

Annual Report

2019-2020

THE NEED

IN Florence COUNTY:

8,639

children under age 5

52.4%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

69.6%

of kindergartners are considered "not ready" for school



THREE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS:

1. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP – Formerly Food Stamps) or Free School Lunches Eligibility
2. Single Parent Households
3. TANF Eligibility

OUR MISSION

To collaborate with other entities, First Steps helps Florence families and caregivers prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private 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

2,120

number of children and adults served by Florence 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



Spencer R. Scott
Executive Director
Florence County First Steps

Since 1999, our mission has always been to serve the children of Florence County by helping families get resources they need to ensure their child's success in school and in life. As we reflect on the 2020 fiscal year, we would like to celebrate the perseverance of our mission despite a worldwide pandemic.

In the middle of our fiscal year, COVID-19 gave us challenges that were unforeseen, including daycares closings and a staggering number of job losses and unemployment. Despite this, Florence County First Steps (FCFS) continued with our programs and followed every protocol to ensure the safety of staff, daycare providers, families, and children. Providers partnered with us received materials such as touch-free thermometers to monitor the health of children and staff. We continued our Child Care Training program remotely through Zoom Meetings. By the end of the year, we held a total of 9 training sessions which were attended by a grand total of 147 teachers and directors. Our Child Care Scholarship program served 22 children and 10 providers. This program also provided 22 developmental screenings.

Our 4K program had 294 children enrolled and 14 providers who participated.

Our Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, which also went virtual, served 16 families in the area with 373 total visits. Those visits equal up to over 350 hours! The Parent-Child Home (PCH) Program—in collaboration with Florence School Districts Three, Four, and Five—served 43 families and provided over 2,586 total home visits. Our Raising a Reader (RAR) program distributed 424 books to 106 families and 5 providers. Our Quality Enhancement (QE) program, which works to help providers and daycares be the very best they can be, served 10 providers, with 132 Technical Assistant (TA) visits and helped 385 children.

The 2020 fiscal year showed FCFS is a part of a resilient community who—even when facing a historic pandemic—strives to help the smallest residents of Florence County. Please know that every dollar invested into FCFS goes back into this community, and your support truly makes a difference.

Spencer

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 Florence County toward the following strategic goals:

- Increase Board and staff participation in FCFS activities, community events and meetings.
- Increase the number of children served in rural areas of Florence County through scholarships, parenting programs and QE.
- Gain participation from facilities in areas outside the city of Florence through QE.

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Florence 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 Florence 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 FLORENCE COUNTY

HEALTH

Through June 30, Florence County had a total of **1,294** confirmed COVID-19 cases and **68** COVID-19 deaths.

JOB LOSS



107.0%

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

CHILD CARE

25.3%

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

51.5%

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

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Florence County First Steps purchased and distributed touch free thermometers to all the providers participating in the QE program. This will enable them to monitor children and staff health safely.

Your support makes a difference.

*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 Florence COUNTY 2019-2020

16

families served

373

total home visits

Last year, Florence County's Parent As Teachers program contractor (Florence One Schools) was able to provide over **350 hours** of home visitations to participating families.



Parents as Teachers.
Model Affiliate



PARENT-CHILD HOME PROGRAM



an evidence-based program

Parent-Child Home (PCH) is a program designed to build strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to succeed. PCH services include:

- Personal Visits** at least six times monthly
- Screenings and Assessments** to identify concerns
- Service** to the most at-risk children and their families
- Connections** to outside resources families may need to succeed.

PARENT-CHILD HOME BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

43

families served

2586

total home visits

Last year, Florence County's Parent Child Home program contractors (Florence School Districts Three, Four, and Five) were able to provide close to **1300** hours of home visitation to the families.

Your support makes a difference.



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

10

child care providers served

132

number of TA visits provided

385

number of children 0-5 enrolled in provider classrooms

This year, Florence County First Steps' Quality Enhancement program was able to provide 249.5 hours of technical assistance and \$5,473 in material grants to participating child care providers.

Your support makes a difference.



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:

- ❖ **Physical Activity: Actions Speak Louder Than Words**
- ❖ **Positive Teacher Communication with Young Children**
 - ❖ **Preschool Teachers Matter**
 - ❖ **Transitions and Behaviors, OH MY!**
 - ❖ **Play is Children’s Work**
- ❖ **How to Keep Your Employees Happy and Full**
 - ❖ **Using the Arts to Redirect Behavior**
 - ❖ **The Great Eight: An Early Childhood Leaders Top 8 Domains for Highly Effective CDC**
 - ❖ **Can Anything Good Come from Playing with Blocks**

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

147

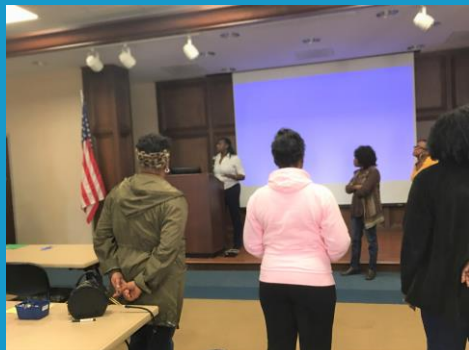
total training attendance

122

child care teachers and directors served

9

number of training sessions offered



Trainers Deanna Woodberry and Crystal Campbell provide engaging and energetic training sessions to Florence County providers.





CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS



an evidence-based program

For many families in Florence 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 low-income families so their parents can return to school or work.

Florence County First Steps offers scholarships to families enrolled in providers participating in our Facility Quality Enhancement, as well as income-eligible children whose parent attends school or works at least 20 hours per week.

SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

22

number of children served

10

number of providers served

22

number of developmental screenings provided

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

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 FLORENCE COUNTY 2019-2020

294

children enrolled

14

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.





RAISING A READER



an evidence-based program

In FY20, Florence County was awarded the opportunity to participate in a Raising a Reader program grant that was geared towards children participating in South Carolina First Steps 4k programs within Florence County. Raising a Reader fosters a love of learning and reading in both children and parents. Adults develop the language and literacy skills needed to support their children's early development, and children gain the foundational skills needed to succeed in school.

RAISING A READER BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

106

families served

5

providers served

The Raising a Reader program was able to distribute **424** books to the children and families that participated in the program. Many of these children had limited access to books in the home or to the local library system.

Your support makes a difference.



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

22

Children were served through childcare scholarships

2

QE facilities are in Florence rural areas.

“ I am so thankful that I received the scholarship. It has been a struggle to pay and I don't know how I would have been able to keep my child in daycare if I did not have it. ”

A.L., Parent of Child Care Scholarship Recipient



OUR SUPPORTERS

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

FUNDING SUPPORT

State of South Carolina: \$396,224
(through South Carolina First Steps)

SC Department of Social Services: \$100,375

SC Endeavor (formally the Center for Child Care Career
Development): \$2,000

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Florence School District 1

Florence School District 3

Florence School District 4

Florence School District 5

Kaplan

South Carolina Department of Social Services

South Carolina Endeavors

JOIN US

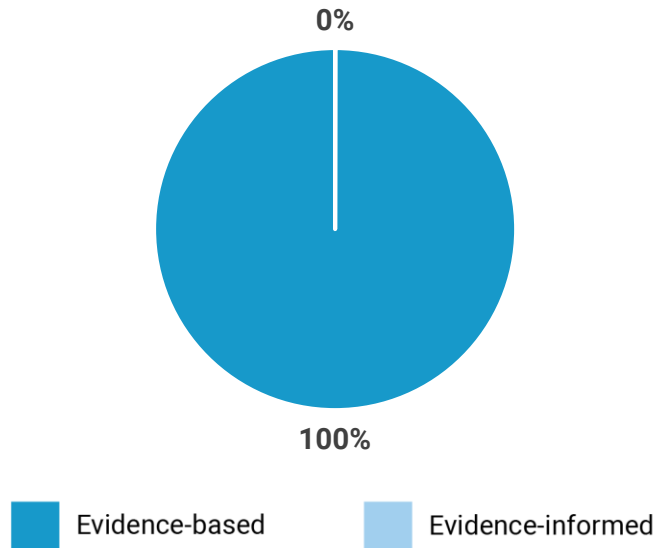
For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at www.florencefirststeps.org or follow us on Facebook at Florence County First Steps.



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception Florence County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,658.042** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.25** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

| | State Funding | Federal Funding | Private Funding | In-Kind Contributions | Total |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Scholarships - DSS | \$79 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$79 |
| Scholarship Initiatives | \$101,798 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$101,798 |
| Child Care Training | \$72,061 | \$0 | \$2,435 | \$0 | \$74,496 |
| Child Care Quality Enhancement | \$75,662 | \$82,559 | \$0 | \$1,853 | \$160,074 |
| Raising A Reader | \$20,154 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$20,154 |
| Parent Child Home | \$60,000 | \$0 | \$0 | \$6,250 | \$66,250 |
| Parent As Teachers | \$20,000 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$20,000 |
| Core Functions | \$46,302 | \$0 | \$336 | \$0 | \$46,638 |
| Administrative Support | \$29,635 | \$0 | \$1,824 | \$41 | \$31,500 |
| Total Expenses | \$425,692 | \$82,559 | \$4,594 | \$8,145 | \$520,989 |



LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Debbie Quesada, Treasurer

Gloria Bracey, Secretary

NayNarium Alls

Paige Knight

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Sandra Sturkie

Debbie Jones

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STAFF

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Lana Hopkins, Program Coordinator

Anastasia Spann, Program Coordinator

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