

Annual Report

2019-2020



THE NEED

IN DORCHESTER COUNTY:

9523

children under age 5

34.1%

of young children live in poverty
or low-income households

55.2%

of kindergartners are considered "not
ready" for school



THREE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS:

1. Risk factor 1: Poor or No Transportation
2. Risk factor 2: Parenting Skills/Single Parent Needs
3. Risk factor 3: Poor/No Quality Child Care

OUR MISSION

Collaborating with other entities, Dorchester County First Steps helps families and caregivers in our 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

#4,712

number of children and adults served by
DORCHESTER 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



Dr. Crystal Y. Campbell

Executive Director
Dorchester County First Steps

“Every day may not be good, but there is good in every day.” This quote is definitely true for this year. I have been able to find something “good” in everyday. Despite living through a pandemic, Dorchester First Steps has accomplished a great deal of good this year. We were still able to connect with families through virtual meetings, phone calls, and porch drop-offs. We were blessed with donations from Lowcountry Food Bank, Sydney Conrad and My Sister’s House, Dorchester Habitat for Humanity, The Children’s Museum of the Lowcountry; and we provided our families with much needed supplies as they fared the “shelter-in” process. We received grant funds that enabled us to create Literacy Kits with books for every child in our Quality Enhancement Center. We provided scholarships to eligible families for childcare and DSS hours to Child Care Providers. We did not miss a beat, thanks to the DCFS Staff: Alicia Turner, Ivory Mitchell, and Kristy Allan. Finally, we would be totally lost with out support from our Dorchester First Steps Partnership Board.

“Do You Like Us Now?”

Dr. Crystal Y. Campbell



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Trimeka Johnson

Chair
Dorchester County First Steps Board of Trustees

To the splendid families of DCFS, the hard-working individuals who specialize in working with those families and to the fine citizens of Dorchester County, we did it!

With your help, we:

- served 690 families, and
- were awarded several grants.

Given the detrimental effects of the novel Coronavirus, those accomplishments are no small feat! We managed to stay connected to our community and provide the loving, caring service that DCFS has long been known to offer. This is grossly in part due to the excellent operation of our local staff under the leadership of Executive Director, Dr. Crystal Campbell. Crystal and her staff each have a vested personal interest in seeing our children develop comprehensively. To this end, we will continue to work tirelessly at removing any barriers to their progress.

This past fiscal year, we increased our community visibility, and forged strong partnerships that benefit the county, community and its citizens; as such, we would like to maintain relationship vitality via public events so much as these unprecedented times will allow.

Finally, we will continue to set SMART goals with the hope of exceeding them for the good of those we serve! Here is to a most productive year!

Trimeka Johnson



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 DORCHESTER County toward the following strategic goals:

- Goal 1 Creating additional strategies to address the health care of children birth to age five.
- Goal 2 Increase the Local Partnership's Infrastructure to improve and enhance services and support to families.
- Goal 3 To implement training and coaching for childcare providers
- Goal 4 Implement the PAT program and prepare for Blue Ribbon Status
- Goal 5 Increase our visibility with social media
- Goal 6 To continue to support Parent Child Home in the school Districts

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Dorchester 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 Dorchester 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 DORCHESTER COUNTY

HEALTH

Through June 30, 2020 Dorchester County had a total of **776** confirmed COVID-19 cases and 10 COVID-19 deaths.

JOB LOSS

2.9%

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

CHILD CARE

57%

Children under 5 in Dorchester County lived in a childcare desert before COVID-19

84.0%

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



During COVID-19 between March to June 2020, DCFS has helped our clients and the community in the following ways:

- Lowcountry Food Bank donations of food
- Cleaning supplies, detergent, non-perishable food and snacks for the children- donated by DCFS
- Feminine Hygiene products for the mothers-donated by My Sister's House, Sarah Conrad
- STEM-Kit activities for the children-donated by Children's Museum of the Lowcountry.

*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

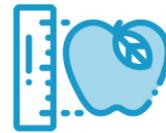
First Steps' Early Identification and Referral (EI&R) programs serve families with young children with suspected delays in development, acting as a local portal to connect families to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children. EI&R services include:



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

#106

children served

#144

materials distributed

#11

referrals to BabyNet or other local services



Dorchester First Steps strives to help every family that reaches out to us. Every time a parent calls with concerns Alicia Turner and Kristy Allan jump into action connecting families to needed agencies and assessing children for potential delays. They also provide follow-up with every family to make sure they have received services.



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.

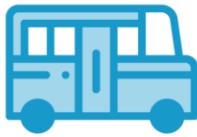
PAT IN DORCHESTER COUNTY 2019-2020

#36 families served

#883 total home visits

When Covid-19 hit our PAT community our families relied on their Parent Educators for continued connections. Families greatly appreciated that services were never interrupted due to Covid-19 and that Parent Educators were there to offer continued parenting support along with supplies and resources to help get through this unprecedented time.





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

7

kindergarten teachers
trained as home visitors

70

children served

#420

total home and school
visits



Countdown to Kindergarten data is for the summer before the current fiscal year. The numbers DCFS has served are absolutely phenomenal because of the many hurdles we have to overcome to make this wonderful learning opportunity happen. Here is a comment from one happy family:

“The best part of the CTK experience was being involved in my child’s learning experience every single step of the way.” – S.D.





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

#1

child care providers served

#16

number of TA visits provided

#57

number of children 0-5 enrolled in provider classrooms



Dorchester County First Steps quality enhancement program has given my center training and support throughout the years to ensure that my center grew. It also helped prepare my staff to provide safe and quality childcare.



