

Annual Report

2019-2020



THE NEED

IN LEXINGTON COUNTY:

16,995

children under age 5

41.4%

of young children live in poverty
or low-income households

62.3%

of kindergartners are considered "not
ready" for school



THREE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS:

1. TANF Eligibility (50% of Federal Poverty or below) and/or
2. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP - formerly Food Stamps) or Free School Lunches eligibility
3. English is not the primary language spoken in the home.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Lexington County First Steps is to support families in Lexington County so that all children enter school ready to learn.

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

2,581

number of children and adults served by
Lexington 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



James H. Riddle, Jr. MHA

Executive Director
Lexington County First Steps

Lexington County First Steps (LCFS) began in 2001 and it has been defined as filling gaps, enhancing and enlarging services and serving the most at-risk children through the collective wisdom of collaborations and partnerships across Lexington County. There is a particularly strong relationship between LCFS and each of the county's five school districts. Lexington County School District 3 has provided in-kind space for LCFS since 2004 and the District processes our payroll and benefits. We are indebted to Lexington 3 for this extraordinary partnership.

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an evidenced-based home visitation model used by LCFS since inception of First Steps. It is the flagship of our county services and is the largest PAT program in South Carolina, partnering with each of the five school district's parenting centers.

Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK), evidence-informed, is a 5 in-home summer visitation program plus a 6th visit to the school which serves as a transition for children entering 5K in the fall. LCFS has the largest CTK program in South Carolina serving 29 of 39 schools in the county.

Other Program Services include specific work with Childcare Providers in addition to outreach to all immigrant families navigating available services, Latino specifically.



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Mary Brooks, M. ED

Chair

Lexington County First Steps Board of Trustees

**Director of Parenting/Family Services/CERDEP
Early Childhood Coordinator
Lexington School District Two**

Countless research supports the urgency with which preschool aged children must be surrounded by rich experiences, not only in literacy and numeracy, but they must also have ample opportunities for motor development and social/emotional development in order to be ready for school. Lexington County First Steps strives to support families across the county in order to provide these types of experiences for parents and children.

Through programs such as Parents As Teachers, Lexington County First Steps provides highly qualified personnel to work with children and families prior to entering school. Our trained parent educators play a vital role in assisting parents with creating engaging experiences that are developmentally appropriate. They also provide valuable resources to promote school readiness as well as connections to local organizations that help support a child's development.

Providing group connections across Lexington County in partnership with all five school districts builds community and strengthens protective factors for our children and their parents. Examples include: Riverbanks Zoo, Saluda Shoals, Edventure, and Kids Day in Lexington.

The Countdown to Kindergarten program in Lexington County allows for educators to develop relationships with families of the youngest learners in our community. This program assists with the successful transition of these children into the school environment.

It is a true privilege to serve on this board as I am confident that Lexington County First Steps is committed to making a difference in school readiness for our children.



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 Lexington County toward the following strategic goals:

- Provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
- Increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
- Promote high-quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
- Provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed.

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Lexington 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 Lexington 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 LEXINGTON COUNTY

HEALTH

Through June 30, Lexington County had a total of **2,170** confirmed COVID-19 cases and **69** COVID-19 deaths.

JOB LOSS

122.3%

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

CHILD CARE

55.1%

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

64.1%

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



To all of our families who have graciously invited us in your "virtual" homes, Many thanks! We look forward to joining you through virtual means and social distancing in May!

Lexington One Parenting Center

*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.



EARLY IDENTIFICATION & REFERRAL



an evidence-based program

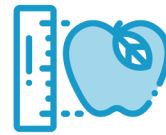
First Steps' Early Identification and Referral (EI&R) programs serve families with young children with suspected delays in development, acting as a local portal to connect families to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children. EI&R services include:



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

41

children served

435

materials distributed

13

referrals to BabyNet or other local services



Lexington County First Steps Community Health Worker participates in Fall Event that was held at Lexington School District Three's Lifelong Learning Center.



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 LEXINGTON COUNTY 2019-2020

108 families served

2,206 total home visits

Lexington County First Steps provided 82 group connections with 587 in attendance.



Parents as Teachers.
Model Affiliate



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

184

children served

1,134

books distributed

Books are 100% free to children in Lexington County because Lexington County First Steps secures the funds to cover the cost of books and shipping fees.

In FY20 Lexington County's Dolly Parton's Imagination Library was not captured in the South Carolina's Data Collection.





