

Annual Report

2019-2020



THE NEED

IN OCONEE COUNTY:

4023

children under age 5

52.3%

of young children live in poverty
or low-income households

65%

of kindergartners are considered "not
ready" for school



THREE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS:

1. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program SNAP or Free School Lunch eligibility.
2. Single Parent household and need of other services.
3. Exposure to Parental/Caregiver depression

OUR MISSION

"To collaborate with other partners, Oconee County First Steps helps Oconee County families and caregivers 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

3157

number of children and adults served by
Oconee 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.



"One of the world's last great places – a destination of a lifetime" National Geographic

Greetings,

It's time to celebrate and evaluate all we've done together through Oconee County First Steps for 2019-2020. In the last four months of our fiscal year, our community bravely faced many challenges: COVID-19 attributing to job loss, school closings, fear, anxiety and childcare uncertainty, racial tensions throughout our nation and the devastating EF-3 Tornado that swept through Seneca leaving destruction and hurt along its path.

It is also time to say "Thank You" to our Community Partners, Child Care Providers, Parents and neighbors for all that has been accomplished for the children of Oconee County this year. This year as a community we have raised the number of children ready for kindergarten by 3%! Yes, we still have work to do, but we are headed in the right direction. Please take a few minutes to read through this report for more information and how you can join us in this work.

Now, time to dream! We look forward to a wonderful year, working together and looking for more opportunities to encourage and empower our community as we strive to prepare our children for success!!

ANGELA RAY

PROGRAM SPECIALIST

Hello,

I have been with Oconee County First Steps for two years. I have a Bachelor's degree in Child & Family Development from the University of Akron. I coordinate our Child Care Training & Professional Development Program. This includes scheduling and facilitating trainings for our Child Care Provider Directors, Teachers and Staff, School District of Oconee County Teachers and substitutes and Home Care Providers.

I really enjoy working with our Child Care Scholarship families and interacting with the children and centers. I am looking forward to what lies ahead for Oconee County First Steps.



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

- By 2020, as resources allow, Oconee County First Steps will have worked with local childcare facilities to increase the number of high-quality placements available for infants and toddler.
- By 2020, as resources allow, Oconee County First Steps will have worked to support informal (or family, friend and neighbor care) childcare arrangements.
- By 2020, Oconee County First Steps will have maintained, if not increased, its current investments and levels of success.
- By 2020, as resources allow, Oconee County First Steps will have worked with local childcare facilities to improve the existing quality of care available to young children.

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Oconee 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 Oconee 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 OCONEE COUNTY

HEALTH

Through June 30, Oconee County had a total of **276** confirmed COVID-19 cases and **1** COVID-19 death.

JOB LOSS

182.9%

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

CHILD CARE

60.1%

children under 5 in Oconee County lived in a childcare desert* before COVID-19

85.3%

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

GO HOME
CORONAVIRUS COVID-19

"Kindness begins with the understanding that we all struggle"

Charles Glassman

Oconee County First Steps worked diligently to stay connected to our Child Care Providers, Child Care Scholarship Families and our community through "We Care Kits", Resiliency Kits, Social Media Posts, texts, phone calls and by participating in community webinars and online meetings to be able to share important up-to-date information.

*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.



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:

- * **SC Early Learning Standards Language Development & Communication**
- * **How We Develop Cognitively: Infants & Toddlers**
- * **How We Develop Cognitively: Preschool**
- * **How the Young Brain Deals with Conflict**
 - * **STEAM: Infant/Toddler 101**
 - * **Teacher & Me: Let's Play**
 - * **It's Lonely at the Top**
 - * **Analysis & Reasoning**
 - * **Safe Sleep**

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

345

total training attendance

85

child care teachers and
directors served

9

number of training
sessions offered



CHILDCARE TRAINING

IT'S LONELY AT THE TOP

TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 11, 2020
6:30 - 9:00 P.M.
SENECA, SC

RSVP to OCFSPROGSPEC@GMAIL.COM by FEBRUARY 4th!





CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS



an evidence-based program

For many families in Oconee County, the cost of quality child care is sometimes out of reach. Our scholarship program makes payments to child care providers with an ABC rating B or above, to care for children from eligible families so their parents can return to school or work. Our Triple P Positive Parenting Program through Heath's Haven provides the necessary Evidence Based Program requirement and is required for all scholarship recipients.

To learn more about ABC Quality visit www.abcquality.org or our website www.oconeefirststeps.org

SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

15

Number of Children served

5

Number of Providers served

20

Number of developmental
screenings provided

**100% of the money paid to childcare
providers goes back into our local economy
to benefit the citizens of Oconee 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 OCONEE COUNTY 2019-2020

22

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.





HEALTHY FAMILIES AMERICA PROGRAM



an evidence-based program

Healthy Families America (HFA) is a program of Prevent Child Abuse America designed to support parents who may be experiencing a range of current or past challenges. HFA is designed as a prevention program; thus, visits begin prenatally or within the first three months after a child's birth and continue until children are between 3 and 5 years old.

Our Healthy Families America Program is presented through ***The Parenting Place***.

To learn more visit www.tppupstate.org/wwwoconeefirststeps.org

HEALTHY FAMILIES AMERICA BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

13

Families served

271

Total home visits





TRIPLE P PARENTING PROGRAM



an evidence-based program

Oconee County First Steps partners with **Heath's Haven** to provide the **Triple P-Positive Parenting Program**. It is a system of parent training programs designed for parents of children ages birth to 12 years old. The main goals are increasing the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents and reducing the prevalence of mental health, emotional, and behavioral problems in children and adolescents. Level 4 Triple P (intensive) is the acceptable version of the model for the purposes of offering evidence-based parent education.

