



ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025





FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Laurens County First Steps:



2,749 children

were directly served in Laurens County



2,490 parents & caregivers

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



616 educators

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

THE NEED PERSISTS IN LAURENS COUNTY

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

4,822

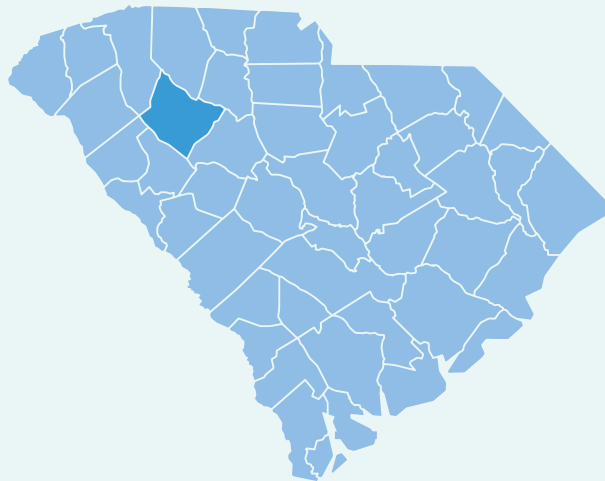
children birth to five

55%

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

OUR MISSION

To find and empower parents and caregivers to effectively serve as their child's first teacher, increasing their potential to succeed in school and beyond.



Toni Able
Executive Director

As we reflect on FY2025, I am proud of the progress Laurens County First Steps has made in supporting our youngest children. Together, we expanded access to quality childcare with 19 scholarships, strengthened parent engagement through evidence-based home visiting, and introduced a StoryWalk® in Joanna to promote literacy, activity, and family bonding. We also celebrated the success of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which delivered 5,925 free books to Laurens County children, nurturing a love of reading from birth. These achievements were possible thanks to the dedication of our board, staff, partners, donors, and families who share our vision. Yet challenges remain. Many families face barriers to affordable childcare. Over 60% of children start kindergarten without the readiness skills they need, while providers struggle with workforce shortages and rising costs. Laurens County First Steps is committed to addressing these issues, so every child has the strong start they deserve.



Olivia Bright
Board Chair

As the new board chair of Laurens County First Steps, I am proud to reflect on our FY2025 achievements. Our dedicated staff participated in community outreach, served families with compassion, and worked tirelessly to expand literacy across Laurens County. By building relationships with parents and children, they provided resources and education to improve kindergarten readiness and foster a love of learning. As a new parent, I often hear from families about the joy the Dolly Parton Imagination Library brings when a new book arrives each month. I am especially proud of our commitment to overcome challenges to continue this service. I look forward to building on the successes of FY2025 as we seek to strengthen support for parents, children, and childcare providers in our community.

PROGRAMS

PARENTING

Parents as Teachers

Offers research-based curricula that help families raise children to be healthy, safe, learning, and ready for school.

19

children served

254

home visits

20

group meetings
and events

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

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

558

children served

5,925

books distributed

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

1,392

children served

38

providers served

20.5

certified training
hours

Child Care Scholarships

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

20

children served

4

providers served

HEALTH

Reach Out and Read

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

1,429

children served

2,857

books distributed

Board of Directors

Renita Barksdale
Amanda Brewington
Olivia Bright
Angela Compton
Laurie Counterman
Jennifer Davis
Janice Farmer
Jervell Fort
Patience Johnson
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FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

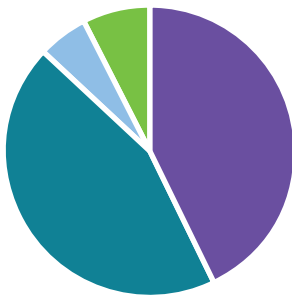


\$1 = \$2.08

Laurens County First Steps leveraged \$252,054.98 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$1.08 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

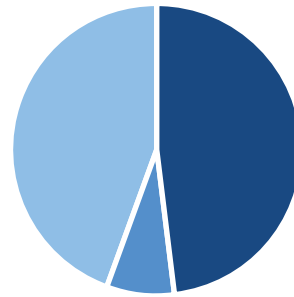
Total: \$458,267.87



- Parenting - \$196,796
- Early Care & Education - \$202,817.43
- Administrative - \$24,685.44
- Core Functions - \$33,969

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$485,639.39



- State Funding - \$233,584.41
- Private Funding - \$37,381.98
- In-kind Contributions - \$214,673

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

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Parents as Teachers has been very positive. My parent educator support has helped me learn about child development. The activities boost my child's confidence and skills and empower me as a parent.

Laurens County First Steps Parent



Donor List

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CONTACT US

laurensfirststeps.org | (864)984-8130
toniable@laurensfirststeps.org