



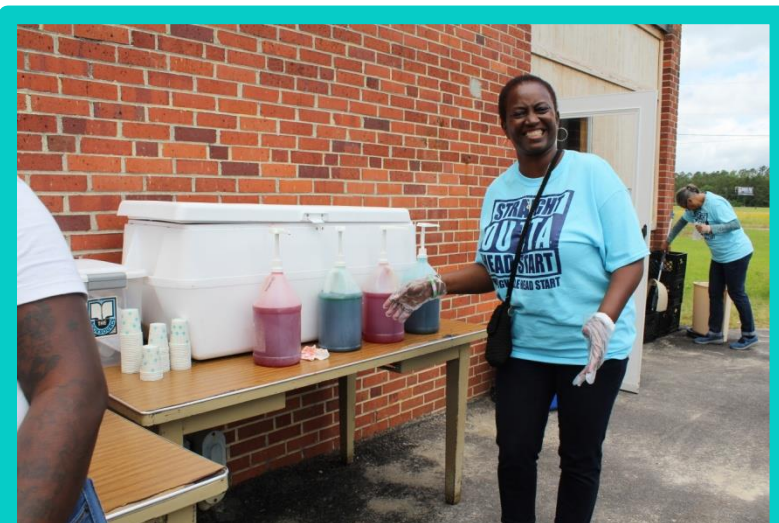
**Child Care Quality
Enhancement**

Child Care Training

**Child Care
Scholarships**

Annual Report

2017-18



OUR VISION:

**Every Marion County child
will be prepared for
success in school.**

Executive Director Message

Marion County First Steps has had a very productive year. The 2017-18 fiscal year saw the Facility Quality Enhancement, Childcare Training, Childcare Scholarships, and the Literacy programs all implemented successfully. Each program met all South Carolina First Steps standards of enhancing childcare programs through regular technical assistance, affordable monthly trainings and affordable childcare to at-risk, impoverished children and families who were low-income or in need of assistance. The success in these programs was due in part to collaborations with childcare providers, knowledgeable instructors, DSS, local churches, and local businesses.

This year during the Week of the Young Child providers and facilities participated in our annual Marion County First Steps Childcare Provider of the Year award. This award recognizes a provider who delivers exemplary service and who works tirelessly helping the children of the community. Childcare facilities applied for their chance to be recognized, and after careful review and consideration, the winner was Ethel Ford. Ms. Ford is a childcare provider at Troy-Johnson Learning Korner. We would like to congratulate her once again on her award. Even though teaching can be a thankless job, it is also fulfilling and rewarding!

Although Marion County First Steps has limited funds, every dollar is used to ensure that children and families do not have to worry about how they will be able to afford a childcare while they work or go to school. Rest assured, if they have at least one South Carolina First Steps-approved risk factor, they will be served in some capacity. When people donate, they know that we put the money into action by helping the smallest citizens of Marion County.



OUR MISSION:

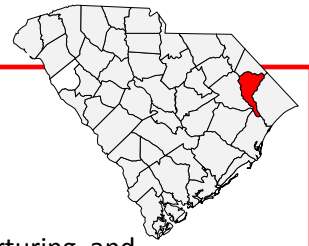
Collaborating with other entities, First Steps helps Marion families and caregivers prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance, and expand high-quality early childhood services.

Spencer

Spencer R. Scott
Executive Director





Find Marion County First Steps:





THE NEED

School readiness **depends on the capacity of caregivers** to provide children with consistent, nurturing, and responsive relationships in safe, stimulating learning environments, **continuously**, starting at birth. Unfortunately, these quality early childhood experiences happen for too few children in Marion County.

How are Marion County's children doing?	What early learning programs are available for children in our county? Last year:	Where can families access child care in our county?
1,855 are under age 5	16 attended Early Head Start as infants and toddlers	19 licensed child care centers
41.3% live in poverty	143 attended free preschool or Head Start as 3-year-olds	13 licensed group/family homes
17.3% of babies born in 2016 were to moms without a HS diploma	133 4-year-olds attended free full-day public school 4K or Head Start	62% participate in the state's Quality Rating System (ABC Quality)
11.9% Babies born with low birth weight	127 0-5 year olds received early intervention or special ed.	15 providers are rated B or higher by ABC Quality
19.90% of last year's kindergartners demonstrated readiness	77 were served by 	473 families received assistance with affording child care last year
Kids Count data provided by: 	Data provided by: 	

THE GOALS

Our partnership's work, in collaboration with state and local partners, is focused on advancing Marion County towards these strategic goals in support of the **Profile of the Ready Kindergartner**, South Carolina's description of school readiness:

1. Increase Literacy Program to serve 150 children by one additional coordinator in the faith-based and Head Start communities by 2020.
2. Increase the number of certified trainers in Marion County by 10%.
3. Increase scholarships to 30 and serve children in hard to reach rural areas of Marion County by 2020.
4. Host Community Meeting Concerning Early Education.

