

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2021 – 2023





Mission

Collaborating with other entities, First Steps helps Florence 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.

Vision

Every Florence County child will be prepared for success in school.

Values

The years of early childhood are critical window of development during which much human potential is shaped.

Families are the single most important influence on the development of their young children.

School readiness is the result of a child's development in many areas, with each contributing to the child's success.

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 daycare 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 programs 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 TA visits and helped 385 children.

The 2020 fiscal year showed that 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

Overarching Measures of Success

Increase the reach of First Steps services.

By FY 23, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by Florence County First Steps will increase from 25% to 30%.

Increase the number of children enrolled in high intensity programs funded by FCFS.

By FY 23, the percentage of children enrolled in high intensity programs will increase from 6% to 11%.

Increase the availability of high-quality early care and education opportunities offered by First Steps.

By FY 23, the percentage of children under age 6 who benefit from Florence County First Steps quality enhancement and training efforts will increase from 14% to 19%.

Objectives

1. Increase the number of children served by Florence County First Steps.
2. Families will have access to high intensity programs funded by Florence County First Steps.
3. Children will have access to high quality childcare facilities.

Increase the number of children served by Florence County First Steps.

STRATEGY 1.1

Scholarships

SMART GOAL(S)

- By FY23, FCFS will reserve at least 10% of scholarships for children living in rural areas.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Local childcare facilities in rural Florence County

STRATEGY 1.2

Parent Child+

SMART GOAL(S)

- By FY23, FCFS will serve at least 50% of children from the rural areas of Florence County.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- School districts located in the rural areas

Increase the number of children served by Florence County First Steps.

STRATEGY 1.3

Community Education and Convener

SMART GOALS

- By FY23, FCFS will participate in at least two annual community events within Florence County to distribute a 1000 Ready Kindergarten brochures, 1000 FCFS brochures, and children's books.
- By FY23, FCFS will collaborate with community partners to host a community health fair to distribute FCFS and community partners' informational materials to at least 300 families of children ages birth to 5.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Partnerships to include but not limited to: SC Resource and Referral, DHEC, SC Licensing, and local hospital systems

Families will have access to high intensity programs funded by Florence County First Steps.

STRATEGY 2.1

Scholarships

SMART GOAL

- By FY23, FCFS will reserve at least 75% of scholarships for the families of children attending facilities that participate in Quality Enhancement.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Childcare facilities participating in Quality Enhancement

STRATEGY 2.2

Parent Child+

SMART GOAL

- FCFS funds parenting programs in 2 Florence County school districts. By FY23, FCFS will recruit and fund parenting programs in at least 2 additional school districts and retain at least 75% of those programs.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Florence County School Districts

Children will have access to high quality childcare facilities.

STRATEGY 3.1

Child Care Quality Enhancement

SMART GOALS

- By FY23, 95% of childcare facilities served will participate in the program for at least 2 years.
- FCFS serves two rural childcare facilities in Quality Enhancement. By FY 23, FCFS will recruit 30% of participating childcare facilities from rural Florence County communities and will retain 10% of those facilities.
- By the end of FY23, at least 75% of participating childcare programs will increase their ERS scores by 5%.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Participating childcare facilities within FQE program

Children will have access to high quality childcare facilities.

STRATEGY 3.2

Scholarships

SMART GOAL

- By 2023, FCFS will continue to partner with DSS to increase the number of scholarships by 5%.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- SC Voucher program in purchasing vouchers and DSS