

Annual Report

2019-2020



THE NEED

IN DILLON COUNTY:

2,121

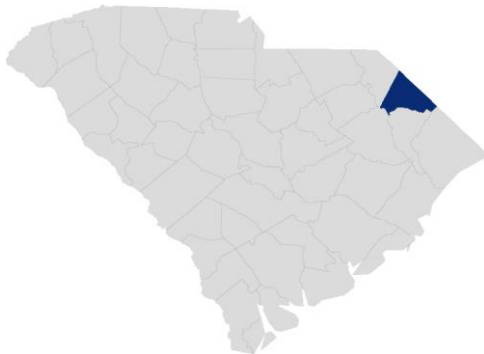
children under age 5

68.8%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

70.1%

of kindergartners are considered "not ready" for school



RISK FACTORS:

1. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Formerly known as Food Stamps)
2. Single parent household and has need of other services.
3. TANF Eligibility (50% of Federal Poverty or Below)

OUR MISSION

"Every child in Dillon County is important and should experience a loving, stimulating, healthy, and safe environment ensured by a supportive family and community."

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

801

number of children and adults served by Dillon 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.

926 Perry Ave., Dillon, SC 29536 | 843-774-0061 | dillonfirststeps.com

Data provided by:

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Shirleen D. Lewis, MS

Executive Director
Dillon County First Steps

First, our thoughts go out to the individuals, organizations, and communities that have been affected by COVID-19. Although, faced with many obstacles and changes, we are all deeply committed to the DCFS mission, and we work each day with a renewed dedication to serve Dillon County Youngest Learners. I am fortunate to work with an amazing staff and a dedicated board of directors who have continued to provide excellence service to our community.

After serving the community through face to face interactions for nine months, we have been able to successfully continue to provide quality early childhood services virtually for our families and child care providers, as well as partner with local organization to provide PPE to our families for the last three months of the fiscal year. I would like to personally thank all of our donors and community partners for all of your contributions and financial support to help DCFS continue to help “Children Prepare for School.” You ROCK!

Sincerely,

Shirleen D. Lewis, MS

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 Dillon County toward the following strategic goals:

- Increasing the population of Hispanic families to participate in programs provided by DCFS.
- Help improve Quality Scores in child care facilities that participate in ABC Quality through the Department of Social Services.
- Expand the number of families and children served in Parents As Teachers.

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Dillon 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 Dillon 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 DILLON COUNTY

HEALTH

Through June 30, Dillon County had a total of **309** confirmed COVID-19 cases and **16** COVID-19 deaths.

JOB LOSS

4.5%

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

CHILD CARE

32.3%

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

74.5%

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



During the pandemic, DCFS provided PPE supplies and basic need items for families who participate in the Parents As Teachers Program.

*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 DILLON COUNTY 2019-2020

43 families served

800 total home visits



My son has learned a lot from the program. I enjoy learning new activities that I can do at home with my son. He is now walking and beginning to say new words. PAT is a great program.

Courtney Olmos, Parent



Parents as Teachers®



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

3

child care providers served

2

number of TA visits provided

51

number of children 0-5 enrolled in provider classrooms



“With Quality Enhancement in my home daycare, it has provided me with a changing table for my babies, toys, books, and helped me set up various centers within my home daycare. I would recommend everyone to reach out to better or refresh their daycare setting with the knowledge and supplies that Dillon County First Steps offers.”

Tamela McGill, Child Care Provider



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:

The Basis for Early Learning: The Theorists
Cognitive Development

Fun And Healthy Foods For Snacks and Celebrations

What Does Inclusion Mean To You?

A Clear Vision Through Transitions and Lesson Plans

Bloodborne Pathogens

Helping Teachers and Children with Developmental Screenings

Orientation To The Regulations 101

Connecting the Early Learning Standards to Your Lesson Plan

Child Abuse 101

Planning for ECE Assessment

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

101

total training attendance

32

child care teachers and directors served

21

number of training sessions offered

“ Local child care trainings make it possible for me to meet licensing requirements without interrupting the daily child care schedule for the families I serve. The age appropriate books, and craft supplies are very much appreciated.

Florine Jones, Owner
Noah's Ark Day Care



LITERACY PROGRAM



an evidence-informed program

Raising A Reader (RAR) is a proven and research-based family engagement and early literacy program for children ages 0-8 that help develop, practice, and maintain the home-based literacy routines necessary for school success. The program promotes and fosters healthy brain development, parent-child bonding, and develops the early language and literacy skills that are critical for academic and life success by engaging parents in a routine of “book cuddling” with their children.