THE IMPACT

In 2017-18, Marion County First Steps provided:

Over 800 children and adults with **intensive support** to equip parents and caregivers with the confidence and competence to be a child's first and best teacher, and strengthen their family's health, economic, and overall well-being

- ✓ **5 staff** working in **3** child care providers, Head Start centers and preschool classrooms with training, technical assistance, resources and support, **helping them better meet the needs of 23 children ages 0-5 in their care Facility Quality Enhancement.**
- ✓ Financial assistance to help **33 children 0-5 attend quality child care** so their parents can work or attend school
- ✓ **Nearly 4000 books** to **spark the love of reading** for nearly **700 children** (Raising a Reader & Family Literacy).
- ✓ A total of more than **800 children and adults** were impacted by Marion County First Steps programs, resources, activities and events.

School Readiness Outcomes

What is the KRA?

In 2017-18, kindergartners across the state were given for the first time South Carolina's newest assessment of school readiness: the **Kindergarten Readiness Assessment**, or KRA. The KRA provides a snapshot of students' abilities at the beginning of the school year, in four domains: Social Foundations, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and Physical Development and Well-Being. Here are the results locally and for the state:

MARION COUNTY DISTRICT (# children)			
Domain	Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating
Social Foundations	34%	33%	33%
Language & Literacy	34%	47%	19%
Mathematics	44%	41%	16%
Physical Dev & WB	36%	28%	36%
OVERALL	40%	41%	20%

SOUTH CAROLINA (54,927 children)			
Domain	Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating
Social Foundations	28%	27%	45%
Language & Literacy	23%	43%	34%
Mathematics	31%	38%	31%
Physical Dev & WB	28%	24%	48%
OVERALL	26%	38%	36%

- 1. Language and Literacy:** reading, writing, speaking, and listening
- 2. Mathematics:** counting, comparison, and sorting
- 3. Physical Well-Being & Motor Development:** dexterity, muscular coordination, and balance
- 4. Social Foundations:** following rules, asking for help, task persistence and other skills necessary to function within the kindergarten classroom

Demonstrating Readiness: student demonstrates foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for instruction based on kindergarten standards.

Approaching Readiness: student demonstrates some foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for instruction based on kindergarten standards

Emerging Readiness: student demonstrates limited foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for instruction based on kindergarten standards

The continuation of the partnership with Marion County Childcare providers will certainly improve KRA scores as we provide the literacy program, quality childcare trainings at no charge, Facility Quality Enhancement that will help providers to improve the services they provide in pre-school, and childcare scholarships which will allow at-risk impoverished children to receive quality childcare at an affordable price for their parents.

Family Literacy

Parents are their child's first and best teachers.

Program Description

Raising A Reader (RAR) is a proven and evidence based family engagement and early literacy program for children ages 0-8. The program helps families develop, practice, and maintain the home based literacy routines necessary for school success. The goal of RAR is to substantially increase the number of families that share picture books and stories with their children frequently and routinely each week.

Our family literacy program:

- ✓ Foster healthy brain development.
- ✓ Enhance early language and literacy skills.
- ✓ Encourage parent-child bonding through read aloud
- ✓ Develop and foster print motivation

Marion County First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our family literacy program families:

41.3%	... live in poverty (2016)
17.1%	... didn't graduate high school (2012-2016)
7.4%	... unemployment rate (2017)

Parents have expressed great satisfaction in the program. As Marion County is a rural area, many parents do not have access to the county library. Raising a Reader offers an opportunity for parents to have quality literature to read to their children.

This year, our Family Literacy program:

- ✓ Increased the times the child asked to be read the book again.
- ✓ Increased the vocabulary skills of participating children by 18% according to the survey.
- ✓ Increase in adults watching a video about the importance of sharing books with your child.

Thank you to our Family Literacy partners!

