



ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025





FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Cherokee County First Steps:



2,205 children

were directly served in Cherokee County



3,103 parents & caregivers

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



486 educators

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

THE NEED PERSISTS IN CHEROKEE COUNTY

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

4,701

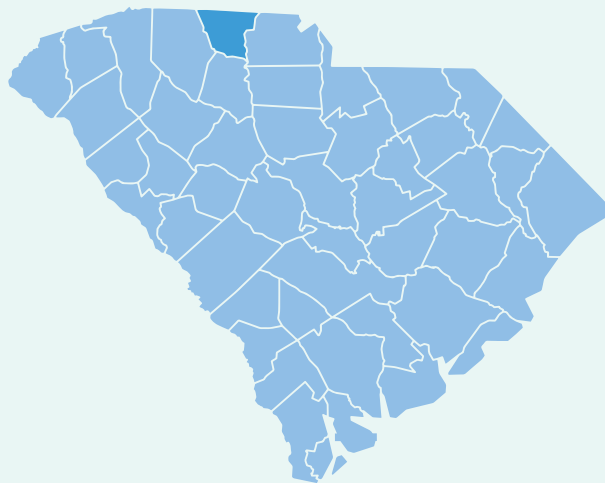
children birth to five

58%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

77%

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

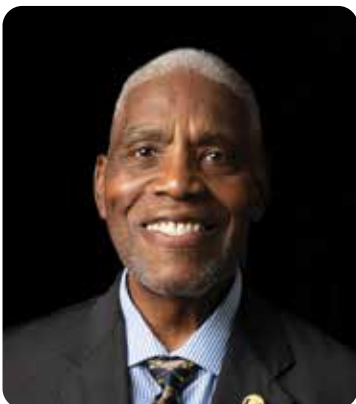
OUR MISSION

Collaborating with other entities, First Steps helps South Carolina 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.



Dorothy M. Priester
Executive Director

Cherokee County First Steps had a successful year. Our commitment to outreach and family engagement were significant elements to our strategy. We concentrated on communication with families and the public by participating in 79 outreach events, meetings, presentations, education fairs and health fairs. The relationships built permitted staff to serve 10,863 children and adults. There were 19,856 books distributed to 2,115 children through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Program; Triple P held 176 parenting sessions; LENA/Talk to Me provided 97 parent visits; and childcare providers received 20 hours of certified training. I wish to convey my heartfelt appreciation to all families, partners, board members, and staff for the integral roles you engaged in during this year. We look forward to our continued relationship in the next year and your assistance in preparing the children of Cherokee County for more remarkable success!



Dr. Arthur Brewton
Board Chair

Cherokee County First Steps Board of Directors supports children, families, and staff in reaching their full potential. We continued our work with families this past year and collaborated with community partners to promote family and community wellness. Our agency is committed to working with partners and parents to find solutions to the barriers to wholeness families are facing. The Board of Directors is committed to its own professional growth and improvement. The Board participates in training on governance and effective implementation of state and local policies, respective roles for committees, and expectations for effective leadership. Finally, staff are trained on their responsibilities by equipping them with the insight and tools to remain in compliance with policies. Cherokee County First Steps Board of Directors, staff, and our partners champion community collaboration and lifelong learning, including success in school and life for the children and families we serve.

PROGRAMS

PARENTING

Positive Parenting Program (TripleP)

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

24

children served

24

families served

176

home visits

LENA Home

Uses innovative technology to assess a family's home language environment and boost positive interactions between parents and children ages 0-3.

17

children served

16

families served

97

home visits

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Free, high-quality books mailed to the home of children from birth until age five.

2,115

children served

19,856

books distributed

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

3,675

children served

81

providers served

20

certified training hours

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.

17

children served

99

home/school visits

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

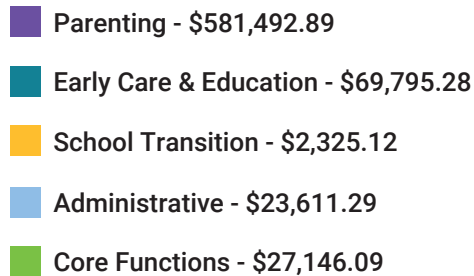
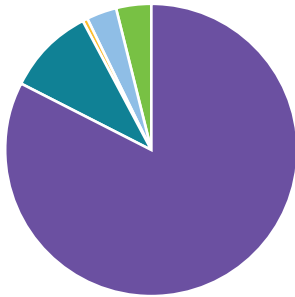


\$1 = \$1.14

Cherokee County First Steps leveraged \$380,795.08 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$0.14 for every state dollar invested.

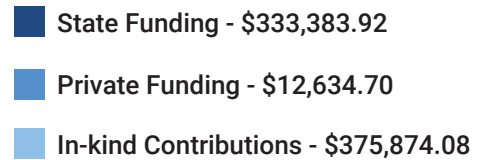
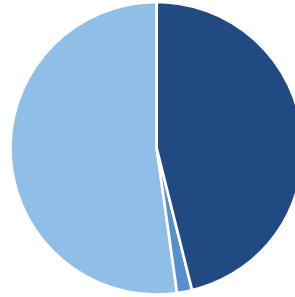
EXPENDITURES

Total: \$704,370.67



FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$714,634



FUNDING SUPPORT

State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding

State READY 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

“

My instructor provided a safe space for me to be honest and open with my fears and mistakes while also reminding me that parenting doesn't come with a handbook.

Jessica B.



Board of Directors

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 Heath Ward
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Donor List

Clearwater Paper \$3,000
 SC Endeavors \$2,500
 Limestone Presbyterian Church \$550
 Alpha Phi Alpha
 Ashby & Debbie Blakely
 Bethel Senior Day Care Center Inc.
 Cherokee County School District
 Encounter Church
 Esthers of Intercession
 Gaffney Little Theatre
 Joel Greene's Heating and Air
 Representative Brian Lawson
 Praise Cathedral
 Project Right Start Mentoring
 Sandra Greene-Tucker
 SC Witness Project
 Strictly Running
 Board Member Contributions
 Cherokee County First Steps Staff
 Allegra Marketing Print \$250
 Dollywood Foundation \$375,874

CONTACT US

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