



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2024-2025





# 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**

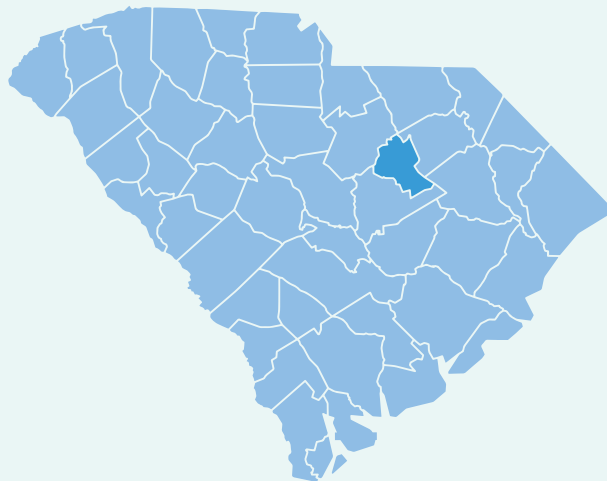
children birth to five

**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

# 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.



**Elder Alexis D. Pipkins, Sr**  
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

### 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

## 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

## HEALTH

### Reach Out and Read

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

**37** children served  
**74** books distributed

### Health Services Coordination

First Steps coordinates with partners to support the health and well-being of families with young children.

**44** families served

## 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

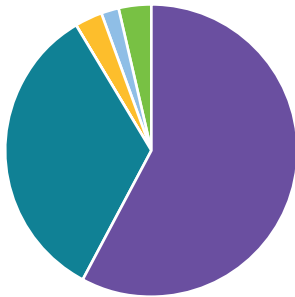


**\$1 = \$3.37**

Lee 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

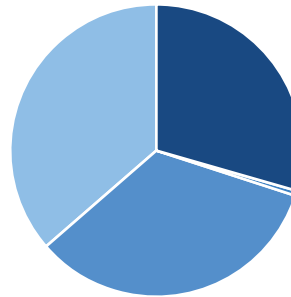
Total: \$2,045,513.87



- 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

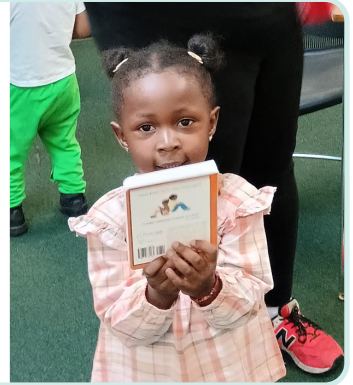
- State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding
- State READY Funding\*
- Federal AmeriCorps Service Site
- Enterprise Mobility Foundation ROAD Forward Grant
- State Income Tax Check-off and Private Donations to SC First Steps

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

“

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

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## Donor List

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Children's Trust of South Carolina  
Save the Children  
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Project IMPACT  
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## CONTACT US

[leefirststeps.com](http://leefirststeps.com) | (803)484-5110 | [lee1ststeps@gmail.com](mailto:lee1ststeps@gmail.com)