

Annual Report

2019-2020



THE NEED

IN CHARLESTON COUNTY:

23,676

children under age 5

37.4%

of young children live in poverty
or low-income households

45%

of kindergartners are considered "not
ready" for school



THREE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS:

1. **SNAP or Free School Lunches eligibility**
2. **Single parent household and has need of other services**
3. **TANF Eligibility (50% of Federal Poverty or below)**

OUR MISSION

To improve the quality of childcare, expand early education programs, provide access to health services, and offer family support. We work to ensure Charleston County's youngest children reach school 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

1,408

number of children and adults served by
Charleston 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



Sherry Whitten Gilliam, M. Ed.

Executive Director
Charleston County First Steps

With a workforce growing at twice the national rate and the distinction of being one of the top tourist destinations in the country, Charleston County is often noted for its rich culture, arts and history. However, one in five children in the county live in concentrated areas of poverty. Based on 2019 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment data, 55% of kindergarteners demonstrated readiness for kindergarten. While this is a 6% increase over the previous year and 16% above the state average, this is no cause to celebrate.

All children can be successful when they have equal access to resources and opportunities to participate in safe, stable, high-quality early learning environments. While we seem to be on the right trajectory, we cannot and will not rejoice until ALL children in Charleston County are ready for school and ALL schools are ready for our children.

Sherry W. Gilliam



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Richardine Singleton-Brown, Esq.

Chair

Charleston County First Steps Board of Trustees

Greetings First Steps Family:

Thank you for all of your hard work and sacrifices during these unprecedented times. Each staff member is valued and appreciated. Your hard work, positive attitudes, ingenuity, compassion, and patience do not go unnoticed.

Our children are so fortunate to have each of you play an integral part in their future successes. On behalf of the Charleston County First Steps Board, thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Richardine Singleton-Brown". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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 Charleston County toward the following strategic goals:

- Expand program services in order to reach children in rural areas and families with extenuating circumstances.
- Ensure that all partnership childcare centers are high quality and that all children and families receive high quality services.
- Increase parent engagement and training to ensure parents function as their child's first teachers and as leaders in their community.
- Strengthen Local Portal and Community Convener efforts in order to support and enhance high quality childcare programs.
- Develop a solid fundraising plan that includes diverse funding streams including grants, special events, donor solicitation, etc.

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Charleston 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 Charleston 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 CHARLESTON COUNTY

HEALTH

Through June 30, 2020 Charleston County had a total of **4,451** confirmed COVID-19 cases and 78 COVID-19 deaths.

JOB LOSS

257.3%

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

CHILD CARE

36.7%

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

70.2%

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



Household items, diapers and personal hygiene products purchased with a \$3,000 grant from Trident United Way COVID Response Fund were distributed to families in need.

*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 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.



EARLY IDENTIFICATION & REFERRAL



an evidence-based program

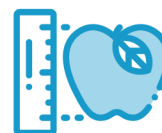
First Steps' Early Identification and Referral (EI&R) programs serve families with young children with suspected delays in development, acting as a local portal to connect families to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children. EI&R services include:



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

16

children served

30

materials distributed

7

referrals to BabyNet or other local services



Charleston County First Steps implemented its Early Identification and Referral strategy using the PASOs model. The bilingual PASOs Community Health Worker (CHW) uses a developmental screening tool to assess each child entering the program and determines which community resources would be most beneficial to the child and family. The CHW also links the Latino community to service providers and information to support any needs.



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 Charleston COUNTY 2019-2020

96

families served

1276

total home visits

CCFS was recognized by the Parents As Teachers National Office for continuing to demonstrate fidelity to all the Essential Requirements of the Parents as Teachers model.



Parents as Teachers.
Model Affiliate



EARLY HEAD START- PARENTS AS TEACHERS



an evidence-based program

Early Head Start - Parents As Teachers – (EHS-PAT) is a home visitation strategy that connects expectant parents and parents of young children with a trained Early Childhood Specialist. This model uses the Parents As Teachers curriculum and abides by all Head Start Performance Standards.



