

Annual Report

2019-2020



THE NEED

IN EDGEFIELD COUNTY:

1,009

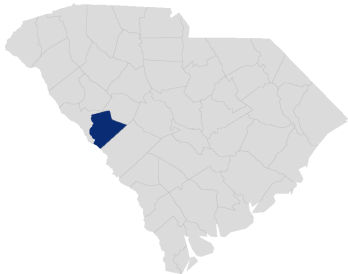
children under age 5

47.8%

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 and/or Free Lunch Eligibility
2. Single Parent Household
3. TANF Eligibility

OUR MISSION

to empower Edgefield County families and caregivers
to prepare children for school success by delivering, enhancing, and
expanding 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

1,962

number of children and adults served by
Edgefield 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



Candi Lalonde

Executive Director
Edgefield County First Steps

If anyone had told me in July of 2019 when this fiscal year started that we would end the year on June 30, 2020, and be in the middle of a pandemic, I would have not believed it. We started the year strong – it was our 20th year of serving young children and their families in Edgefield County. We held a huge celebration in November as part of our annual meeting. We recognized Board members and community supporters; we heard from past participants; and we highlighted achievements from the past 20 years.

We welcomed 2020 with our programs entering their third quarter realizing full enrollment, with so many plans for extended services, community meetings, fundraisers, celebrations, and trainings. Then our country was impacted by the arrival of the Covid-19 virus and it began spreading quickly. By March of 2020, South Carolina was in a state of emergency, and we all began the quarantine in hopes of “flattening the curve” of the virus. Schools shut down, businesses closed, people started going only to places that were essential, and masks became the newest fashion accessory. For us, programs suddenly had to cease in-person contact and our community realized that we were not going to get back to normal any time soon. Home visits and trainings were cancelled, and we became increasingly thankful for cell phones and Zoom in order to continue to provide a quality level of services.

However, all is not lost. Yes, we have had to adjust to our “new normal,” but I cannot say enough about our state and local leaders, our First Steps family statewide, and our local staff, vendors, and community partners. I have witnessed in them the same qualities that we have worked for 20 years to instill in our young children and their families – strength, compassion, perseverance, and resilience. We will continue to provide quality services safely to our child care providers and the families we serve, and we will come out the other side of this pandemic stronger, wiser, and more dedicated than ever to meet their needs.

Candi Lalonde

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 Edgefield County toward the following strategic goals:

- Increase access to and affordability of high quality child care and a continuum of early childhood services
- Increase knowledge of parenting skills to empower parents to be their child's first teacher
- Address barriers of families to increase participation in ECFS programs
- Educate the community about programs and services of ECFS
- Engage and mobilize the community to promote early childhood education programs county-wide

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Edgefield 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 Edgefield 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 EDGEFIELD COUNTY

HEALTH

Through June 30, Edgefield County had a total of **84** confirmed COVID-19 cases and **3** COVID-19 deaths.

JOB LOSS

150.1%

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

CHILD CARE

55.5%

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

88.3%

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



In May of 2020, Edgefield County First Steps Board members joined with the Executive Director to put together learning bags for over 500 children who had been affected by the closure of public, private, and charter schools. The bags contained books, crayons, coloring books, play dough, and pencils. These learning bags were delivered directly to the schools, and staff members at each school ensured that the bags were delivered to the children.

*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.



NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP



an evidence-based program

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) helps transform the lives of first-time mothers and their babies. Through ongoing home visits from registered nurses, moms receive the care and support they need to have a healthy pregnancy, provide responsible and competent care for their children, and become more economically self-sufficient. From pregnancy until the child turns two years old, Nurse-Family Partnership Nurse Home Visitors form a much-needed, trusting relationship with their clients, instilling confidence and empowering them to achieve a better life for their children – and themselves.

BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

16

children served

180

number of home
visits provided



The Nurse-Family Partnership program helped me through my pregnancy and is teaching me how to be the best mother I can be. Being a young mother is hard and society really looks down on you, but the Nurse-Family Partnership does not. Mrs. Austin came into my life like an angel. She has taught me so much on the qualities of being a good mom and about myself. Without this program, I don't even know where my daughter and I would be.



Edgefield County First Steps Nurse-Family Partnership Participant



IMAGINATION LIBRARY



an evidence-based program

As the local affiliate of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, we provide free, high-quality books to children from birth until age five, no matter their family's income.

Children enrolled in our Imagination Library program receive one book per month by mail. Each title is selected by a panel of early childhood literacy experts, who are responsible for choosing books that meet the age-specific developmental needs of young children.