Marion County School District

The Academy of Early Learning

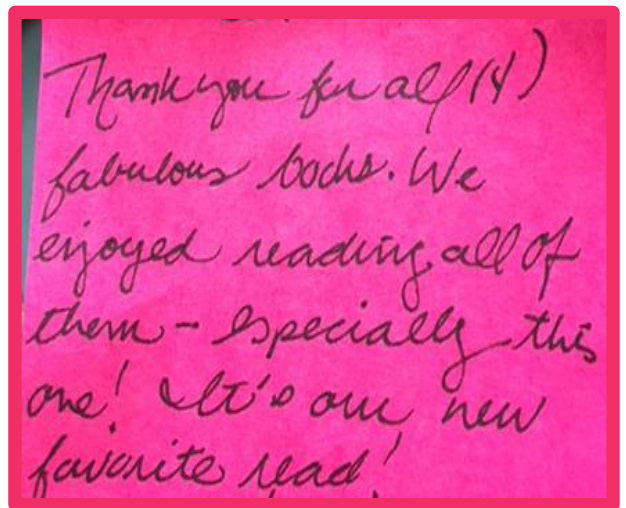
Marion County School District Parenting Program



Students take blue bags, certificates, and a library card application in May for the summer.

Family Literacy by the Numbers 2017-18

Children Served	175
Parenting Education Hours Offered	7.5



Parent acknowledgement of Raising A Reader (RAR).

Evidence of Effectiveness:

The Family Literacy components of Raising A Reader and early childhood education meet the First Steps legislation's definition of an **evidence-based** program.



Child Care Quality Enhancement

In order to thrive, children need nurturing, responsive relationships and a supportive learning environment, both within and outside the home.

Program Description

The quality of care they received by young children is crucial to their healthy development and school readiness. Child care providers strive to provide high quality care, but may lack the resources that are commonly available to publicly-funded early childhood programs, such as educational materials, on-site professional development, and other support.

First Steps' Child Care Quality Enhancement (QE) is intended to produce measurable improvements in the quality of care provided to young children. Participating child care providers must serve a high percentage of at-risk children, and are selected through a competitive process that requires a strong level of commitment to the QE process.

Program Components

1. On-site Technical Assistance (TA) at least twice monthly
2. Equipment and materials funding
3. Integration with locally available training, provided by First Steps and other partners
4. Workforce Development
5. Coordination with community partners
6. Pre/post assessments of the classroom environment and teacher-child interaction, using nationally-recognized observational tools for infant/toddler and preschool settings (ITERS, ECERS, FCCERS)

QE by the Numbers, 2017-18

Child Care Providers Served	3
Number of TA Visits Provided	54
Number of Children 0-5 Enrolled in Provider Classrooms	23

Congratulations to our QE participants for 2017-18!

Child Care Provider	Pre/Post Improvement
Ms. Lil's	From 4.52 to 4.38
Tender Loving Care	From 3.46 to 3.58
Tender Tots	From 2.97 to 3.29

This year, our Quality Enhancement program:

- ✓ 100% of participating FQE childcare providers participated in MCFS childcare trainings and found the trainings to be very beneficial.
- ✓ ERS scores for two of the three FQE childcare providers improved an average of .22.
- ✓ Provided 54 hours of technical assistance to child care providers
- ✓ Provided nearly three times the required Childcare Training Hours to FQE Childcare providers during FY18.

Thank you to our Quality Enhancement partners!

Ms. Lil's

Tender Loving Care

Tender Tots

Evidence of Effectiveness:

Child Care Quality Enhancement meets the First Steps legislation's definition of an **evidence-based** program.



Child Care Training

Those who care for young children need high-quality, accessible, and affordable professional development.

Training Sponsored by Marion First Steps, 2017-18

<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Hours</u>
Leading & Motivating Your Team	3
Parental Involvement in Programs	2
Approaches to Literacy ECE	2
STEM in the Pre-School Program	1
Mighty Math in Preschool Program	2
Building Babies Brains	1.5
Phases in Language Development	1.5
Stages of Writing Development	1
Social & Emotional Development	1.75
Professionalism, Who Needs It?	2.5
Social Media Etiquette in Childcare	2.5
TOTAL TRAINING HOURS	20.75

Nicole Weeks is AWESOME!