TRIPLE P PARENTING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

13

Families served

21

Parent Meetings



Heath's Haven
Equipping Our Community For Healthy Relationships



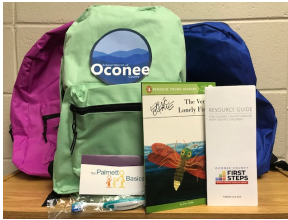
PUBLIC AWARENESS



an evidence-informed program

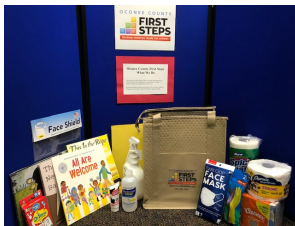
PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION 2019-2020

500



Bookbags for all PreK 4 students in the School District of Oconee County and SC First Steps 4K.

20



"We Care Kits"

were distributed to Child Care Providers in Oconee County.

900



Warm a Child project collected winter items for children in Oconee County.

7



Mental Health First Aid Training for youth and adults. Also, a Poverty Simulation was presented.

400

Resiliency Kits In partnership with Empower Oconee, Heath's Haven, United Way of Oconee County and SC Children's Trust, OCFS provided color books/activity Books to the kits for families in Oconee County. Special thanks to Anderson University Nursing Students for helping with distribution.



Empower Oconee SC
CHILDREN ♥ FAMILY ♥ COMMUNITY





COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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

8,324

Number of Materials Distributed





OUR SUPPORTERS

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

FUNDING SUPPORT

Anonymous Community Donors

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Oconee County Department of Social Services
SC Department of Health & Environmental Control
St. Mark's United Methodist Church
Heath's Haven
The Parenting Place
South Carolina Child Care Resource and Referral Network
The Journal, Oconee Publishing, Inc.
Borg Warner
Foothills Early Learning Center
Pennsylvania Children's Center
Darlene Faucette – Quality Coach South Carolina Child Care Resource &
Referral Network
Janet Thompson – Child Care Trainer
Dorian Young – Child Care Trainer
Tonya Hayes – Child Care Trainer
Oconee County First Steps Board of Directors

Make a difference in the life of a child on

**GIVING
TUESDAY**

scfirststeps.org/donate

JOIN US

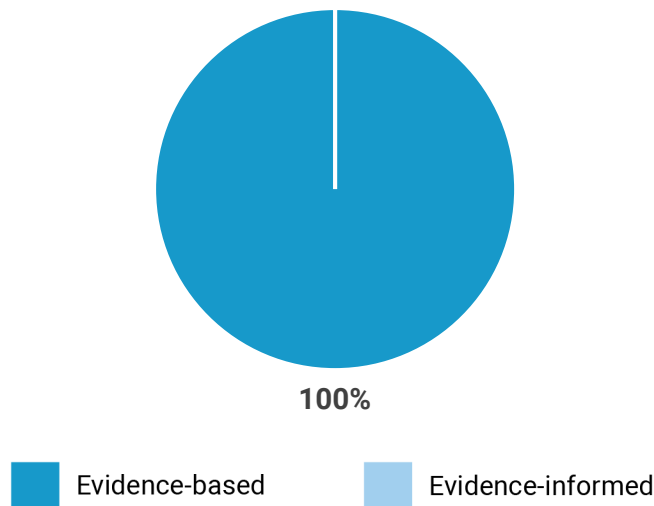
For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at
oconeefirststeps.org



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Oconee County First Steps has leveraged **\$3,747,674.83** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.90** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

Oconee County First Steps	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Administrative Support	\$22,472	\$0.00	\$431	\$2,364	\$25,268
Partnerships & Community Education	\$17,928	\$0.00	\$91	\$338	\$18,358
Healthy Families America	\$52,022	\$0	\$0	\$26,505	\$78,527
Triple P Positive Parenting	\$14,286	\$0	\$0	\$4,942	\$19,229
Child Care Training & Prof. Development	\$14,397	\$0	\$0	\$1,933	\$16,330
Child Care Scholarship Initiative	\$62,347	\$0	\$0	\$666	\$63,013
Total Expenses	\$183,455	\$0	\$522	\$36,749	\$220,727



LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kendra Vincent, Recreation Therapist, **Chair**

Misty Lee, DHEC designee, **Vice Chair**

Kathleen Davis, Child Care Provider, Legislative Appointee, **Secretary**

Darcy Arnall, Library Designee

Annette Burney, Legislative Appointee

Katie Conlin, Retired Early Childhood Educator

Barbara Dyar, Local Government

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Suzanne Evans, Retired Child Care Director

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Alice Lee, Head Start Designee

Shanon Lusk, SDOC Designee

Summer Mast, Non-Profit Organization

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Lorilei Swanson, Parent advocate

Molly Tannery, Legislative Appointee

Reg Tatum, Business Community

Tony Vincent, Faith Community

Janis Young, Child Care Center Director

STAFF

Daby Snipes, Executive Director

Angela Ray, Program Specialist

Kindel Thomas, Social Media Consultant

CONTACT US

PO Box 1557 | 864-985-3342 | www.oconeefirststeps.org