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

Group Connection



Prior to COVID-19, EHS-PAT families enjoyed participating in thematic group socializations.

EHS-PAT IN Charleston COUNTY 2019-2020

28

families served

349

total home visits



Parents as Teachers®
Model Affiliate



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

4

child care providers served

101

number of TA visits provided

95

number of children 0-5 enrolled in provider classrooms



Being a part of the First Steps family is enlightening! From adding quality in every area in my school, to TA with my teachers, First Steps is beneficial for both our programming and our community.

Ms. Cushan Brown, Director/Owner of C.A.R.E. Academy, LLC





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:

Creating a Culture of Safety II

Problem Solving with Preschoolers: A Solution Kit

Social and Emotional Development in Young Children

Parent, Family and Community Engagement.

Culture Matters: Supporting Home Culture

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

99

total training attendance

46

child care teachers and
directors served

5

number of training
sessions offered



I applaud the work First Steps has done with families and teachers under their umbrella. Teachers are able to further their education in order to further their careers.



Ms. Tarja Young, Teacher at Academy Kingdom Child Care Center



RAISING A READER



an evidence-based program

Raising A Reader promotes positive early learning family experiences, which help prepare children for success in school. Through book-lending and parent workshops, Raising A Reader encourages families to develop, practice, and maintain habits of sharing books - a habit that research demonstrates is essential to developing reading skills. Families who enjoy books together help children become a better listeners, learn new words, and build an understanding of the world.

RAISING A READER BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

260

children served

16

family workshops
provided

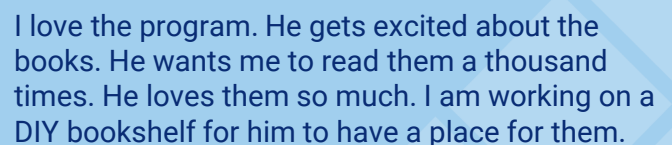




B.E.A.R. WITH US BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

families served

classrooms
served



Parent Survey Comment



Early Head Start Child Care Partnership



an evidence-based program

Early Head Start is a research-based program that provides intensive comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income infants and toddlers and their families. As part of the federal Early Learning Initiative, the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant allows us to partner with local childcare centers to provide full-day, year-round, high-quality childcare to families to promote self-sufficiency so that children can enter school healthy and ready to learn.

EHS-CCP BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

120

children served

103

families served

4

providers served



"There are so many great things that I could say about First Steps EHS-CCP. The most important for me though would be the foundation that it established for my daughter's education. She learned so much during her time in the program. Certainly, things that I wouldn't have had the time to teach her, being a full-time employee. For that, I'm forever grateful. I also served as a parent on the Policy Council. It was truly a great experience for me. I was able to witness firsthand the love and compassion that everyone had for the children, community, and the program. It was a great opportunity to serve with them."

Former EHS-CCP Parent and Policy Council Member



PUBLIC AWARENESS



an evidence-informed program

Often, community problems or issues are too large and complex for any one agency or organization to tackle. In these circumstances, putting together a coalition of groups or individuals can be an effective strategy for developing solutions to the problem or/or achieving the goal.

Over a year ago, the First Steps Executive Directors from Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties began brainstorming how best to combine our resources and talents to make a difference for the children and families in the communities we serve. We were already partnering with some of the same agencies and tapping some of the same resources. However, one area of concern for each agency was the lack of opportunities for families to participate in events that provide vital learning opportunities for children and their families outside of the classroom. Calling ourselves the *Tri-County Play Collaborative*, we developed and implemented a collaborative agreement with community organizations to provide free or low-cost admission to events for our children, families, and staff. We co-sponsored events for young children and families in the community, thus increasing public awareness of First Steps local partnerships.

We are grateful to our current partners - *the Children's Museum of the Lowcountry, Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, and Beidler Forest* - who have welcomed our families and staff with open arms and look forward to expanding our list of partners in the future.