*Anytime she conducts trainings, whether I
need the hours or not, I'll be there.*

*Cynthia Edge
Bundles of Joy*



Nicole Weeks along with Marion County
Childcare Providers

Training by the Numbers, 2017-18

Total Training Attendance	284
Child Care Teachers and Directors Served	33
Number of Training Sessions Offered	11

This year, our Training program provided:

- ✓ 33 early childhood staff with high quality training, impacting more than 230 children.
- ✓ 20.75 hours of certified training for area childcare providers to meet annual re-certification requirements
- ✓ 11 childcare classes were sponsored by MCFS during FY18.

Thank you to our Training partners!

Pleasant Grove Academy Ms. Jean Pearson, Childcare
Director & Reverend AC Robinson, Pastor
Childcare Instructors and Childcare Providers
CCR&R

Evidence of Effectiveness:

Child Care Training and Professional Development meets
the First Steps legislation's definition of an
evidence-based program.



Child Care Scholarships

Too many families in Marion County cannot afford quality care for their children.

Program Description

Access to quality child care is essential for children while away from their primary caregivers. Yet, of those families income-eligible for child care assistance in South Carolina, only a small fraction receive it due to lack of funds. In the absence of nurturing and consistently available family, friends or neighbors, parents are faced with few—or no—affordable care options.

Marion County First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our scholarship families:

100% ... live in poverty
70% ... Received Food Stamps
37% ... Received TANF
48% ... Parental Depression

In addition to regular monitoring of child care providers that receive First Steps scholarships, First Steps conducts at least one developmental screening each year with scholarship children and connects families to needed services within the community.

During FY18 MCFS successfully provided wrap-around services with childcare scholarships, Facility Quality Enhancement and Childcare Trainings.

Scholarships by the Numbers, 2017-18

Children Served	33
Providers Served	9

First Steps has been a blessing to my Sugar Bears family, especially those parents who are trying to do their best for their children by giving them the opportunity to be placed in a learning and loving environment at an affordable price.

THANK YOU, FIRST STEPS!

Barbara Smith, Sugar Bears Owner



Childcare Director, Ms. Barbara Smith with the FY18 scholarship recipients

This year, our Scholarship program:

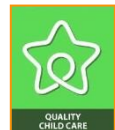
- ✓ Provided 33 children with scholarship assistance so their parents could work or attend school
- ✓ 100% of Scholarship Recipients lived in poverty.
- ✓ 70% of Scholarship Recipients received Food Stamps
- ✓ 37% Scholarship Recipients received TANF

Thank you to our Scholarship partners!

Pleasant Grove Academy * Little Promises Learning Korner * Troy Johnson's Learning Korner * Bundles of Joy * Sugar Bears Childcare Center * Agapeland Childcare Center * Department of Social Services

Evidence of Effectiveness:

Our partnership's Child Care Scholarship strategy is considered **evidence-based** because it is connected to the following evidence-based programs:



Literacy Program

Parents are their child's first and best teachers.

Program Description

Our Literacy programs offer an integrated and family-friendly approach, helping both parents and children to improve their literacy skills. Our literacy services integrate all of the following:

1. Distribute books to children/parents
2. Interactive Parent/Child Activities
3. Training in storytelling techniques
4. Parenting classes

Literacy Program by the Numbers 2017-18

Children Served	507
Books Distributed	3969
Early Childhood Education Hours Offered	185
Parenting Classes	12

This year, our Family Literacy program:

- ✓ Increased the number of times parents read to their child(ren)
- ✓ Increased the number of books in the home.
- ✓ 20 facilities participated in Marion County First Steps Literacy Program
- ✓ After 10 months of implementation, a total of 4426 children (duplicated count) were served.



Literacy Coordinator, Ms. Beryl Collington, and little Ayden pose during story time

