FIRST STEPS
CHESTERFIELD COUNTY

ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025

FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Chesterfield County First Steps:

232 children
were directly served in Chesterfield County

178 parents & caregivers
received services and support to be their child's first and most important teacher

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

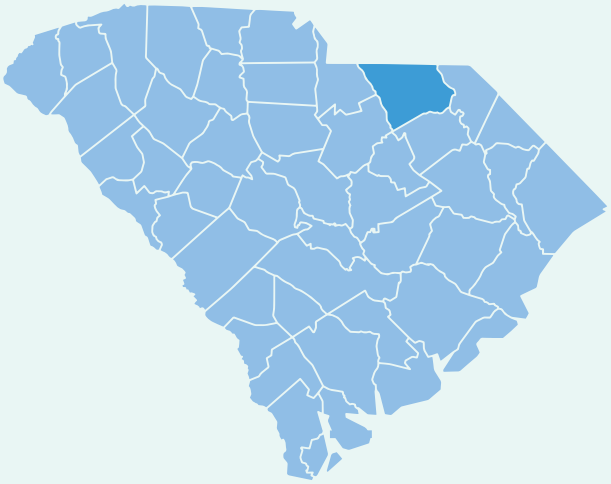
THE NEED PERSISTS IN CHESTERFIELD COUNTY

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

2,837
children birth to five

57%
of young children live in poverty or low-income households

66%
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

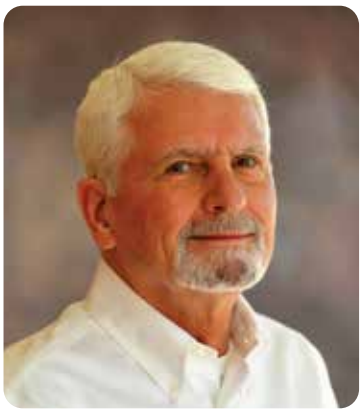
34% less likely
to be chronically absent in kindergarten

OUR MISSION

The mission of Chesterfield County First Steps is to ensure opportunities for young children and their families, so every child enters school healthy and ready to learn

Karen Martini-Waller
Executive Director

From birth, children embark on a continuous journey of learning, with early experiences playing a pivotal role in shaping their long-term development. Research indicates that children experiencing poverty may enter kindergarten up to a full academic year behind their peers, a disparity that can expand as they advance through school. High-quality early education has the potential to bridge this gap, profoundly influencing a child's trajectory both immediately and over a lifetime. CCFS serves as a local portal connecting families of preschool children to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children. We act as a community convener serving the needs of our youngest citizens and their families. A county-wide needs assessment is conducted every three years to assure that our goals are meeting the needs of the most at-risk families in Chesterfield County. We thank our dedicated board, staff and volunteers for their service to young children.



Tony Nolan
Board Chair

Chesterfield County First Steps to School Readiness Partnership (CCFS) was created in 1999 as an independent nonprofit organization. CCFS is one of 46 County Partnerships charged by the General Assembly with improving the school readiness of South Carolina's young children.

Since its inception, Chesterfield County First Steps has relied on local data, strong partnerships, and evidence-based practices for decision making. Chesterfield County First Steps remains dedicated to improving school readiness, early childcare quality, and family support.

We have established a 24-year history of working with local agencies and organizations. Our network of partners is expanding, and there are ongoing discussions regarding both enhanced and additional services. However, financial resources remain the primary limitation.

Our team evaluates success not only through quantitative metrics, but also by observing positive student engagement upon entry.

PROGRAMS

PARENTING

ParentChild+

Home visitation for families with 2- and 3-year olds to promote early literacy skills.

30 children served

1,502 home visits

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

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

177 children served

1,739 books distributed

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Child Care Scholarships

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

10 children served

Early Education Program Support

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

24 children served

2 group meetings and events

HEALTH

Early Identification & Referral

Providing developmental screenings and referrals to other services.

24 children served

432 materials distributed

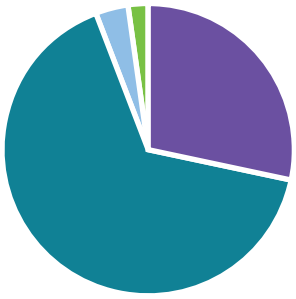
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

$1 = $1.58

Chesterfield County First Steps leveraged $311,130.88 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of $0.58 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

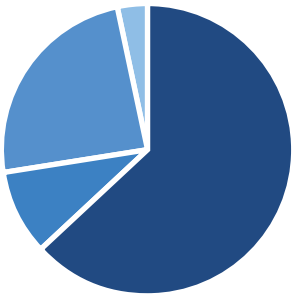
Total: $786,364.25



- Parenting - $224,284.82
- Early Care & Education - $517,116.63
- Administrative - $27,498.73
- Core Functions - $17,463.97

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: $843,493.92



- State Funding - $532,363.04
- Federal Funding - $79,909.86
- Private Funding - $204,571.03
- In-kind Contributions - $26,650

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*

We LOVE, LOVE, LOVE Compass Point. I am completely comfortable with all the staff and their ability to teach and care for my children. This is hands down the best 3k-4k program in Cheraw & Chesterfield.

Chesterfield County First Steps Parent

Board of Directors

Tony Nolan

Chandar Anderson

Kathryn Cress

Donor List

The Malloy Foundation

Duke Energy

SC ABC Quality Grant

Mary B. Redfearn

Omicron Delta Kappa Gamma

Chesterfield County Library System

Northeastern Technical College

South Carolina First Steps private funds

CONTACT US

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