



FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Lee County First Steps:



439 children

were directly served in Lee County



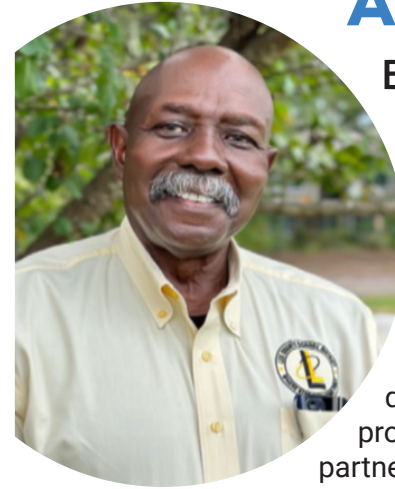
203 parents & caregivers

received services and support to be their child's first and most important teacher



356 educators

participated in First Steps training and professional development, benefitting 500+ children



Andrew Moses

Board Chair

I am excited that in FY2023 Lee County First Steps has continued to provide high quality services for the children in our community and surrounding counties. Our Executive Director and the Staff have really made a positive impact by being a vibrant force to provide quality services and programs that work and improve the quality of life for those we serve. Knowing that we have had one of the largest boards and most active Local Partnership Boards in the state, I believe that in itself speaks to our commitment as a Board to advocate to provide high quality child care, parenting, child care training for child care providers, and to provide core services in Lee County and the state. Also, I want to thank all of our partners for helping us to expand our reach and provide more comprehensive services because truly their investment in Lee County has helped us to be a leader in the region and state to provide expanded services to children and families.

PROVEN RESULTS

A 2019 study found that children who received First Steps local partnership services were:



74% more likely

to score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment



34% less likely

to be chronically absent in kindergarten

THE NEED PERSISTS IN LEE COUNTY

First Steps works but we need to expand our reach to ensure that all children are ready.

906

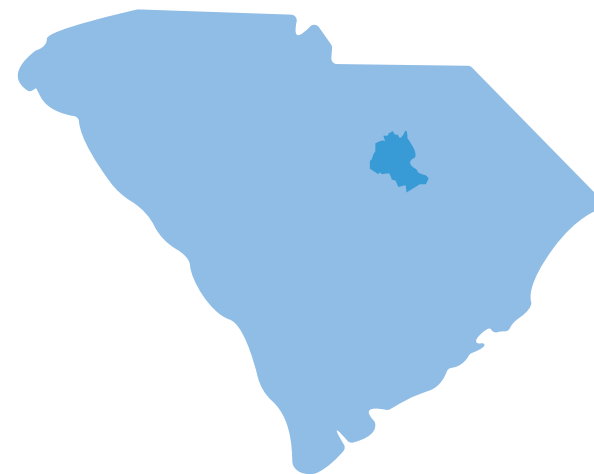
children under age 5

57.6%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

63%

of kindergarteners are considered "not ready" for school



Board of Directors

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
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CONTACT US

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2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

OUR MISSION

Collaborating with other entities, Lee County First Steps helps South Carolina families and caregivers prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private resources to ensure that children arrive at school healthy and ready to learn.



Alexis D. Pipkins, Sr.
Executive Director

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, Lee County First Steps (LCFS) continued to experience the opportunity to be even more committed to providing programs, services, and support to the children and families in Lee County and other areas by being focused and driven to meet our overarching goal to ensure that children arrive at school healthy and ready to learn. With the vision, commitment, and fortitude of the LCFS Board Members, I have been committed to ensure that our partnership is focused-driven with developing strong sustainable, collaborative partnerships that impacts Lee County, our region, state, and nation in a progressive manner. I have been committed to enhancing and strengthening our community ability to meet and reach the goals of our comprehensive plan. In fact, we have been able to expand our Save the Children Early Steps Program with funds from SC First Steps ESSER Parenting Competitive Grant Funds, and READY Grant Funds awarded to the agency in FY2023. Also, LCFS has been able to expand the Strengthening Family Program Lee, Florence, Sumter, Williamsburg, and Darlington Counties. Also, Lee County First Steps was fortunate to receive a major grant award from SC First Steps ESSER-3 Parenting Grant in the amount of \$326,000 for 3 years to expand parenting programs and services in Lee County. Also, Save the Children provided LCFS with a \$21,000.00 to host a local Parenting, Family, and Community Summit, and the 2023 Early Childhood Summit Gala. Also, LCFS was able to implement Family Café the Be Strong Parent Café Model and take the families who successfully completed the prescribed numbers of sessions on two external trips: Columbia Bus Trip to Riverbanks Zoo and Garden, and Myrtle Beach Bus Trip to The Aquarium and The Myrtle Beach State Park.

