FIRST STEPS
FLORENCE COUNTY

ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025

FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Florence County First Steps:

495 children
were directly served in Florence County

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

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

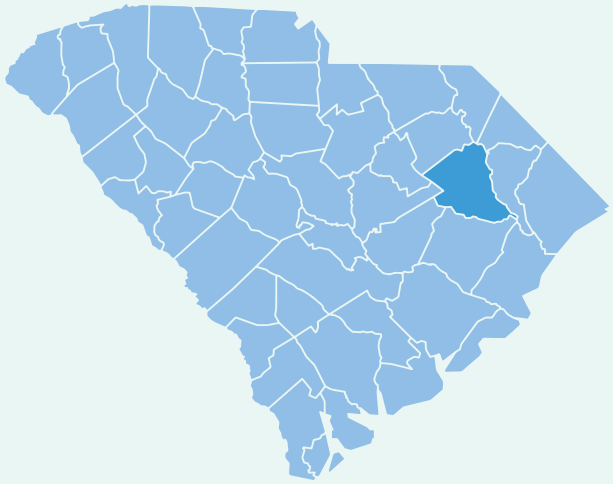
THE NEED PERSISTS IN FLORENCE COUNTY

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

10,077
children birth to five

47%
of young children live in poverty or low-income households

62%
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 Florence County First Steps is to ensure that all children start school ready to reach their highest potential. This is achieved by engaging families, caregivers, and community partners in high-quality programs and services that improve early childhood development, from before birth through age five. The organization also serves as a connector and convener of all early childhood stakeholders in Florence County.

Spencer R. Scott
Executive Director

This year has been one of both progress and perseverance for Florence County First Steps. Together with our Board, staff, and community partners, we have continued to expand opportunities for children and families, ensuring that every child enters school ready to succeed.

Through scholarships, we have opened doors for families to access high-quality childcare. These investments not only give children the strong foundation they deserve, but also allow parents to pursue education and steady employment, strengthening both families and our local workforce. Our Center and Family Childcare training and quality enhancement efforts have strengthened providers across Florence County, helping them deliver the highest level of care and education.

I am grateful for the unwavering commitment of our Board of Directors, the tireless work of our staff, and the support of community leaders who share our vision. Together, we are transforming lives and building a stronger Florence County.

Rev. Kippie Brown
Board Chair

It is my honor to serve as Chairman of the Board for Florence County First Steps. Each year, I am reminded of the importance of preparing our youngest children for success. Under the leadership of Executive Director Spencer R. Scott and with the dedication of our staff, we have expanded programs and strengthened partnerships to meet the needs of children and families.

Childcare scholarships, parenting support, and early literacy efforts continue to make a lasting impact, helping children thrive while allowing parents to pursue education and employment. These opportunities also strengthen our workforce and support small businesses.

As a Board, we are committed to guiding and advocating for this mission. I am deeply grateful for the dedication of our staff, Board members, and community partners. Together, we are building a brighter future for Florence County's youngest learners.

PROGRAMS

PARENTING

ParentChild+

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

90	4,657
children served	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.

29	13	535
children served	group meetings and events	home visits

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.

65	4	388
children served	schools served	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.

36	5	216
children served	schools served	home/school visits

HEALTH

Quality Enhancement

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

511	11	275
children served	providers served	training hours provided

Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

521	16	24.5
children served	providers served	certified training hours

Child Care Scholarships

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

80	54	17
children served	families served	providers served

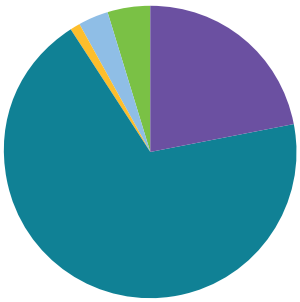
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

$1 = $2.22

Florence County First Steps leveraged $791,230.83 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of $1.22 for every state dollar invested.

EXPENDITURES

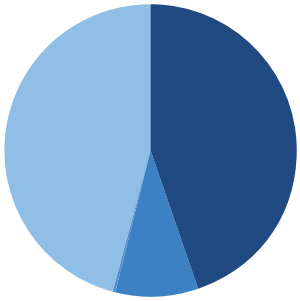
Total: $1,530,040.25



- Parenting - $336,366.92
- Early Care & Education - $1,056,954.76
- School Transition - $13,710
- Administrative - $52,542.06
- Core Functions - $70,475.51

FUNDING SOURCES

Total: $1,437,651.39



- State Funding - $646,420.56
- Federal Funding - $130,592.72
- Private Funding - $4556.36
- In-kind Contributions - $656,081.75

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

"A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning." - Brad Henry. After reading this, we instantly thought of Ms. Allen. We've had a wonderful experience with her as a home visitor for both of our children.

Florence County First Steps Parent

Board of Directors

Kippie Brown
Debbie Jones
Laura Marsh
Denita Davis
Phoebe Clark
Nicole Echols
Orbree Friday-Widder
Eleanor Flemming
Shala Sweeney
Sheridan Murray
Belinda Cain
Mary Howard
Jordan Waters

Donor List

South Carolina Department of Social Services
SC Endeavors
Greenville Technical College
Lakeshore Learning
Kaplan Early Learning Company
Florence County School District 3

CONTACT US

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