



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2024-2025





# FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Saluda County First Steps:



**1,306 children**

were directly served in Saluda County



**2,035 parents & caregivers**

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



**112 educators**

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

## THE NEED PERSISTS IN SALUDA COUNTY

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

**1,232**

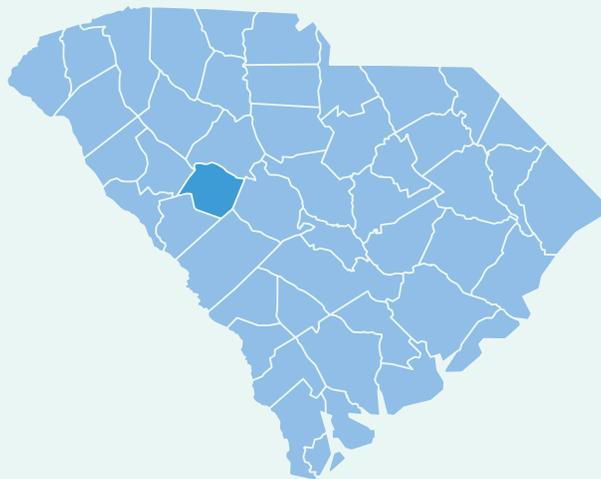
children birth to five

**44%**

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

**80%**

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

Saluda County First Steps mission is to help families and caregivers prepare children to succeed in school by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver enhanced and expanded high-quality diverse early childhood services.



**Kim Chariker**  
Executive Director

My goal as ED of Saluda County First Steps is to be known in Saluda County as the first resource for early educational programs for all families with young children. FY25 has been a year of assessment, evaluation, and redirection. As expected, change can be a blessing or it can be a deterrent. Our Board reviewed program accomplishments and identified program areas that needed change. After compiling much data and having open and honest discussions during our board meetings, we determined the best course of actions for programs in Saluda County for the future. Our goal was to reach as many children and their families as possible with the highest quality early educational interventions and programs as possible to ensure that they are ready for school. We have collaborated together with our community partners and private donors to expand our reach within our diverse population. #OneSaluda



**Angela Erhardt**  
Board Chair

Saluda First Steps staff and board are motivated by our mission to help families and caregivers prepare children to succeed in school and to work with our community partners to serve Saluda children and families. We are committed to helping children be prepared for kindergarten and increasing awareness of First Steps programs until every child has the support to be successful entering kindergarten.

Saluda First Steps offers proven programs and community events, such as sponsors readings at the library, gives books to all K3, K4, and kindergarten students throughout the school year, maintains the Story Walk in the town park, provides Triple-P parenting classes, and ensures all programs and materials are available in Spanish for Saluda County wonderfully diverse community.

Saluda First Steps is proud to serve the young children and families of Saluda County and be a part of a such a supportive community.

# PROGRAMS

## PARENTING

### Positive Parenting Program (TripleP)

A parenting and family support system designed to prevent – as well as treat – behavioral and emotional problems in children.

27

children served

23

families served

19

group meetings and events

### Library-Based Programs

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

1,084

children served

1,383

books lent

87

reading hours

## EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

### Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

122

staff trained

16

providers served

20

certified training hours

### Enhanced Early Education

Provides important support to students and their families through supplemental materials and book distributions to classrooms

52

children served

1,864

number of training sessions

## HEALTH

### Nurse-Family Partnership

Home visitation for first time mothers, from pregnancy until the child turns two.

7

children served

45

home visits

## Board of Directors

Condace Bush

Jennifer Campbell, Vice Chair

Courtney Clark

Angela Erhardt, Chair

Freda Gantt

Cynthia Howard

Nancy Jordan

Christy Marshall

Elizabeth McCartney

Shanna Meyers

Lynn Padgett, Secretary

Rachel Porter

Cecelia Yonce

# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

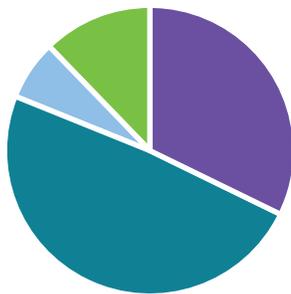


**\$1 = \$1.56**

Saluda County First Steps leveraged \$127,450.19 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$0.56 for every state dollar invested.

## EXPENDITURES

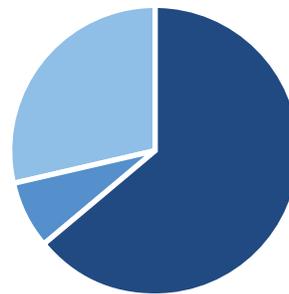
Total: \$352,505.30



- Parenting - \$114,040.89
- Early Care & Education - \$172,002.96
- Administrative - \$24,258.85
- Core Functions - \$42,202.60

## FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$354,754.50



- State Funding - \$227,304.31
- Private Funding - \$26,840.62
- In-kind Contributions - \$100,609.57

## FUNDING SUPPORT

State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding

State READY Funding\*

Lipscomb Family Foundation

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

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

“

Through the SC First Steps Parenting Program, I have been able to share strategies that have worked for my own family, offering ideas and encouragement to parents who may not have had those resources before. I've also built friendships in the group.

**Saluda County First Steps Parent**



## Donor List

Save The Children  
Central Carolina Community  
Foundation  
ABC Academy, LLC  
Cromley's Ford, Inc.  
Eloise (Pat) Green  
Dr. David Mathis  
Dr. Harvey Livingston  
Edward and Helen Hallman  
Owens and Marcia Shealy  
David Chariker  
Dakota Chariker  
Alicia Shealy

Haskell and Teresa Parler  
Betty Gardiner  
Christine Webb  
Kathy Charles  
Carla Boozer  
Raymond and Karisa Ruth  
Candi Lalonde  
Sarah Eargle  
Joy Burge  
Deb Padgett  
All 13 Board Members and  
Executive Director

## CONTACT US

saludafirststeps.org | (864)321-1441 | kim@saludafirststeps.org