



## FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Richland County First Steps:



**502 children**

were directly served in Richland County



**839 parents & caregivers**

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

## THE NEED PERSISTS IN RICHLAND COUNTY

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

**26,917**

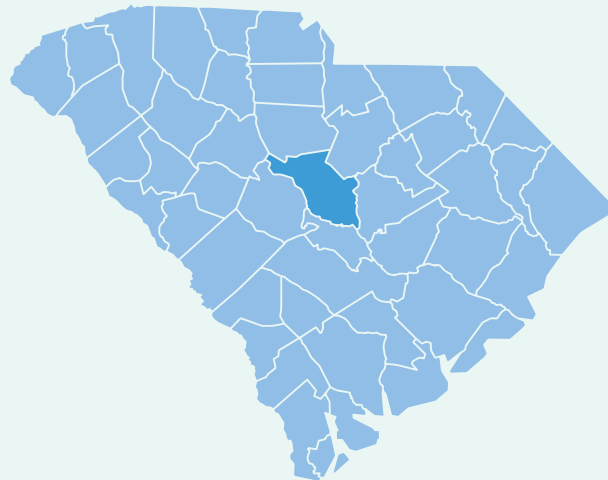
children birth to five

**43%**

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

**57%**

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

## Board of Directors

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William Jeter	Cassandra Legette
Monita Dawkins	Quinne Evans
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# ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



## CONTACT US

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# OUR MISSION

From Day 1 to Grade 1, Richland First Steps empowers our community to nurture children, so that they are ready to thrive in school.



**Elizabeth Kabalka**  
Executive Director

I began as Executive Director in April 2025 and am excited to join a dedicated team of early childhood professionals who are building on the legacy of the first 25 years of Richland First Steps. Through Parents As Teachers, the Palmetto Basics and Early Head Start programs, our staff consistently delivers high quality care, education and empowerment. Families deserve nothing less.

We are undertaking a needs assessment of young children and their families in Richland in 2025-26. This data will inform a new, 3-year strategic plan to identify emerging needs in our community, while also fulfilling our mission - to support at risk families directly through our evidence-based programming, but also to foster collaboration among of all who serve this same demographic. Working together, we can ensure that all Richland families with young children and those who serve them benefit from the generosity of the citizens who fund First Steps and ensure every child turns five ready to thrive.



**Rachael Fulmer**  
Board Chair

The board members of Richland First Steps demonstrated remarkable commitment and diligence, partnering with Waller Consulting to meticulously review and align organizational policies and procedures. Their collaborative efforts ensured that all guidelines fully comply with both Early Head Start standards and the requirements set forth by State First Steps.

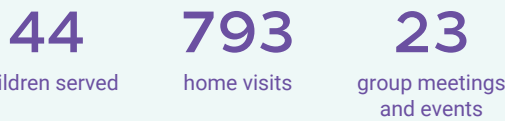
Following a comprehensive search process, the Richland First Steps board and staff proudly welcomed Elizabeth Kabalka as the new Executive Director. The organization is enthusiastic about Elizabeth's arrival and looks forward to her contributions to both Richland First Steps and the greater Midlands community.

# PROGRAMS

## PARENTING

### Parents as Teachers

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



### Connected Families

Prevents the unnecessary removal of young children from their homes by providing parents and caregivers with voluntary, coordinated services.



## EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

### Early Head Start

A federally funded program that provides family-centered services to infants and toddlers under age 3, pregnant women, and their families.



Two-year-old Jaliyah beams when Miss Shannon arrives for her biweekly Richland First Steps home visit. Her parents say the program has boosted her confidence and skills and they urge other families in Lower Richland to join!



# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

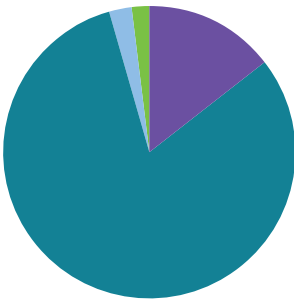


**\$1 = \$3.38**

Richland County First Steps leveraged \$2,737,398.28 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$2.38 for every state dollar invested.

## EXPENDITURES

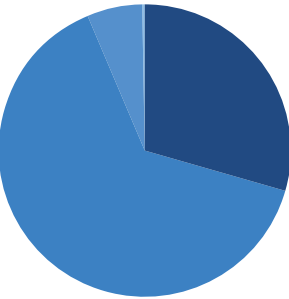
Total: \$3,929,711.12



- Parenting - \$568,942.48
- Early Care & Education - \$3,194,528.72
- Administrative - \$90,728.59
- Core Functions - \$75,511.33

## FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$3,885,655.37



- State Funding - \$1,148,257.09
- Federal Funding - \$2,495,641.72
- Private Funding - \$239,856.56
- In-kind Contributions - \$1,900

## FUNDING SUPPORT

State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding  
State READY Funding\*  
The Duke Endowment & Doris Duke Foundation  
Sylvamo

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

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