IMAGINATION LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

307 **2,585**

children served

books distributed

Books are 100% free to children in Edgefield County, because Edgefield County First Steps secures the funds from local businesses and individuals to cover the cost of books and shipping fees.

Sponsor a child for just \$27 a year.





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

1

kindergarten teachers
trained as home visitors

15

children served

90

total home and school
visits



The children are so excited for the visits and it is a great way to get to know the parents in a comfortable one-on-one setting. A parent sent me this picture after one of my visits. This student was the youngest of 4 boys in their family and he was so excited to complete the puzzle by himself. I love working in this program.

Janice Cleveland
Countdown to Kindergarten Teacher

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

2

child care providers served

62

number of TA visits provided

107

number of children 0-5 enrolled in provider classrooms

“

As an owner/operator/director of a center, I feel the services provided by Edgefield County First Steps are extremely helpful. Ms. Joy is the quality coach for our center. She provides constructive feedback to myself and my teachers as she evaluates them one by one. She also assesses the children's needs so that we can provide our students with the best possible child care experience.

”

Aramis Hillary, Owner, Little Folks Day Care



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:

Healthy Eating Habits Start Early

Being a Strength-Based Leader

Physical Activity: Why and How

Special Needs in Child Care

Bloodborne Pathogens

Math is Everywhere

Communication and Language Development of Young Children

Are You a Social and Emotional Teacher?

Doing the Right Thing – Even When It Isn't Easy

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

452

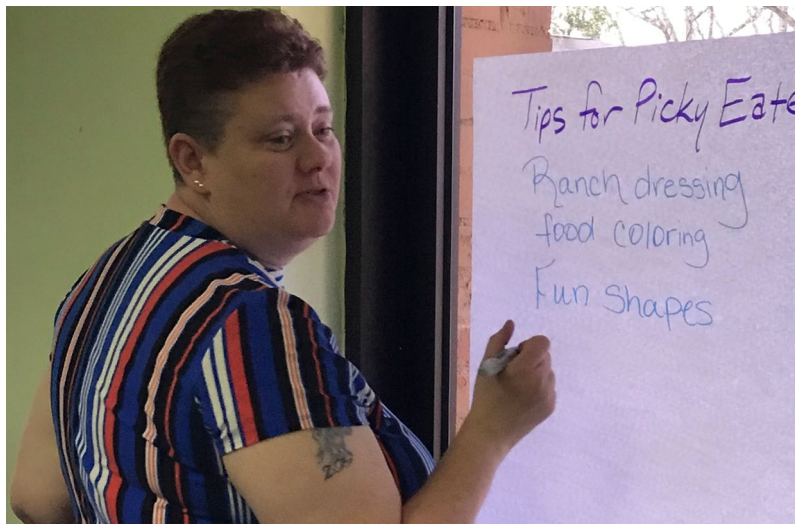
total training attendance

84

child care teachers and
directors served

21

number of training
sessions offered





CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS



an evidence-based program

For many families in Edgefield County, the cost of quality child care is out of reach. Our scholarship program makes payments to child care providers to care for children from families who have risk factors that might impact their child's success in school.

The children in this program receive developmental screenings twice a year. These children are enrolled in our Imagination Library program. The parents of our scholarship children also attend classes through our Nurturing Parenting program.

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

SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

28

number of children
served

2

number of providers
served

82

number of
developmental
screenings provided

This program has helped my kids stay in a positive child care facility and not be bounced around. Also, the classes we take have helped me grow. Everything has been helpful for myself and my children.

Cherry, ECFS Child Care Scholarship recipient

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 EDGEFIELD COUNTY 2019-2020

11

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.





FAMILY LITERACY



an evidence-informed program

Family literacy programs offer an integrated and family-friendly approach, helping both parents and children improve their literacy skills. Family literacy services integrate all the following: adult education, early childhood education, parent education, and interactive parent/child activities.

Our family literacy program:

Helps parents of young children increase their education levels

Teaches parents how to support their child's literacy and overall development

Provides quality early learning experiences for children 0-5 while their parents attend adult education

FAMILY LITERACY BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

10

Number of families
served

560

adult education hours
attended

54

home visits
completed

17

Children
served



230

parenting
education hours
attended



NURTURING PARENTING



an evidence-based program

The Edgefield County First Steps Nurturing Parenting Strategy is designed to empower individuals and families with new knowledge, beliefs, strategies, and skills to make good and healthy lifestyle choices through group-based parenting sessions,

All recipients of our child care scholarship and family literacy strategies are referred to our nurturing parenting strategy. We also accept referrals from our partners at the Department of Social Services.

