



FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Lee County First Steps:



909 children

were directly served in Lee County



641 parents & caregivers

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



933 educators

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

THE NEED PERSISTS IN LEE COUNTY

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

865

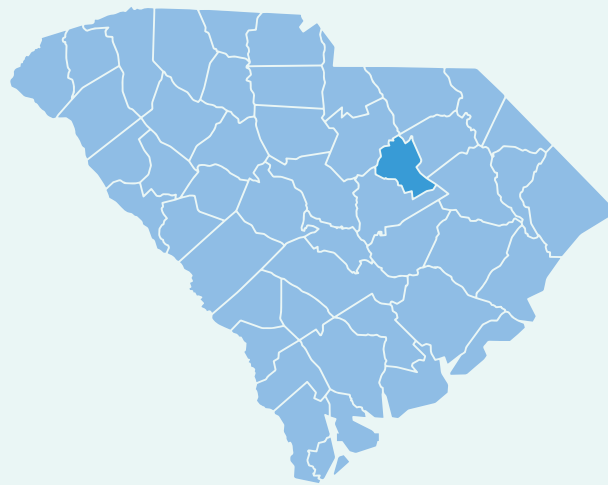
children birth to five

58%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

63%

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

“

I am very appreciative of all the help that I receive from Lee County First Steps. The visits, parent meetings helped provide even more resources, the countless books and handouts also have help my daughter thrive

Parent



Board of Directors

Belinda Butler
Sandy Jenkins
Maverick Wilson
George Williams
Kijuana Tate
Regina Nesmith Dimery
Sheila Rouse
Andrew Moses
Betty Addison
Diana Williams
Lillie Patterson
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Donor List

SC First Steps
Children's Trust of South Carolina
Save the Children
Morehouse School of Medicine
Project IMPACT
Central Carolina Community Foundation
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CONTACT US

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ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



OUR MISSION

We work collaboratively to ensure that all children start school ready to reach their highest potential with engaged support from their parents, caregivers, and communities.



Alexis Plpkins
Executive Director

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, 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 strategic and 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’s 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 Award.



Andrew Moses
Board Chair

I am excited that in FY2025 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.

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.

134

children served

1,786

home visits

68

group meetings and events

HIPPY

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is a home visiting program that supports parents in their role as a child’s first and most important teacher.

30

children served

485

home visits

7

group meetings and events

Motheread/Fatheread

Offers adult literacy classes to parents of young children, with an emphasis on the importance of reading regularly as a family.

31

children served

18

parent workshops

Strengthening Families

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

30

children served

24

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.

29

children served

31

families served

14

group meetings and events

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

15,039

children served

352

providers served

46

certified training hours

Child Care Scholarships

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

83

children served

7

providers served

HEALTH

Reach Out and Read

Free, high-quality books provided by a child’s pediatric provider during doctor’s visits.

37

children served

XX

books distributed

not provided

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.

98

children served

588

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.

50

children served

300

home/school visits

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

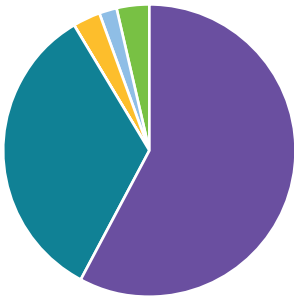


\$1 = \$3.37

Lexington County First Steps leveraged \$1,426,299.74 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$2.37 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

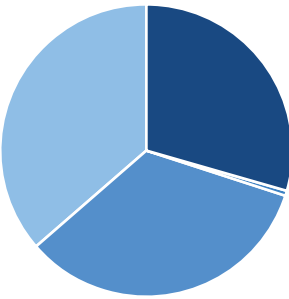
Total: \$2,045,513.87



- Parenting - \$1,182,713.47
- Early Care & Education - \$688,735.57
- Health - \$3,189.34
- School Transition - \$61,333.17
- Administrative - \$35,688.43
- Core Functions - \$73,853.89

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$2,027,826.10



- State Funding - \$601,526.36
- Federal Funding - \$12,414.10
- Private Funding - \$680,810.10
- In-kind Contributions - \$733,004.54

FUNDING SUPPORT

- State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding
- State READY Funding*
- Federal AmeriCorps Service Site
- Enterprise Mobility Foundation ROAD Forward Grant
- State Income Tax Check-off and Private Donations to SC First Steps

*Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) Proviso 1.84