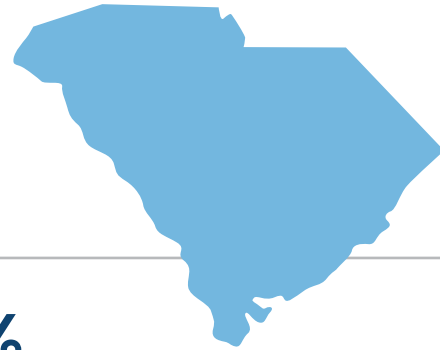


# FIRST STEPS 4K

READY FOR STATEWIDE EXPANSION



**57,000**

FOUR YEAR OLDS

**61%**

ARE AT RISK

**41%**

OF AT-RISK 4-YEAR-OLDS LIVE IN A ZIP CODE THAT DISQUALIFIES THEM FROM FREE 4K

## First Steps 4K is prepared to serve children and families in all 46 counties.

South Carolina First Steps provides free, high-quality four-year-old kindergarten in private child care settings through First Steps 4K, part of the state's Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP).

In 2021, the program is serving children and families in 39 of 46 counties, in more communities than ever before.

As of January 8, 2021, First Steps 4K is serving 2,235 children in 212 centers (233 classrooms). Among current First Steps 4K programs, 70% are open year round, continuing through summer, and 57% are available 8 hours a day.

Gov. Henry McMaster's recent allocation of \$5 million from the Governor's Education Emergency Relief (GEER) Fund to South Carolina First Steps supports the expansion of First Steps 4K programs offering full-day and summer options.

**\$8,541**

AVERAGE ANNUAL COST OF CENTER-BASED CHILD CARE FOR A 4-YEAR-OLD

## The cost of early education is unaffordable for most SC families.

Among the state's 57,000 four-year-olds, about 35,000 (61%) children are considered at-risk, meaning they live in a household with an income of 185% or less of federal poverty, are Medicaid eligible, experiencing homelessness or transiency, or in foster care.

**10%**

OF THE STATE'S MEDIAN INCOME FOR MARRIED COUPLES

In South Carolina, approximately 4 out of 10 of at-risk children in live a school district that disqualifies them for CERDEP funding under current law.

**35%**

OF THE MEDIAN INCOME FOR SINGLE PARENTS

When families experiencing financial hardship have access to safe, reliable, full-day child care, they are better able to enter the workforce, pursue education and job training, and boost their earnings. An increase in family income improves outcomes for both parents and children.



## SC child care providers have the capacity to serve every child in need.

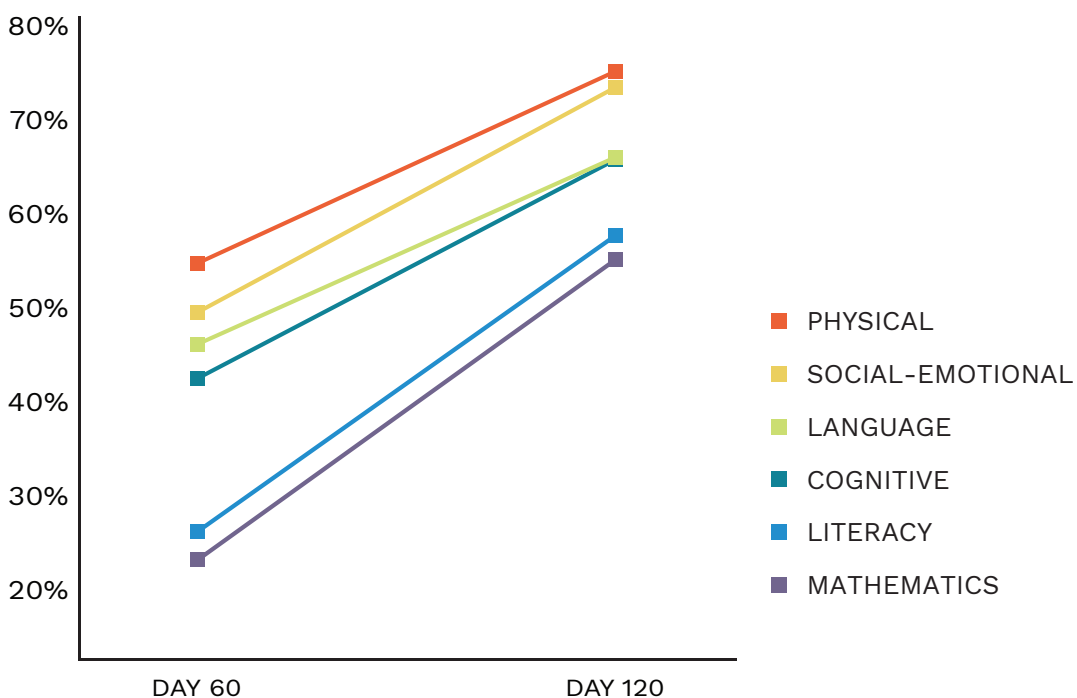
Statewide, there are 178,220 4K slots in 1,386 licensed, approved, or registered child care centers, not including public schools. In the non-CERDEP school districts, there are 88,601 slots (50%). First Steps 4K gets children ready for school.

## First Steps 4K gets children ready for school.

Research shows that children who attend a high-quality preschool program are more successful in kindergarten and beyond.

To ensure the quality of our programs, First Steps 4K maintains rigorous program standards, including the use of evidence-based curriculum. To support their success, First Steps provides quality assessments, on-site coaching, funding for equipment and materials, parent education opportunities, and high-level professional development.

First Steps 4K measures student progress using the Teaching Strategies Gold® assessment model. During the 2019-20 school year, our students demonstrated gains in all areas of development and learning.



**“The economic viability of our state depends on people being able to go back to work, and the future of our state depends on investments we make today in our youngest citizens.”**

**GEORGIA MJARTAN**  
Executive Director, South Carolina First Steps