

Annual Report

2019-2020



THE NEED

IN COUNTY COUNTY:

1918

children under age 5

61.3%

of young children live in poverty
or low-income households

69%

of kindergartners are considered "not
ready" for school



THREE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS:

1. SNAP Recipient
2. TANF Recipient
3. Single Parent Household

OUR MISSION

To collaborate for ensuring that all children start school ready to reach their highest potential with engaged support from their parents, caregivers, and communities.

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

887

Children and adults served by Chester
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 A FIRST STEPS FAMILY



First Steps has been a vital part of our family since James and Thomas were six months old. Parent Educator Boyd was the first to recognize that the twins needed intervention and coordinated the services required for their unique abilities. The Chester County First Steps team, Mrs. Watson, Ms. Gore and Mrs. DeSantis were supportive in facilitating parenting resources and services. Our skills were enriched for fulfilling the needs of our boys, the joy of our lives. Without First Steps, the twins would not have developed into the independent teenagers and creative artists they are. Thank you, First Steps

*Paintings by James and Thomas

Dresa and Cynthia Roddey

Centuria S. Watson
Executive Director
Chester 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



OUR GOALS

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

- Goal 1 – Training early childhood professionals to enhance early learning experiences in classrooms.
- Goal 2 – Connect with local family servicing agencies and organizations to fulfil service gaps.
- Goal 3 – To provide parents with guidance and support that promotes children's developmental domains.
- Goal 4 – Raise funds for enhancing delivery of programs, services. 4

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Chester 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 Chester 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 CHESTER COUNTY

HEALTH

Through June 30, Chester County had a total of 191 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 2 COVID-19 deaths.

JOB LOSS

4.5%

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

CHILD CARE

67.6%

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

78.5%

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



Parents' responsibilities must continue regardless to what is occurring in the community. Eliminating stressors that can arise is one of the focuses of the parenting team. Frequent contact for emotional support, infant and personal care supplies were provided. While adhering to social distancing guidelines, parent support staff performed personal visit to young mothers.

*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.

“ I enjoyed cooking the recipes I learned with my children later at home. They enjoyed trying something new.

Alicia Morrow, PAT Parent



A fun activity following a healthy snack is a workout everyone enjoys.

Fresh vegetables, donated by Wild Hope Farm, were ideal ingredients that complemented the theme of preparing quick nutritious meals for busy parents. Group Connection cooking classes were supported through a collaboration with SC DHEC. Their guidance for preparing budget friendly dishes was well received by all attendees of this Parents As Teachers project.



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 CHESTER COUNTY 2019-2020

26

families served

466

total home visits

Communication with parents was important, it was consistent and timely. Reassurance during times of uncertainty bolsters emotional support.



Parents as Teachers®



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 Literacy-Rich Environments
Understanding Early Language & Literacy Development
Supporting Children With Behaviors that Challenge Us
Infant/Child CPR
Transforming A Staff Into A Super Work-Force
Direct OR Indirect: Relation Is Key
Math Into Play
Embedding Health & Safety
Where Conversations Lead
Nutrition Fun with Food Celebrations & Snacks
Physical Activity Building

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

58

total training attendance

58

child care teachers and
directors served

8

number of training
sessions offered



Your trainings are informative, and it is great meeting people from other counties. I also like the age range of people in class. Your trainers are knowledgeable, they keep our attention after having a long day.



Shan Foster, Childcare Professional

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 CHESTER 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.





Children and parents of Horizon Christian Academy enthusiastically participated in early literacy activities with the support of classroom and childcare center staff. Bags of books were given to each child for in-home literacy experiences. With engagement of all family members, the goal of child led literacy activities will become engrained in the child's home.

RAISING A READER BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

1

child care providers
served

2

number of TA visits
provided

7

number of children 0-5
enrolled in provider
classrooms





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, Chester County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Chester 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

763

Children impacted
by school
readiness
information

23

Hours of service
to early childhood
partners

“ We are grateful to have First Steps as a partner to assist with efforts to contact and identify families with young children in the county. And, especially for families we would have difficulty connecting with. ”

Belinda Butler, Client Services Coordinator, Select Health



OUR SUPPORTERS

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

FUNDING SUPPORT

State of South Carolina - \$176,523
(South Carolina First Steps)

Carolina Family Engagement Center Grant - \$2,000

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Chester County – \$34,200

Chester YMCA – \$3,068

JOIN US

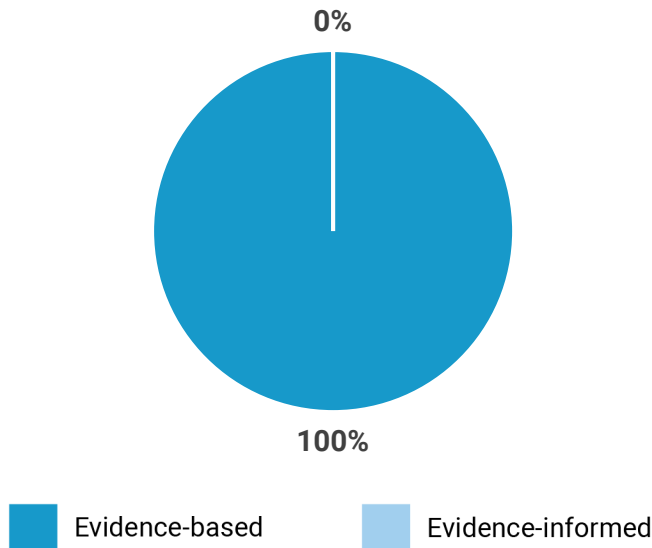
For more information on partnership opportunities, programs and services contact
Chester County First Steps 803-385-6174



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Chester County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,432,078** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$.40** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$90,190.01	\$0	\$487.59	\$18,615	\$18,760.72
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$	\$0	\$	\$	\$
Child Care Training	\$52,284.59	\$0	\$470.43	\$17,607.01	\$70,362.03
Nurse Family Partnership	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Half Day 4K	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Early Head Start	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Partnerships & Community Education	\$16,007.50	\$1,049.19	\$68.59	\$576	\$17,701.28
Administrative Support	\$18,040.72	\$0	\$0	\$720.00	\$18,760.72
Total Expenses	\$176,522.83	\$1,049.19	\$1,026.61	\$37,518.02	\$216,116.65



LEADERSHIP

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STAFF

Centuria S. Watson, Executive Director
LaTonya Boyd, Parent Educator - Supervisor
Candy Gore, Parent Educator

CONTACT US

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