



ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025





FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Anderson County First Steps:



1,555+ children

were directly served in Anderson County



1,550 parents & caregivers

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



694 educators

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

THE NEED PERSISTS IN ANDERSON COUNTY

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

14,179

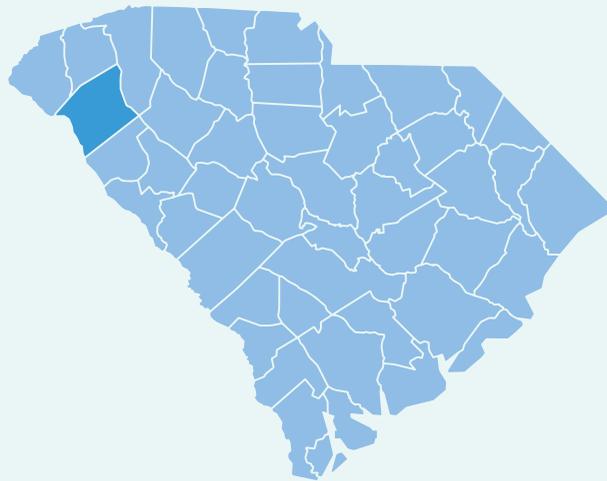
children birth to five

41%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

60%

of kindergarteners are considered "not ready" for school



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

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life. We strive to create a supportive learning community that fosters growth, creativity, and innovation. At Anderson County First Steps, we are committed to helping our students achieve their goals and reach their full potential.



Paige Wall
Executive Director

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend our gratitude to the dedicated partners across the Anderson County School Districts, local community leaders, committed staff, and South Carolina First Steps. As we mark 26 years of serving Anderson County's youngest learners, we celebrate the continued impact of our mission: to prepare children ages 0–5 for lifelong success. Since its inception, the Anderson County First Steps Partnership has invested in the community's children and families through collaborations with educational institutions, healthcare providers, and other local agencies. These investments have supported parenting programs, early education classes, school transition initiatives, and services targeting at-risk children and their families. In 2024-2025, we continued to see strong outcomes across our initiatives, especially in preparing children for a successful start to school. We are proud of the strides made and remain appreciative of our community.



Sheryl McCollum
Board Chair

I remain excited to be your Board Chair of Anderson County First Steps. We are more than an organization – we are a community united by hope, fueled by purpose, and committed to the success of every child and family we serve. For over two decades, Anderson County First Steps has stood alongside parents, educators, and community partners with one goal: to prepare our youngest learners for a lifetime of success. Education is not just preparation for life – it is life. Everything we do—from early intervention to family engagement, improving care, and promoting literacy—plants seeds of lifelong learning. In 2024–2025, we reached more children than ever, partnered with local schools, and distributed books and materials that open minds. We are proud to be part of this community, where every child is valued and allowed to soar. Thank you for believing in our mission.

PROGRAMS

PARENTING

Raising a Reader - Enhanced

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

74 children served **72** families served **3,348** books distributed

Positive Parenting Program (TripleP)

A parenting and family support system designed to prevent – as well as treat – behavioral and emotional problems in children.

27 children served **24** families served **60** group meetings and events

HEALTH

Healthy Steps

A pediatric primary care program that supports early childhood development and effective parenting.

1,047 children served **1** clinics served

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Early Education Program Support

Providing families with early care and education by supporting center-based child care programs.

32 children served **32** families served **20** group meetings and events

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.

36 children served **6** schools served **216** home/school 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.

35 children served **12** schools served **210** home/school visits

“

What an honor it has been to witness a very quiet and shy child enter his classroom and end up thriving-both socially and academically- this past year. We are so proud of his growth, achievements, and love for learning.



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

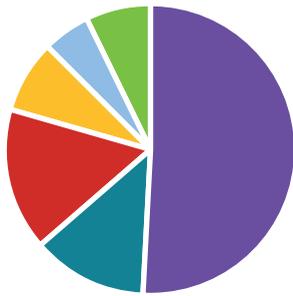


\$1 = \$1.45

Anderson County First Steps leveraged \$227,848.08 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$0.45 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

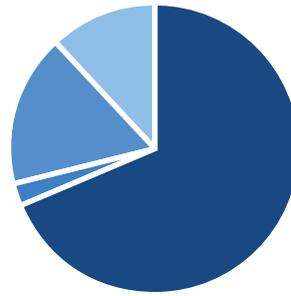
Total: \$708,600.91



- Parenting - \$362,103.03
- Early Care & Education - \$90,534.50
- Health - \$110,857.21
- School Transition - \$57,102.40
- Administrative - \$37,087.81
- Core Functions - \$50,915.96

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$730,042.08



- State Funding - \$502,194
- Federal Funding - \$18,748.69
- Private Funding - \$122,995.75
- In-kind Contributions - \$86,103.64

FUNDING SUPPORT

State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding

State READY Funding*

State Dept. of Social Services and Dept. of Public Health Funding (Healthy Steps Program)

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 1.84

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

Board of Directors

Kaitlyn Andrews
Nicole Schmidt
Greta young
Haymee Giuliani
Bailey Johnson
Penny Whiteman
Shannon Vaughn
Jackie Blakley
Wendy Burgess
Keri Davis
Maria Torres-Green
Jackie McCall
Sheryl McCollum
Karen Sweat
Allison Strickland
Melissa Davis
Charity Walker
Jennifer Buford
Diane Smiley

Donor List

South Carolina First Steps
Anderson County School Districts 1-4

CONTACT US

andersonfirststeps.org | (864)222-0410 | 1stesac@bellsouth.net