

Annual Report

2019-2020

THE NEED

IN AIKEN COUNTY:

9,635

children under age 5

53.5%

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. Risk factor 1: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Free School Lunch eligibility.
2. Risk factor 2: Single parent household ad has need of other services.
3. Risk factor 3: English is not the primary language spoken in the home.

OUR MISSION

"Through collaboration, Aiken County First Steps empowers families and caregivers to **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

1,697

number of children and adults served by
Aiken 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.

105 Gator Lane, Aiken SC 29801 | 803-306-1343 | scfirststeps.org/Aiken

Data provided by:

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



I Knew You Could

*I knew you could! And you knew it too-
That you'd come out on top after all you've been through.
And from here you'll go farther and see brand new sights,
You'll face brand-new skills that rise to new heights.*

Marcia L. Nash, Md.Ed.

Executive Director
Aiken County First Steps

Over the past 20 years, Aiken County First Steps Board of Directors and staff have provided a pathway for children and families as they go through life's peaks and valleys. Our community partners, donors, and volunteers- people like you- have provided valuable resources to assist us in getting our families on the road to success. Our encouraging words of wisdom and determination reminds children and adults to always believe in themselves and do their best. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude for the Aiken County Community. TOGETHER WE CAN!

~Marcia L. Nash



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Dr. Charlene Moore-Peterson

Board Chair
Aiken County First Steps

Greetings,

I am Dr. Charlene Moore-Peterson, Board Chair of Aiken County First Steps to School Readiness. I am excited to be working with Aiken County First to work and support the success of children from birth to age five. Here in Aiken, we are supporting the Mission, Vision, and Values of South Carolina First Steps to ensure that they are ready for kindergarten and beyond. It is an honor to serve on this wonderful board.

Dr. Charlene Moore-Peterson



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 Aiken County toward the following strategic goals:

- Increase numbers served from rural areas by engaging the local communities by asking community members what they need, not just telling them. (all programs)
- Increase community engagement – in terms of time, money, clients, collaborations, and in-kind support.
- Support the early childhood workforce through quality training, incentives, and working with administrators and childcare directors.
- Empower families using a strengths-based/asset-based approach, not a deficit approach. Build trust.
- Engage and mobilize the community to promote early childhood education programs county-wide.

OUR GOALS



PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Aiken 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 Aiken 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 AIKEN COUNTY

HEALTH

Through June 30, Aiken County had a total of **404** confirmed COVID-19 cases and **12** COVID-19 deaths.

JOB LOSS

128.2%

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

CHILD CARE

40.5%

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

77.6%

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



When the
CHILDREN
are no longer the focus,
We have lost focus!

Shadie Hall, ACFS Board Member- Delegation Appointee



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. The Aiken County First Steps PAT affiliate 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. Aiken County First Steps provided 8 virtual connections to the PAT families.

PAT IN AIKEN COUNTY 2019-2020

144 total home visits

12 families served

14 children served



Parents as Teachers®

Building A Foundation



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

215

children served

215

books distributed



Books are 100% free to children in Aiken County because Aiken County First Steps secures the funds to cover the cost of books and shipping fees and work collaboratively with United Way of Aiken County.

Sponsor a child for just \$25 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

5

kindergarten teachers
trained as home visitors

31

children served

186

total home and school
visits



A Countdown to Kindergarten student from Ridge Spring Monetta Elementary school uses the upper- and lower-case tiles to identify and name letters in her name.

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

4

child care providers served

130

number of TA visits provided

284

number of children 0-5 enrolled in provider classrooms

Aiken County First Steps FY19-20 Quality Enhancement Childcare Centers

Freedman Early Learning Center: ABC Level B+
Sunshine House #57: ABC Level B
Sunshine House #59: ABC Level B
Tint Treasures Daycare Center: B+



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:

Adult-Child CPR/ First AID

Bloodborne Pathogens

Introduction to ITERS-3

Language and Learning and Hearing Loss Changes the Game

Its Lonely at the Top: How to listen to understand

Understanding Childcare Licensing Regulations

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

123

total training attendance

52

child care teachers and
directors served

14

number of training
sessions offered



Professional Development Day

The more you know
The more you grow!



CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS



an evidence-based program

For many families in Aiken County, the cost of quality childcare is out of reach.

Our scholarship program makes payments to childcare providers to care for children from low-income families so their parents can return to school or work.

Eligibility include meeting at least 2 SCFS risk factors. Aiken County First Steps offers scholarships to families enrolled in our Parents as Teachers program, as well as income-eligible children whose parent attends school or works at least 20 hours per week.

SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

30

number of children
served

4

number of providers
served

29

number of
developmental
screenings provided

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

216

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 childcare providers, Aiken County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Aiken 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

2,795

Materials distributed

8

Community/Partner Events





OUR SUPPORTERS

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

FUNDING SUPPORT

South Carolina First Steps: \$412,273

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

Aiken County First Steps Board: \$300.00

Aiken County First Steps Staff: \$55.00

MSHALL & Associates: \$20.00

WellCare Health Plans, Inc.: \$700.00

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Aiken County Public School District

Augusta Book Club

Augusta Chinese Association

Barbara Sanders

Eltroyce Moore

Freedman Early Learning Center

Jakovia Raiford

Palmetto Chiropractic Wellness Center, LLC, Orangeburg SC

Shiloh Baptist Church

Tiny Treasures Daycare Center

United Way of Aiken County

JOIN US

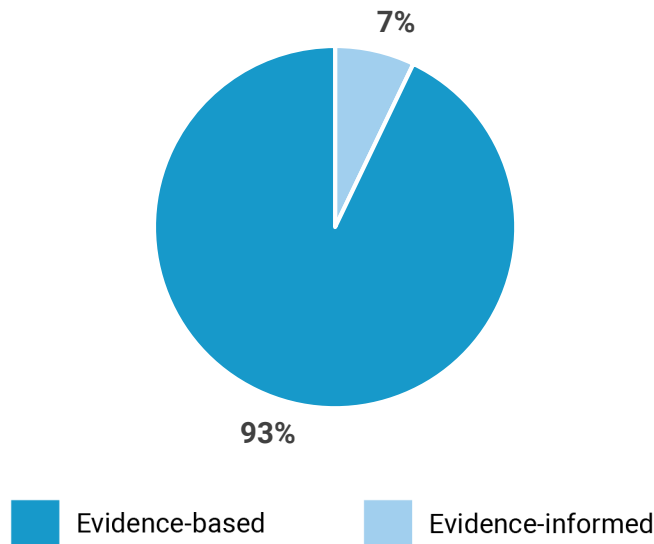
For more information on partnership opportunities, call us at (803)-306-1343 15



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Aiken County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,880,329.36** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$.32** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$59,210	\$0	\$0	\$23,119	\$82,329
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$35,583	\$0	\$0	\$9,280	\$44,863
Child Care Training	\$25,468	\$0	\$49	\$3,600	\$29,117
Child Care Scholarships	\$109,547	\$0	\$0	\$7,900	\$117,447
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$18,652	\$0	\$	\$2,160	\$20,812
Imagination Library	\$15,673	\$0	\$0	\$15,800	\$16,473
Administrative Support	\$20,218	\$0	\$0	\$1,600	\$21,818
Core Functions	\$20,252	\$912	\$0	\$3,760	\$24,924
Total Expenses	\$304,603	\$912	\$49	\$67,219	\$372,783



LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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STAFF

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Shaquana McClue, Childcare Technical Assistant
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Jakovia Raiford, Administrative- Programs Assistant Intern

CONTACT US

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