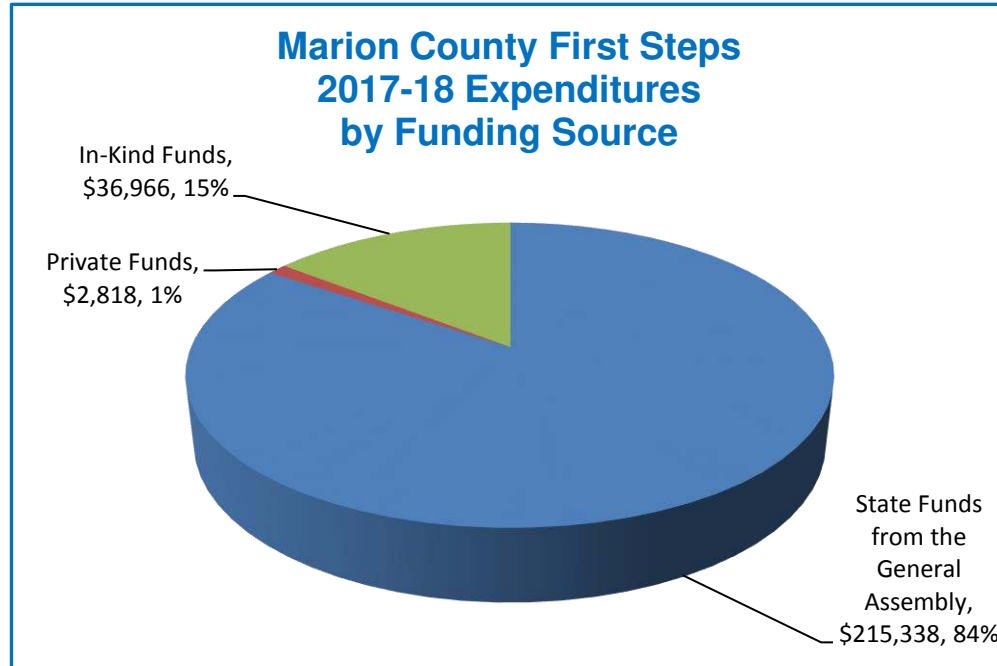
Thank you to our partners!

Marion County School District
 Pee Dee Community Action Agency-Head Start
 Local Child Care Facilities

Marion County First Steps

415 S Coit Street Florence, SC 29501
 843-629-0202
 scott2omega@yahoo.com

Financial Impact



Total 2017-18 Expenditures: \$215,338

State Funds Leveraged in 2017-18*: 18%

*Percentage of state dollars matched by additional federal, private, and/or in-kind funds

2017-18 Expenditures by Strategy

	State \$	Private \$	In-Kind \$	Total \$	% of 2017-18 Expenditures
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$17,844	\$29	\$5,435	\$23,308	7%
Child Care Training	\$18,113	\$1,930	\$5,435	\$25,478	7%
Child Care Scholarships	\$98,000	\$0	\$117,600	\$215,600	61%
Family Literacy	\$41,458	\$0	\$0	\$41,458	12%
Program Support	\$28,634	\$851	\$4,270	\$33,755	10%
Administrative Support	\$11,289	\$8	\$2,226	\$13,523	4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$215,338	\$2,818	\$134,966	\$353,122	100%

Unaudited numbers for the period July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018

Since inception, Marion County First Steps has leveraged \$732,200 from sources outside of state government. That's .16 cents for every state dollar.

Thank you supporters!

Through partnerships and collaborations, as well as financial support from grants and contributions, Marion County First Steps leverages state dollars to enhance and expand services to children and families.

Funding Support

State of South Carolina: \$215,338
(through South Carolina First Steps)

SC Department of Social Services \$100,375

SC Center for Childcare Career Development: \$2,000

In-Kind Support

ABC Child Care \$19,600

Kaplan Learning Company

Florence County First Steps \$17,366



How your support helps children in Marion County:

- ✓ \$50 feeds dinner to low-income families attending a parenting workshop
- ✓ \$110 provides a young child a book per month for one year!
- ✓ \$150 helps a low-income family afford quality child care for one month

HOW TO GIVE: All contributions can be submitted to:

Marion County First Steps

415 South Coit Street, Florence SC 29501

Save the Date!

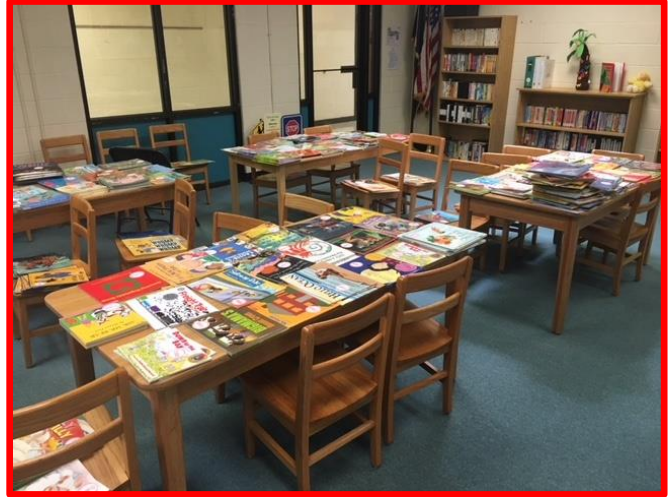
- Terrific Toddlers Baby Contest will be held December 2018
- StrollerWalk 2019 will be in September/October 2019

Support Marion County First Steps today through a tax-deductible donation, or volunteer!