NURTURING PARENTING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

19

families served

24

total group
meeting hours





PUBLIC AWARENESS



Edgefield County First Steps has developed a community education and outreach plan that includes the following activities:

1. Develop, produce, and/or distribute public education materials to promote our partnership's mission and inform the public of available resources.
2. Sponsor, co-sponsor, and/or participate in community events that reach our target audience, encourage community engagement, and create public awareness
3. Use effective online and social media to communicate, inform, and activate
4. Educate and engage local and state policymakers and other community leaders on the local impact of First Steps
5. Network, coordinate, and convene local stakeholders to collaboratively build a system of care for early childhood





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

Through partnerships and collaborations, as well as financial support from grants and contributions, Edgefield County First Steps leverages state dollars to enhance and expand services to children and families. Additional support comes from local businesses and individuals

FUNDING SUPPORT

South Carolina First Steps: \$200,000
Dollar General: \$10,000
Center for Child Care Career Development: \$2,000
Women in Rural Electrification (W.I.R.E.) – Aiken Electric Cooperative
Power One Family Matters Ministry, Calvin and Rev. Sallie Cooks, Co-Founders
United Way of Edgefield
Beth McLeod, Fulcher Law Firm
Elizabeth Gordineer, M.D.
Dr. Jeffery Gosney
Town of Trenton
Johnston Development Corporation
Reel Insurance Agency, Inc.
Edgefield Educational Consulting Services, LLC
Sumner Law Firm, LLC
100% of Edgefield County First Steps Board Members and Staff
Over 30 additional individual sponsors

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Edgefield County School District
Carolina Health Centers, Inc.
Edgefield County Chamber of Commerce
First Book

JOIN US

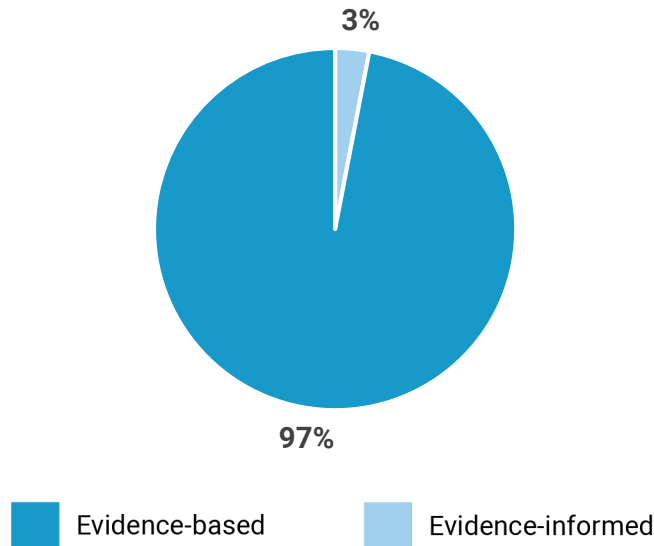
For more information on partnership opportunities, contact us at 803-275-0800 or go to our website at www.edgefieldfirststeps.org



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Edgefield County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,117,815** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.63** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Family Literacy	\$33,289	\$0	\$667	\$104,177	\$138,133
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$16,822	\$0	\$13	\$360	\$17,195
Child Care Training	\$9,888	\$0	\$949	\$360	\$11,197
Nurse Family Partnership	\$21,741	\$0	\$3	\$5,989	\$27,733
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$3,002	\$0	\$6	\$180	\$3,188
Nurturing Parenting	\$5,281	\$0	\$6	\$180	\$5,467
Imagination Library	\$2,927	\$0	\$3,359	\$72	\$6,358
Child Care Scholarships	\$60,937	\$0	\$13	\$360	\$61,310
Core Functions	\$11,775	\$749	\$4,826	\$33,903	\$51,253
Administrative Support	\$19,858	\$0	\$1,001	\$1,260	\$22,119
Total Expenses	\$185,520	\$749	\$10,845	\$146,839	\$343,953



LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Liz Posey, Chair	Phyllis Lott
Jenny Mims, Vice-Chair	Blair Massey
Gail Jackson, Secretary	Betsy Painter
Margaret Childress	Jennifer Satterwhite
Janice Cleveland	Moronda Talley
Jaime Creasy	Heather Trotter
Carla Dorn	Sierra Washington
Elizabeth Fulton	Amy Wilhelm
Aramis Hillary	Renee Williams
Cynthia Howard	

STAFF

Candi Lalonde, Executive Director

Joy Burge, Child Care Quality Enhancement Coach

Deborah Padgett, Nurturing Parenting Instructor

CONTACT US

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