

# Annual Report

## 2019-2020



## THE NEED

### IN SUMTER COUNTY:

# 7,054

children under age 5

# 61%

of young children live in poverty  
or low-income households

# 79%

of kindergartners are considered "not  
ready" for school



### THREE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS:

1. TANF Eligibility 50% of Federal Poverty or below
2. TANF (50% Poverty or below) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Free school lunch eligibility
3. Single parent households

## OUR MISSION

To cultivate, nurture and develop opportunities for children and families for success in school and life 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

# 2,823

number of children and adults served by  
Sumter 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.

220 Hasel Street, City SC 29150 | 803.464.1224

Data provided by:

# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Every effort is made to provide quality strategies and programs to empower families, children and childcare providers with the skills needed to ensure school readiness. It is our goal to help children reach their fullest potential while preparing them with the foundation for long-term success through their adult life.

Our success is due to the commitment of our board, parents, school district, childcare providers, staff and other community partners in early education to collaborate and share limited resources for the greater good of our youngest population.

We look forward to the challenges and opportunities to continue to ameliorate school readiness in Sumter County.

*Julia A. Nelson*, MPA

Executive Director



# 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**

In support of the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner, our approach is focused on advancing Sumter County toward the following strategic goals:

## OUR GOALS

- To provide high comprehensive parenting program to strengthen families and access to local resources.
- To coordinate and partner with local organizations to serve as a portal for expansion of early intervention programs to increase school readiness.
- To improve quality professional development opportunities in order to increase the number of qualified staff for child care centers.
- To provide and expand opportunities for children to have access to affordable high-quality child care with scholarships/ABC vouchers.



# PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Sumter 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 Sumter 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 SUMTER COUNTY

### HEALTH

Through June 30, Sumter County had a total of **1,099** confirmed COVID-19 cases and 34 COVID-19 deaths.

### JOB LOSS

**134.0%**

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

### CHILD CARE

**46.1%**

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

**71.4%**

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



Sumter County First Steps is providing our families and staff with Personal Protective Equipment. Our goal is to follow the recommended precautions by CDC to ensure the safety of everyone and to do our part to stop the spread of COVID-19.

\*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 ABC COUNTY 2019-2020

**59** families served

**1,073** total home visits

PAT recently received the highest rating from the federal Prevention Services Clearinghouse. This recognition validates the effectiveness of Parents as Teachers as a strategy for improving parenting practices, promoting early detection of developmental delays and health issues, preventing child abuse and neglect, and enhancing school readiness and success.



Parents as Teachers®



## 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

**336**      **4,037**

children served

books distributed

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

**Sponsor a child for just \$25 a year.**







## 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

**Marketing Your Child Care Business Part I and II**

**Taking A Closer Look: Social Competence and Emotional**

### TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

**76**

total training attendance

**76**

child care teachers and  
directors served

**3**

number of training  
sessions offered







## CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS



*an evidence-based program*

For many families in Sumter County, the cost of quality child care is out of reach. We partner with SC Department of Social Services to provide vouchers/scholarships. Each voucher is \$3,500 and provides a 20% match for additional federal funds to be added to South Carolina. SC DSS guidelines are used to determine eligibility, which is based on income along with work/school requirements.

SCFS integrates scholarships with those participating in our Parent As Teachers (PAT) program. Those enrolled with PAT and Voucher/Scholarship programs are also enrolled in Dolly Parton Imagination Library program.

### SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

# 23

number of children served

# 8

number of providers served



# 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 SUMTER COUNTY 2019-2020

# 212

children enrolled

# 16

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, Sumter County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Sumter County begin school ready to succeed.

### 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

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## OUR PARTNERSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

**1405**

Children

**1418**

Parents





## OUR SUPPORTERS

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

### FUNDING SUPPORT

**State of South Carolina First Steps \$351,456**

**Private Donations \$250.00**

### IN-KIND SUPPORT

Sumter School District

South Carolina DSS.

## JOIN US

For additional information, please contact us at [sumterfirststeps@gmail.com](mailto:sumterfirststeps@gmail.com) or

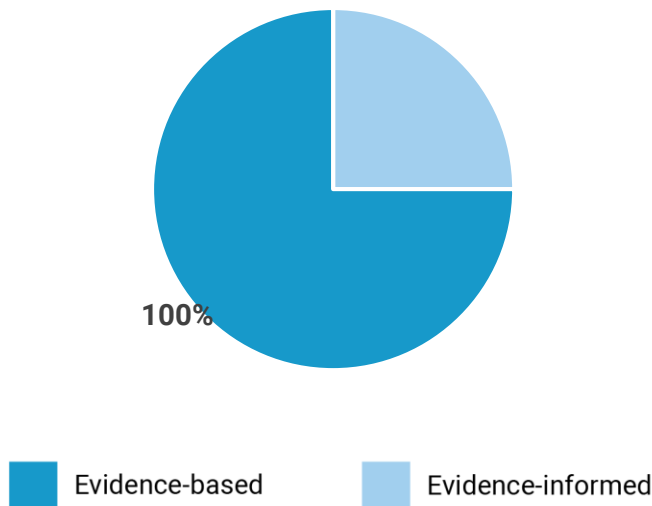
**220 Hasel Street • Sumter, South Carolina| 803.464.1224**



## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

### OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



### ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, ABC County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,148,798.76** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.28** for every state dollar.

### SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$155,595.30	\$	\$	\$42,500.00	\$198,095.30
Dolly Parton Imagination Library	\$6,122	\$	\$2,040.94	\$	\$8,163.78
Child Care Training	\$33,351.56	\$	\$1,663.03	\$	\$35,014.59
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$4,051.52				\$4,051.52
Scholarships/ABC Vouchers	\$112,643.71	\$	\$	\$17,500.00	\$130,143.71
Administrative Support	\$11,403.82	\$	\$1,376.37	\$	\$12,780.19
Core Functions	\$7,415.63		\$153.46		7,569.09
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$330,584.38</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$5,233.80</b>	<b>\$60,000.00</b>	<b>\$395,818.18</b>



## LEADERSHIP

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Artrell Brown, Board Chair

Walter Newman, Vice-Chair

Toni Brew, Treasurer/Secretary

Reverend Billy Bennett

Austin Floyd

Harrison Brown

Julie Hynes

Dianne Jeter

Michael Jonas

Jennifer Miles

Wanda Ramsey

Julia Triplett

### STAFF

Julia A. Nelson, MPA

Executive Director

## CONTACT US

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# Sumter County First Steps Photo Gallery

