



2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT



FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Dorchester County First Steps:



1,344 children

were directly served in Dorchester County



1,416 parents & caregivers

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



270 educators

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

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

THE NEED PERSISTS IN DORCHESTER COUNTY

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

10,484

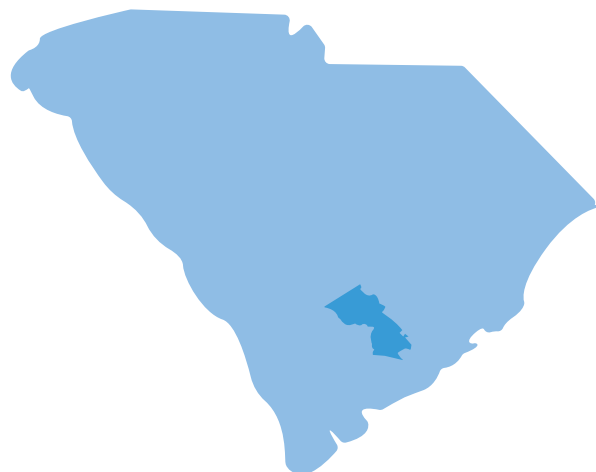
children under 6

33%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

60%

of kindergarteners are considered "not ready" for school



OUR MISSION

To prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance and expand high-quality early childhood services.



Crystal Campbell

Executive Director

Winston Churchill once said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts."

This quote sums up my feelings at the end of FY24. DCFS had many successes this year, but coupled with the successes were also failures. My staff and I touched many lives with our programming and implemented plans to help parents with day-to-day living issues, strategic reading processes and skills to support them as their child's first teacher. but we failed in recording all our achievements and outcomes. One of our greatest achievements was connecting with parents and building trust and relationships. We also supported and strengthened several childcare centers. Not keeping the data has proven to be an issue for us which may have a direct effect on our community, but "Stones and sticks are thrown only at fruit bearing trees", Sumi. DCFS is a fruit bearing agency.

So, the issue of not keeping perfect records only shows me where we can improve in FY25, and I'm encouraged that we are making a positive impact in and on our community despite what the lack of data indicates. We must tangibly show it moving forward.

When given lemons, I always make lemonade. So, with a new staff (who have joined DCFS while not receiving benefits), a greater determination to work with more families, and the still small budget watch out FY25, for with great belief and trust in God we will be victorious!

Many thanks to all of our Local Partnership Board, donors, childcare providers and families. "Do you like us now?"

Serving Dorchester County's children birth through age five.

PROGRAMS

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Quality Enhancement

Promotes quality in child care by providing early educators with one-on-one coaching and support.

136

children served

11

providers served

168

technical assistance
hours

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

380

children served

5

providers served

24.5

certified training
hours

Child Care Scholarships

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

17

children served

HEALTH

Reach Out and Read

Site visits for home child care providers to encourage developmentally appropriate practices.

1,214

children served

2,428

book distributed

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.

41

children served

3

schools served

246

home 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.

38

children served

3

schools served

228

home visits

PARENTING

Parents as Teachers

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

38

children served

15

group meetings
and events

711

home visits

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.

13

children served

6

group meetings
and events

115

home visits

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

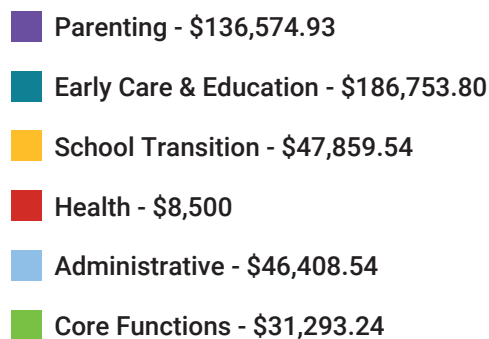
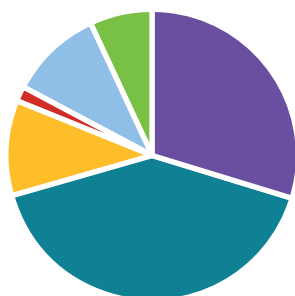


\$1 = \$1.37

Dorchester County First Steps leveraged \$134,877.78 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$0.37 for every state dollar invested.

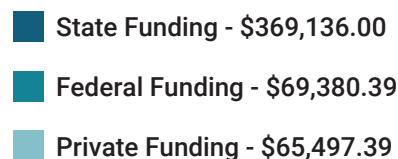
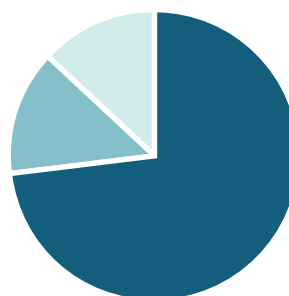
EXPENDITURES

Total: \$457,390.05



FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$504,013.78



FUNDING SUPPORT BY SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS

State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding
 State READY Funding*
 Federal AmeriCorps Service Site
 Federal Preschool Development Grant Funding**
 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 1.105

**Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0080-01-00 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, awarded to the South Carolina Department of Social Services, Division of Early Care and Education

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

Note: Revenue amounts may show a difference between allocations and revenue based on penalties imposed by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees for non-compliance with organizational policies. The figures provided are based on unaudited financial statements and, as such, are subject to change.



Lisa Hart

Board Chair

Whew! FY24 was a challenge, but DCFS, under the leadership of Dr. Crystal Campbell, was still successful. Despite losing 3 of the 4 staff members, being able to only hire one new person before June, all the while Dr. Campbell was having to keep the connections with child care centers and families, staying connected with collaborative partners and agencies, implementing Strengthening Families (a new program) and not to mention all of the duties and travel associated with being the President of the Southern Early Childhood Association, DCFS still met its goals and outcomes of supporting the families of the county and making a positive difference which is part of the strategic plan.

I am so encouraged and proud of the staff and all of the accomplishments of this year. As Board Chair and a business owner, I know how important it is to meet goals, but what's more important is HOW we overcome the setbacks and still have positive outcomes. The outcomes far outweigh the outputs this year and DCFS is better for it.

I look forward to an even better FY25. With new staff members, greater and more strategic social media presence and an intense focus on compiling data, it's going to be an even more spectacular year. DCFS is on fire!

Our Local Supporters

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