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

42

kindergarten teachers
trained as home visitors

186

children served

1,088

total home and school
visits



Mrs. Lynch was amazing, she went above and beyond for my daughter. We are so lucky that she is a teacher with HE Corley Elementary School.

Parent of HE Corley Countdown to Kindergarten Student





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:

Training Topics:

Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons

Flip-It (Transforming Challenging Behavior)

A Reflection of Responsibilities & Self Evaluation for Directors

Developing & Strengthening Early Childhood Educator Part 1 & 2

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

71

total training attendance

62

child care teachers and
directors served

5

number of training
sessions offered



Lexington County's training is a lifeline to our center. Through the training sessions, we not only learn about new methods and trends in the early childhood field, but we also learn about resources available to our center. As a director, I always look forward to these trainings because I know I will learn something that will give me greater confidence in leading my team toward excellence, so that we can make a positive impact in our world through the little lives we work with each day.

Joy Huyck, Director & Co-Founder of My Amigos Bilingual Education Center (MABEC)



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 LEXINGTON COUNTY 2019-2020

130

children enrolled

13

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.





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

71

Convener sessions and
events attended

46

Sponsoring, co-sponsoring, and/or
participating in community events
that promote school readiness



The collaboration between Lexington County First Steps and Lexington School District Three continues to offer many benefits, from shared space, shared employees, and shared events. Staff from both agencies participated in a Fall event and are pictured here.



OUR SUPPORTERS

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

FUNDING SUPPORT

State of South Carolina SC First Steps: \$613,745

South Carolina Endeavors (Formerly CCCCD): \$2,000

United Way of the Midlands Contributions Designated to LCFS: \$10,000

LCFS Staff & Board Contribution: \$315

Countdown to Kindergarten

Lexington One: \$4,676

Lexington Two: \$24,716

Lexington Three: \$668

Lexington Four: \$1,336

Lexington Five: \$11,690

United Way of the Midlands: \$10,000

South Carolina First Steps \$3,340

Preschool Development Grant

\$56,120

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Lexington One: \$97,316

Lexington Two: \$151,850

Lexington Three: \$24,000

Lexington Four: \$22,968

Lexington Five: \$86,750

JOIN US

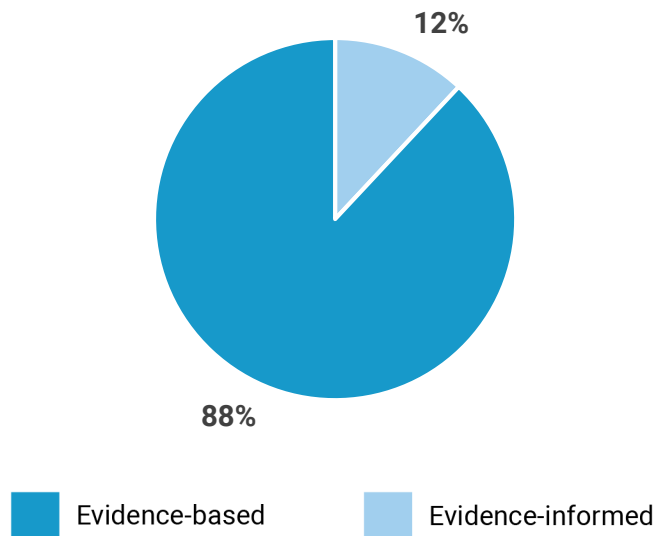
For more information on partnership opportunities, email **James H. Riddle Jr. at**
jriddle@lex3.org



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Lexington County First Steps has leveraged **\$8,282,355** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.61** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
EB Parents as Teachers	\$406,155	\$0	\$1,525	\$411,740	\$819,420
EI Countdown to Kindergarten	\$27,914	\$12,560	\$25,297	\$	\$65,771
EB Child Care Training	\$23,726	\$0	\$3,385	\$	\$27,111
EB PASOs Early Identification Refer	\$8,665	\$39,294	\$6,416	\$	\$54,375
EI Resource & Referral Service (PSSA)	\$31,696	\$0	\$13	\$	\$31,709
NA Core Functions	\$56,657	\$4,090	\$0	\$	\$60,747
NA Administrative Support	\$42,673	\$0	\$502	\$	\$43,175
Total Expenses	\$597,486	\$55,944	\$37,138	\$411,740	\$1,102,308



LEADERSHIP

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STAFF

James H. Riddle Jr., Executive Director
Pat Smith West, Program Coordinator
Debbie Teer, Director of Childcare Quality
Sandy Butler, PASOs Community Health Worker

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