RAISING A READER BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

67

families served

3

providers served



Raising A Reader (RAR) has been an asset to Hamer Canaan Head Start. RAR has made a lasting impact on students, parents, and teachers. RAR is an awesome program.



**Sharon T. Davis, Center Director
Hamer Canaan Head Start**



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 DILLON COUNTY 2019-2020

60

children enrolled

4

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.





PUBLIC AWARENESS



an evidence-informed program

Dillon County First Steps Staff and Board Members promote literacy throughout the county on this day by dressing up as characters and reading in early childhood classrooms. Participants visited elementary schools and child care providers.

HALLOW-READ DAY BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

460

materials
distributed

1

events held

230

total event
attendance





PUBLIC AWARENESS



an evidence-informed program

Through a partnership with the Powerhouse Church, Dillon County First Steps was able to distribute paper, pencils, crayons and notebooks to area students.

BACK TO SCHOOL BASH BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

200

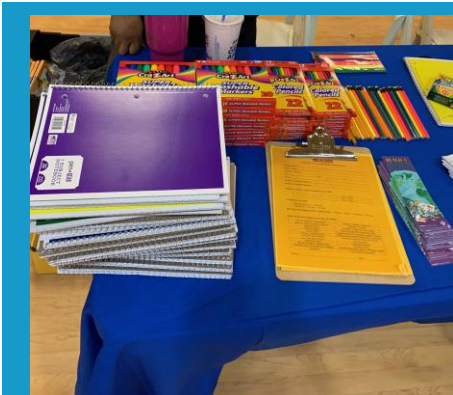
materials
distributed

1

events held

100

total event
attendance





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

17

Community Partners
and Sponsors

\$16,600

Donations through
fundraising, community
partners, and grants



Thank you!

Dillon County First Steps Partners and Sponsors



OUR SUPPORTERS

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

FUNDING SUPPORT

SC Ports Authority: \$5,000

Healthy Learners: \$5,000

Sisters of Charity Foundation: \$3,000

SC Endeavors: \$2,000

3 On 3 Basketball Tournament Fundraiser: \$1,125

Board Member/Staff Campaign: \$325

United Way-Dillon County: \$150.00

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Dillon School District Four

City of Dillon Wellness Center

City of Dillon Fire Department

Kaplan Early Learning Company

Helen Lane Wiggins

ABC Quality Program

Child Care Resource & Referral

SC Child Care Inclusion Collaborative

JOIN US

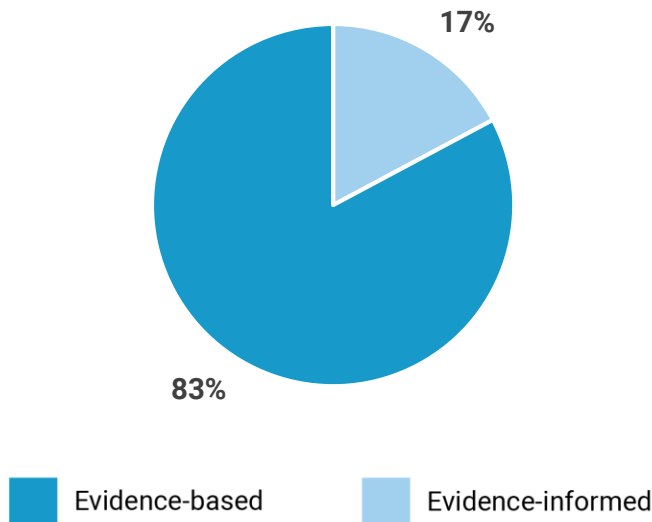
For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at **dillonfirststeps.com**.



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Dillon County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,175,819** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.23** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$52,079	\$50,480	\$4,152	\$106,711
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$48,702	\$	\$1,329	\$50,031
Child Care Training	\$27,139	\$300	\$1,584	\$29,023
Raising A Reader	\$26,576	\$	\$1,329	\$27,905
Core Functions	\$16,256	\$167	\$1,328	\$17,751
Administrative Support	\$18,810	\$1,230	\$1,703	\$21,743
Total Expenses	\$189,562	\$52,177	\$11,425	\$253,164



LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kenneth L. Smith, Chair	Karen English
Dr. Michael McRae, Vice Chair	Chevella German
Preston Greene, III, Secretary	Aleesha Leggette
Millie Odom, Assistant Secretary	Dollie R. Morrell
Tierney L. Alford	Rev. Allen Nesmith
Lisa Armstrong	Angela S. Rogers
Beryl Collington	

STAFF

Shirleen D. Lewis, Executive Director

Shantel McRae, Parents as Teacher Supervisor

Angela Coward, Finance Manager

Geraldine Ellis, Parent Educator

CONTACT US

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