TRI-COUNTY PLAY COLLABORATIVE BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

8

events held

400+

total event
attendance



Tri-County Play Collaborative staff actively engaging children in making ladybugs during the 6th annual Ladybug Release event at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Addressing the needs of young children is a shared endeavor. In addition to providing services to families and support for childcare providers, Charleston County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Charleston 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 2019-2020

123

referrals made to
local agencies

15

community partners

“ We are ecstatic to partner with First Steps! As the region's collective impact organization, our goal is to bring organizations and people together in partnership to ensure all children have the resources they need to achieve their highest potential. ”

**Ms. LaTisha Vaughn, Chief Operating Officer
Tri-County Cradle to Career**



OUR SUPPORTERS

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

FUNDING SUPPORT

Office of Head Start \$1,729,809
Charleston County School District EHS-PAT \$122,097
Dollar General \$5000
Trident United Way \$3000
SC Endeavors \$2000
Belk \$490
Charleston County First Steps Board of Directors \$405
Gamma Xi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
(Twenty Pearls Foundation of Charleston, Inc.) \$225
Waffle House \$200
Tech Soup \$188
Susan Herrington \$150
Omicron Rho Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. \$100
Piggly Wiggly \$100
Target \$100
Resource Partners \$80
Publix \$25
Network for Good \$15

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Nia Infant, Toddler & Child Development Center
Academy Kingdom Child Care Center
John's Island Early Childhood Christian Academy
Harvest Pointe Child Development Center
My Three Sons Restaurant
Great American Cookies
Pizza Hut
Healthy Blue
Low Country Food Bank
Charleston County School District
Begin with Books
First Book

JOIN US

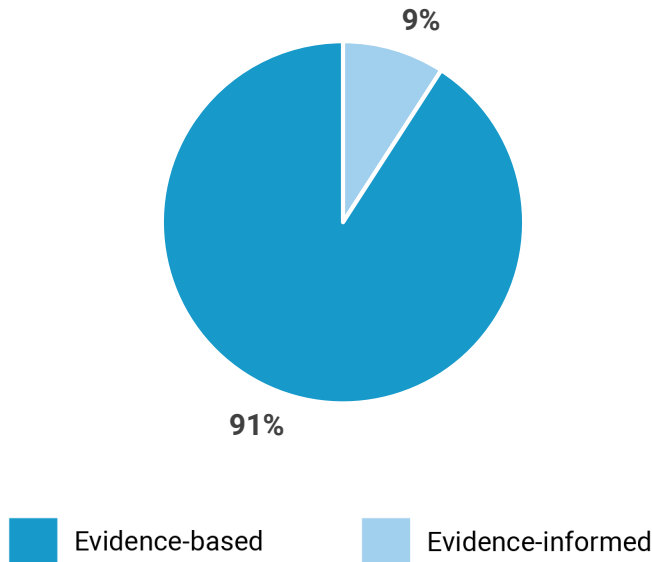
For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at
<https://www.charlestonfirststeps.org/>



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Charleston County First Steps has leveraged **\$16,777,080.37** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$1.01** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$392,668	\$0	\$16,738	\$15,316	\$424,722
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$67,110	\$0	\$0	\$875	\$67,985
Child Care Training	\$31,251	\$0	\$5,700	\$0	\$36,951
Early Head Start - Parents As Teachers	\$0	\$118,284	\$0	\$0	\$118,284
Trident Literacy	\$10,980	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,980
Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership	\$0	\$1,581,651	\$0	\$314,107	\$1,895,758
Raising A Reader	\$55,164	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$55,164
Partnerships & Community Education	\$82,347	\$49,051	\$0	\$323	\$131,670
Administrative Support	\$94,063	\$1,628	\$1,363	\$21,544	\$118,598
Total Expenses	\$733,583	\$1,750,563	\$23,801	\$382,165	\$2,860,112



LEADERSHIP

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Kanya Hammond, PAT Parent Educator

Lisa VanDort, PAT Parent Educator

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