



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025





# FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Dillon County First Steps:



**222 children**

were directly served in Dillon County



**198 parents & caregivers**

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



**32 educators**

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

## THE NEED PERSISTS IN DILLON COUNTY

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

**2,026**

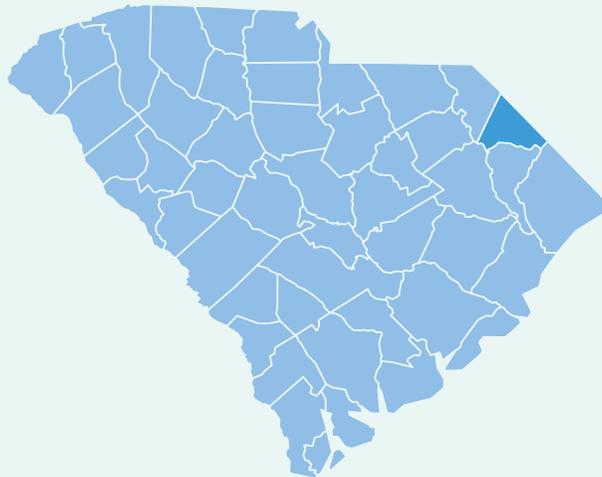
children birth to five

**76%**

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

**83%**

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

## Preparing Children for School



**Shirleen Lewis, Ed. S.**  
Executive Director

Dillon County First Steps is fully dedicated to our mission, and we strive each day with renewed commitment to serve the youngest learners in Dillon County.

I am privileged to collaborate with an exceptional staff and a devoted board of directors who consistently deliver excellent service to our community.

This year, we have been thrilled by the growth of the new partnerships we established in our Raising A Reader Program. We are equally enthusiastic about celebrating the families who have successfully completed our Nurturing Parenting and Nurturing Fathers Program, and we look forward to their application of these skills to thrive both personally and professionally.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our donors and community partners for your contributions and financial support, which enable DCFS to continue its mission of helping "Children Prepare for School." You are amazing! Thank you for your steadfast support in transforming lives one family at a time.



**Dr. Michael McRae**  
Board Chair

The work we undertake is vital, and it requires the support of numerous individuals to effect change in the lives of the children and families we assist. Contributions of all sizes accumulate to significantly contribute to the success of DCFS. You are a crucial component of that strategy.

DCFS is strategically positioned and will persist in enhancing its legacy, collaborating with board members, exceptional staff, and community partners, while striving towards our primary objectives. We are thrilled that we have been able to expand the services through our Nurturing Parenting Program. We have made an incredible start in engaging directly in weekly parenting programs and we are astonished by the way families are bonding and implementing lessons into their daily lives.

We will focus on enhancing our capacity and collaborating with partners to address county needs. We appreciate your commitment to this organization, and we eagerly anticipate partnering with you in our future endeavors.

# PROGRAMS

## PARENTING

### Nurturing Parenting

Designed to build nurturing parenting skills as an alternative to abusive and neglecting parenting and child-rearing practices.

151

children served

127

families served

578

group meetings

### Library-Based Programs

Connect librarians with child care programs and preschool classrooms, providing books, storytelling, and staff training.

71

children served

## EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

### Quality Enhancement

Intensive support to child care centers and preschool classrooms to improve quality.

5

providers served

99.58

training hours provided

### Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

774

children served

27

providers served

21

certified training hours

“

I would like to say thank you so much, because the meetings are efficient and beneficial for the Moms, Dads, and the children on Wednesday nights. It has helped me get guidance for my family.

**Kimberly Ravenell**



# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

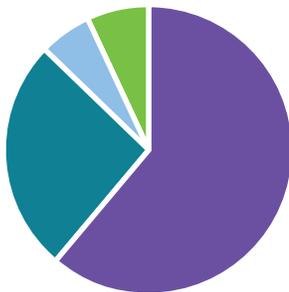


**\$1 = \$1.15**

Dillon County First Steps leveraged \$87,736.07 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$0.15 for every state dollar invested.

## EXPENDITURES

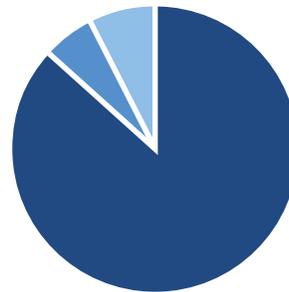
Total: \$669,380.62



- Parenting - \$410,421.15
- Early Care & Education - \$174,493.71
- Administrative - \$38,060.78
- Core Functions - \$46,404.98

## FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$661,465.02



- State Funding - \$573,728.95
- Federal Funding - \$0.26
- Private Funding - \$38,250.50
- In-kind Contributions - \$49,485.31

## FUNDING SUPPORT

State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding

State READY Funding\*

Federal AmeriCorps Service Site

State Income Tax Check-off and Private Donations to SC First Steps

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

## Board of Directors

Lisa Armstrong	Tabitha James
Beryl Collington	Jennifer Oxendine
Karen English	Gabriel Salmon, Sr.
Amanda June	Millie Odom
Chevella German	Michael McRae
Kenneth Smith	Carla Shelley

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Amanda June | Beryl Collington | Carla Shelley | Chevella German | Cynthia Pernell | Dr. Michael McRae | Gabriel Salmon, Sr. | Karen English | Kenneth Smith | Lisa Armstrong | Millie Odom | Eastern Carolina Community Foundation - Regional Enrichment Fund | Niagara Cares Fund | SC Endeavors | SC Ports Authority | Sisters of Charity Foundation of SC | United Fund of Dillon County, Inc. | Angela Coward | Fitness By Cory | Geraldine Ellis | Hannah Walters | Rashawn Aaron | Shannon Hargrove | Shirleen Davis | Terry & Shantel McRae | Amber Pearl Grice & Village | Boys to Men/Girls With A Purpose | Chief Judge James E. Lockemy | County of Dillon Board of Education | Detrice Dawkins, Dillon County Council | Dillon Branch No. 5513 NAACP | Dillon Marion Alumnae | Ebenezer Baptist Church | First Baptist Church Dillon | First Citizens Bank | Gerome McLeod | Kids Limited Development Center, LLC | Manning Baptist Church | Nurturing Parenting Mom's Group | Rev. Dr. W. Franklin Blue | Robbie Coward, Dillon County Council District 6 | Trustees of Hazy Grove Baptist Church Building Fund | Wendell Cooper

## CONTACT US

[dillonfirststeps.com](http://dillonfirststeps.com) | (843)774-0061 | [shirleenlewis@bellsouth.net](mailto:shirleenlewis@bellsouth.net)