Ronda Simmons, Owner/Director of Little Fish Academy



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:

Due to COVID-19 our training plan was severely interrupted, and the training data was lost during the transition into the new data system from September to December 2019

**Training Categories:
Health & Safety
And
Child Guidance**

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

#25

total training attendance

#25

child care teachers and directors served

#6

number of training sessions offered



**DCFS Trainings are very interactive and lively,
100% satisfactory rating**



CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS



an evidence-informed program

Dorchester County is proud to offer childcare vouchers to qualifying families. The scholarships give working parents or parents who are attending school the opportunity to have their children in a quality childcare center.

Parents who receive our scholarships are encouraged to also participate in our home visitation program (Parents As Teachers) and all group connections that are offered for the children and families. DCFS staff member, Ivory Mitchell, monitors and supports the children in the childcare centers and provides technical assistance to the childcare providers as well.

SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

#11

number of children
served

#5

number of providers
served

#12

number of
developmental
screenings provided

100% the money paid to child care providers goes back into our local economy to benefit the citizens of Dorchester County.



Picture submitted by Riverpointe Christian Academy



FAMILY LITERACY



an evidence-informed program

This program was created to put much needed books in the hands of the children in our Quality Enhancement program. Additional funds were secured through a grant from Coastal Community Foundation. Twelve Thematic Kits were created featuring a book and activities for the teachers to use with the children and additional books were obtained to provide every child with a book that corresponded with the theme. Due to the Pandemic and centers closing we were not able to implement the program. However, it will be implemented in FY21.

Family Literacy Kits Projected to Serve (Due to Pandemic we were not able to complete this program, but all the Kits are ready for FY21) 2019-2020

#1

childcare provider served

#24

number of TA visits provided (August 2019-March 2020)

#20

number of children 0-5 enrolled in provider classrooms





LITERACY PROGRAM



an evidence-informed program

For the past 5 years Dorchester First Steps has created, supplied, stored and refurbished Literacy Kits in the two County Library Systems. We have a unique memorandum of agreement with both Libraries and they provide us with the number of times the kits circulate.

LITERACY KITS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

#810

Number of time
circulated





PUBLIC AWARENESS



One of the on-going activities that DCFS participates in is the PLAY Collaborative with Magnolia Plantation and Gardens. We love it when our families come out to the Fairy Garden for a visit. The Tri-County PLAY Collaborative has several funders.

Tri-County PLAY Collaborative BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

6

Books featured
In the Story walk
At Magnolia
Gardens Fairy
Garden

#56

Number hours
spent meeting and
planning

#5

Total number of
events



The mission of the Tri-County PLAY Collaborative is to provide our families with the opportunity to participate in community events at little or no cost. The following agencies partner with us: Beidler Forest, Children’s Museum of the Lowcountry, Halsey Gallery, Charlestowne Landing, and Magnolia Gardens & Plantation.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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

#96

Number of group
Convener
meetings

#5912

Number of Hours
spent in Convener
Group Meetings

“
Local Portal Comment:
[It's great] all the information that was given to us [to] get us
ready! – K.B.
”



OUR SUPPORTERS

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

FUNDING SUPPORT

Coastal Community Foundation: \$5000

Summerville D.R.E.A.M.: \$102.00

Contributions in honor of Hannah Graff: \$847.00

Continuous Quality Improvement (Workshop for the ED) \$5000.00

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Dorchester District Four Schools: 63,663.00

JOIN US

Dorchester County First Steps strives to support the community as we help families with children birth to age 5 prepare for school success. ***"Do You Like Us Now?"***

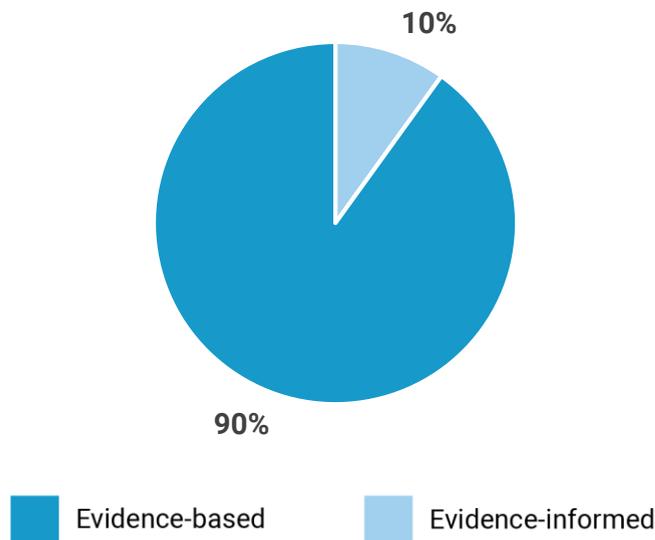
For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at **dorchesterfirststeps.org**



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Dorchester County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,175,818** from sources outside of state government. That's **\$0.27** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$138,940	\$1757	\$0.00	\$63,663	\$204,360
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$47,860	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$47,860
Child Care Training	\$32,547	\$0	\$2,096	\$0	\$34,643
Library Based Programs	\$7,211	\$0	\$1,155	\$0	\$8,367
Countdown To Kindergarten	\$19,930	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$19,930
Scholarship Initiatives	\$35,267	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$35,267
Early Identification Referrals	\$10,685	\$0	\$0	\$0	10,685
Childcare Quality Enhancement	\$47,860	\$	\$	\$	\$47,860
Core Functions	\$29015	\$1,754	\$	\$	\$30,770
Administrative Support	\$18,137	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$18,137
Total	\$332,506	\$2512	\$3252	\$63,663	\$411,934



LEADERSHIP

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STAFF

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Ivory Mitchell, QE Program Director
Kristy Allan, Program Specialist
Delores Footman, Parent Educator (DD4)
Roslyn Young, Parent Educator (DD4)



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