Our leadership has solidified our long-standing collaboration with SC First Steps, Lee County School District, Children's Trust of SC, Save the Children, Bishopville-Lee Child Development, Wateree Head Start-Bishopville Site, Kiddie Land Family Day Care, and Darlington-Lee County Adult Education. Also, I am grateful for having an awesome team- LEE TEAM, our employees, consultants, contractors, and volunteers who have been consistent with their work ethic to help us meet the needs of our children and families in such a dedicated manner. LEE TEAM's work ethic and commitment is intricately weaved throughout this FY 2023 Annual Report I would also like to salute all of the children, parents, grandparents, caregivers, Early Childhood Staff that have been enrolled in our programs and allowed us to be part of their families' life in such a meaningful manner.

Serving Lee County's children birth through age five.

"Josiah said, my book has 6 trucks they are different colors. I'm counting the pages, and I have 18 pages to read. Mom said, Josiah loves the pictures he enjoys talking about the different trucks and what they do with the dirt. We enjoyed reading the book together. Thanks for the books with the beautiful colors."

Lee County First Steps parent



PROGRAMS

PARENTING

Early Steps to School Success

Designed to provide high-quality early childhood development serves to young children and families living in under-resourced and underserved communities.

131 children served **66** families served **1,993** books distributed

Raising a Reader - Enhanced

Helps families develop, practice, and maintain home literacy habits.

12 children served **5** group meetings and events

Strengthening Families

Parents and children attend 14 weekly group sessions, learning parenting and life skill both separately and together.

13 children served **13** families served **14** group meetings and events

Family Café

Parent discussion groups that promote social connections with other parents, support in times of need, learning about parenting and child development, and emotional awareness.

92 children served **49** families served **14** group meetings and events

Reach Out and Read

Site visits for home child care providers to encourage developmentally appropriate practices.

36 children served **150** book distributed

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

7,561 children served **226** providers served **40** certified training hours

Child Care Scholarships

Eligible children receive tuition-free enrollment at quality child care centers.

22 children served **22** families served

SCHOOL TRANSITION

Countdown to Kindergarten

Supports transitions into kindergarten by connecting incoming students, their families, and their teachers in a series of one-on-one sessions during the summer.

81 children served **486** home visits

Countdown to 4K

Supports transitions into pre-kindergarten by connecting incoming students, their families, and their teachers in a series of one-on-one sessions during the summer.

34 children served **204** home visits

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

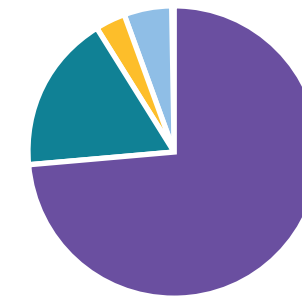


\$1 = \$8.04

Lee County First Steps leveraged \$1,441,992,85 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$7.04 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

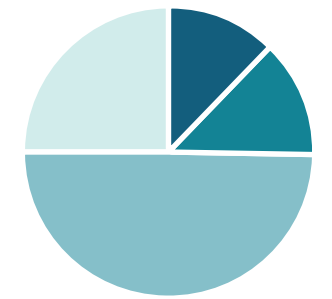
Total: \$1,740,297.91



- Parenting - \$1,281,222.01
- Early Care & Education - \$305,478.58
- School Transition - \$59,684.58
- Administrative - \$93,912.74

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$1,646,742.85



- State Funding - \$204,750
- Federal Funding - \$211,729.95
- Private Funding - \$820,442.58
- In-kind Contributions - \$409,820.32

FUNDING SUPPORT BY SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS

- State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding
- State READY Funding*
- Federal Preschool Development Grant Funding**
- Federal ESSER Funding***
- State Income Tax Check-off and Private Donations to SC First Steps

*Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) Proviso 1.105

**Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0080-01-00 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, awarded to the South Carolina Department of Social Services, Division of Early Care and Education

***American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, awarded to the South Carolina Department of Education