Kaplan Early Learning: \$200

### IN-KIND SUPPORT

Born to Read.  
Kaplan Early Learning Company  
Hargray  
The Baptist Church of Beaufort  
Wayfair  
Department of Social Services  
Beaufort County School  
SC First Steps  
Lady's Island Yacht Club  
PASO's  
The Black Chamber of Commerce  
Beaufort Jasper Hampton Comprehensive Health Services  
Beaufort Jasper EOC  
Technical College of the Lowcountry  
SC ABC Program  
Church of the Cross  
SC Child Care Resource and Referral  
Beaufort County Library  
Welvista  
SCECA

## JOIN US

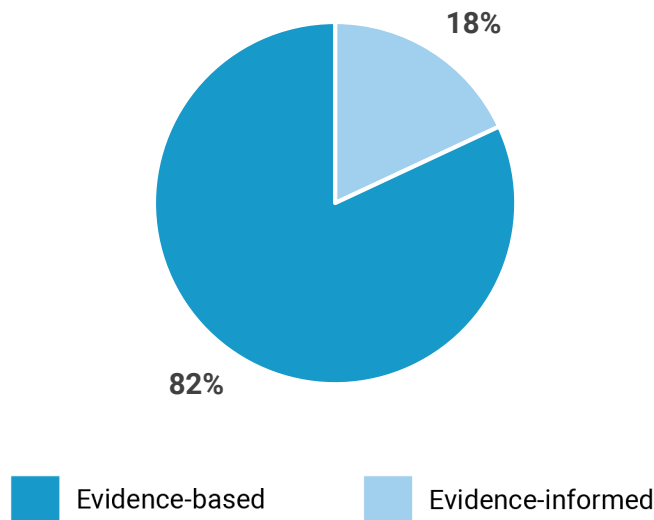
For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at  
[www.beaufortfirststeps.com](http://www.beaufortfirststeps.com)



## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

### OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



### ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Beaufort County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,271,897** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$.29** for every state dollar.

### SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$96,742	\$4,000	\$8,034	\$88	\$108,864
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$119,806	\$	\$8,111	\$1,110	\$129,027
Child Care Training	\$42,573	\$	\$18,152	\$82	\$60,806
Early Intervention & Referral	\$20,183	\$40,417	\$17,235	\$	\$77,835
Count Down to Kindergarten	\$	\$1,461	\$	\$	\$1,461
Core Functions	\$36,902	\$	\$	\$46	\$36,948
Administrative Support	\$24,360	\$	\$	\$65	\$24,424
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$340,566</b>	<b>\$45,878</b>	<b>\$51,531</b>	<b>\$1,390</b>	<b>\$439,365</b>



## LEADERSHIP

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Julia Burnes, Chair	Anita Lynn Singleton, Vice Chair
James Williams, Treasurer	Kelly Zytynski, Secretary
York Glover	Marilyn Jenkins
Ernestine Morris	Madie Orage-Green
Nancy Priester	Ronald Manyin
Kathleen T. McTeer	Tonya Allen Jenkins
Olandor Lewis	

### STAFF

Betty Washington, Executive Director

Lucette Brown, Parent Educator

Sheryl Newton, Early Child Educator

Solimar Abbott, Community Health Worker

Erin Mathews, Program Specialist

## CONTACT US

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