



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2024-2025





# FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Aiken County First Steps:



**731 children**

were directly served in Aiken County



**1,043 parents & caregivers**

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



**218 educators**

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

## THE NEED PERSISTS IN AIKEN COUNTY

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

**11,149**

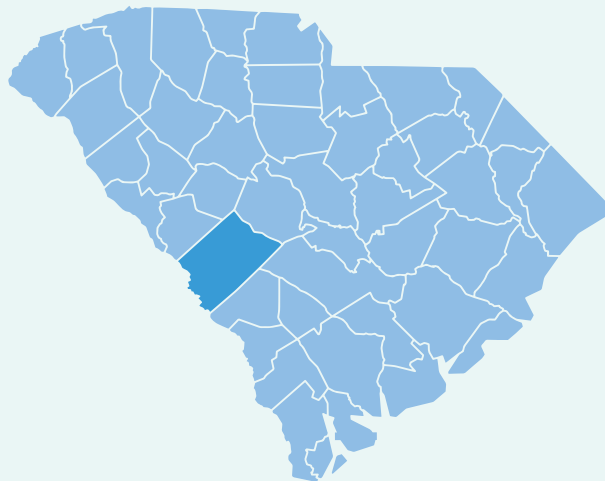
children birth to five

**39%**

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

Through collaboration, Aiken County First Steps empowers families and caregivers to prepare their children for school success by delivering, enhancing, and expanding high-quality early childhood services.



**Marcia Nash**  
Executive Director

As we reflect on the past year, I am reminded of a powerful quote from Dr. Dan Wuori: 'If you want to know how children are doing, you need to understand how their parents are doing.' This statement resonates deeply as we navigate the joys and challenges that come with supporting the families and young children in Aiken County. The progress we have achieved this year is a testament to the resilience and dedication of our community.

I want to take a moment to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Aiken County First Steps Board of Directors, our dedicated staff, our invaluable community partners, and the tireless volunteers who contribute their time, energy, and expertise. Your unwavering support has been instrumental in our mission to empower parents and caregivers, preparing our children for the success that lies ahead of them. Together, let's continue to foster a brighter future for our families in Aiken County.



**Marie Davidsohn**  
Board Chair

As the Board Chair of Aiken County First Steps, it is with both great pride and a profound sense of gratitude that I present to you our Annual Report for 2024-2025. This comprehensive report not only encapsulates our achievements and progress over the past year but also serves as a testament to the unwavering commitment of our community, partners, and dedicated supporters in advancing early childhood education and development across Aiken County. Together, we are building a brighter tomorrow for our children, where every child could thrive and reach their full potential. As we reflect on our journey, we are filled with excitement about the path ahead and the transformative work that lies before us. Knowing that we have partners like you gives us hope and strength to continue. Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to this important cause. Your involvement makes a significant difference in the lives of so many children and families in our community.

# PROGRAMS

## PARENTING

### Parents as Teachers

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

**23** children served  
**12** group meetings and events  
**341** home visits

### Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Free, high-quality books mailed to the home of children from birth until age five.

**738** children served  
**5,008** books distributed

## HEALTH

### Early Identification & Referral

Providing developmental screenings and referrals to other services.

**10** children served  
**9** families served

## EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

### Quality Counts

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

**157** children served  
**4** providers served  
**148** training hours provided

## 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.

**20** children served  
**5** schools served  
**120** 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.

**9** children served  
**2** schools served  
**54** home/school visits

### Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

**6,745** children served  
**46** providers served  
**31** certified training hours

### Child Care Scholarships

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

**38** children served  
**35** families served  
**14** providers served

# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

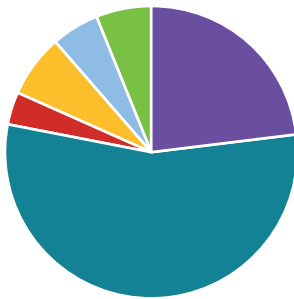


**\$1 = \$2.05**

Aiken County First Steps leveraged \$416,226.89 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$1.05 for every state dollar invested.

## EXPENDITURES

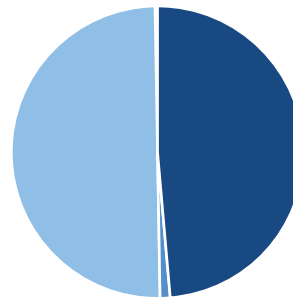
Total: \$853,130.96



Parenting	- \$197,315.45
Early Care & Education	- \$469,705.67
Health	- \$31,833.26
School Transition	- \$58,513.38
Administrative	- \$45,338.45
Core Functions	- \$50,424.75

## FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$814,062.73



State Funding	- \$397,835.84
Private Funding	- \$7,935.31
In-kind Contributions	- \$408,291.58

## FUNDING SUPPORT

State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding  
State Income Tax Check-off and Private Donations to SC First Steps

“

Celestine Mulima from Aiken County First Steps has been an asset to my educational success and my family's well-being. Their childcare program has provided my family with dependable, high-quality care that allowed us to grow together.



## Board of Directors

Dorothy Hughes  
Teresa Lilly  
David Walker  
Narice Brighthop-Carpenter  
Carsyn Zambrano  
Shadie Hall  
Gail Diggs  
Shirley Von Beck  
Kayla Scarborough  
Theodore Barnett  
Susan Budney  
Lauren Enter  
Marie Davidsohn

## Donor List

Aiken County Public School District  
Department of Social Services  
United Way Aiken County  
Golden Harvest Food Bank  
Marie Davidsohn  
Marcia Nash  
Traci Nambi & Family  
Tashica Aldrich  
Megiddo Kidstation  
Consuella Carter, CC Educational Training Services  
Robin McCants, McCants Professional Development  
SC Forestry Commission  
Spotless Janitorial Services  
The Pizza Joint-Aiken  
New Moon Cafe  
What's Cookin" Downtown Aiken  
Royal Aikenites Club  
Pipeworks, INC  
Pharm Tech Express

## CONTACT US

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