Raising a Reader

Raising A Reader (RAR) is a proven and evidence – based family engagement and early literacy program for children ages 0-8. The program helps families develop, practice, and maintain the home-based literacy routines necessary for school success. The Spencer Scott, MCFS Executive Director and literacy coordinator were both trained in this program. Over \$10,000 was used to fund RAR.

Before the program started at the Academy of Early Learning, teachers were introduced to the program. There were also parenting classes to help parents understand the importance of reading aloud to their children.



Getting books ready for the red bags!

The parenting classes continued during the school year. Each class focused on a different aspect of reading.

At the Academy of Early Learning, 175 four year old students participated in this program. Students were given 4 age appropriate books in red bags to take home each week. Parents were encouraged to read the books with the children during “book cuddling”. One parent wrote “ Thank you for all four fabulous books. We enjoyed reading all of them-especially this one! It’s our new favorite read!”

In May, students were given a blue bag to take home for the summer. The blue bag contained a library card application, bookmark with reading tips, and a RAR certificate signed by the executive director. The library card applications were returned to the school and taken to the library. Children were mailed a library card during the summer.



The program is an integral part of the program at the Academy of Early Learning. Marion County is a rural area. This program provided books in the home to parents who can’t go to the library. Also it provides a wonderful opportunity for parents to bond with their children. What better way parents should spend time with their children but through reading!

**“The more that you read, the more things you’ll know. The more you learn, the more places you’ll go!”
—Dr. Seuss**

Board Members

Marion County First Steps Board continues to support changes for the better.

Understanding the importance of literacy in the early stages of life, for the second year, the Marion County First Steps Board approved the implementation of the Reading Program in Marion County. This move has proven to be a good one, based on the continuous success of the Reading Program.

Executive Director, Spencer R. Scott, along with the Board, is very pleased to see the impact this program is having with our children in their schools, in their homes and in the community as a whole. As such, the board of Marion County First Steps plans to continue allocating funding to this program next year and in years to come.

photo (right): Board Chair Annette Gerald and Executive Director Spencer Scott



2017-2018 Marion County First Steps Partnership Board

Name	Position	Board Category
Annette Gerald	Board Chair	Early Childhood
Donald Fling	Board Vice-Chairman	Faith Based Community
Rachel Mason	Board Member	Healthcare Provider
Tanya M. Hodge	Board Member	Family Educator Provider
Lula Coleman	Board Member	Non-Profit Organization
Michelline Williams	Board Member	Healthcare Provider
Bernard Gerald	Board Member	Business Community
Joanna Page	Board Member	Early Childhood Education
Sylvia Jackson	Board Member	Early Childhood Education
Tameka Swinton	Board Member	Head Start
Holly Evans	Board Member	Marion County Library
Victoria Belin	Past Board Chair	Senate Appointment

Knowledge is Power and it is obtained through Reading!! Our children MUST READ TO SUCCEED!

What is First Steps?

At the state level and in every county, First Steps leverages state funding with other public and private resources to help South Carolina's children enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed. First Steps programs and services support families as their child's first and most important teacher and are customized to meet the unique needs of local communities, grounded in strong evidence, fueled by stakeholder collaboration, and accountable for results.

First Steps Goals

- (1) provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want** to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
- (2) increase comprehensive services** so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
- (3) promote high quality preschool programs** that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
- (4) provide services** so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and
- (5) mobilize communities** to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed.

First Steps Building Blocks of Quality Early Childhood Programs and Services



Healthy
Start



Family
Strengthening



Early
Intervention



Quality
Child Care



Early
Education



School
Transition

From Greenville to Charleston, Abbeville to York, First Steps local partnerships serve as ...

Local portals connecting preschool children and families to services

Conveners of community stakeholders to address the needs of young children and their families

Champions of the importance of school readiness to our children's future.



for South Carolina First Steps:
scfirststeps.org

for Marion County First Steps:
marionfirststeps.org



[I CAN] is First Steps' public awareness campaign for school readiness, in support of the state's Profile of the Ready Kindergartener. Includes resources for parents, providers and communities to learn what they can do to support school readiness.

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Like us on Facebook: **icansc**