

Annual Report

2019-2020



THE NEED

IN Laurens COUNTY:

3,820

children under age 5

60.6%

of young children live in poverty
or low-income households

62.7%

of kindergartners are considered "not
ready" for school



THREE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS:

1. SNAP
2. single parent/head of household
3. teenage custodial parent

OUR MISSION

Collaborating with other entities, Laurens County First Steps helps local 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 .

OUR APPROACH



High quality programs and services
for children and families



Intensive training, resources and
support for childcare providers



Strategic partnerships and
community education

OUR IMPACT

1,682

number of children and adults served by
Laurens County First Steps in 2019-2020

JOIN US

We rely on a community of partners, donors, and volunteers – **people like you** – who believe in a brighter future for children and families in our community.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Laurens County First Steps staff.



This year began as most years do... busy with fall events and working with scholarship children, PAT families, and providing training for childcare providers. It ended in the most unusual and unexpected way! No one was really prepared for a worldwide pandemic. But beginning in March 2020, we quickly learned the true meaning of virtual. Virtual home visits, virtual meetings, virtual birthday celebrations, etc. Zoom burnout became a reality.

I am proud that our staff proved to be resilient and accepting of a new way to deliver our services without neglecting anyone. It is a big learning curve for all, but we want the best program services for our children and their families. We truly have learned to take 'one day at a time'. Our main goal is and always will be to get children healthy and ready to succeed in school.

Rosemary C. Patterson

Rosemary C. Patterson
Executive Director
Laurens County First Steps

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

It is an honor to serve as the chair of the First Steps of Laurens County Board of Directors. The organization is well run by a qualified and dedicated director and support staff, as well as a strong and determined group of board members.

This year we will begin our participation with Palmetto Basics to further impact the learning opportunities for young children. The Basics are 5 evidenced based parenting principles that address learning experiences for young children. This Basics teach parents how to interact with children in all aspects of daily life to enhance learning experiences at early ages.

First Steps of Laurens County continues to provide exemplary community support through Parents as Teachers, Nurse Family Partnership, and child care training. Our number one priority is serving the very young children in our community.

Carol Anne Barnes

Chair

Laurens County First Steps Board of Trustees

GETTING CHILDREN READY FOR SCHOOL

All children are ready to benefit from a quality kindergarten experience when they are five years old by September 1 of that school year. But kindergarten readiness—the critical stage at which children are prepared for learning and success—is more than a matter of age. For a strong start in school, children need positive relationships and supportive learning environments beginning at birth. At First Steps, we partner with families, caregivers, and communities to ensure that all children are prepared for success.

South Carolina's Profile of the Ready Kindergartner

Developed by SC First Steps and the SC Department of Education, the state's description of school readiness includes 60 developmental milestones across 5 categories:



**Approaches to learning
& inquiry**



Emotional & social development



**Physical development,
self-help & motor skills**



Mathematical thinking



Language & literacy development



OUR GOALS

In support of the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner, our approach is focused on advancing Laurens County toward the following strategic goals:

1. LCFS will form a committee of community leaders across all sections of Laurens County to share resources and work to make those resources readily accessible to pre-school children and their families in Laurens County.
2. LCFS will revise all printed informational materials, up-date social media platforms, and work to develop a website.

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Laurens County First Steps quickly pivoted to provide much-needed support to young children, their families and childcare providers.

Our work has never been more critical. While children are at low risk for the serious health effects of the virus, the crisis is having a profound impact on their wellbeing and development. For children of color and low-income communities, these impacts are expected to be even more damaging. That is why Laurens County First Steps is enhancing our efforts to provide parents and caregivers with the services and resources they need to weather this storm.

IMPACT ON LAURENS COUNTY

HEALTH

Through June 30, Laurens County had a total of **489** confirmed COVID-19 cases and **19** COVID-19 deaths.

JOB LOSS

215.5%

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

CHILD CARE

58.1%

children under 5 in Laurens County lived in a child care desert* before COVID-19

74.4%

children under 5 in Laurens County lived in a childcare desert as of May 28, 2020



Parent Educators get activity kits ready for our PAT families. The kits were delivered to all our families -to their porches or childcare centers. The materials in the kits were coordinated to go along with the foundational lessons that are delivered through virtual home visits. The kits contained activity folders, art supplies, and books.

*The Center for American Progress defines a childcare desert as a ZIP code with at least 30 children under the age of 5 and either no childcare centers or so few centers that there are more than three times as many children under age 5 as there are spaces in centers.



PARENTS AS TEACHERS



an evidence-based program

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a home visiting program designed to build strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to succeed. PAT services include:



Personal visits from a parent educator at least twice monthly



Monthly group connections with other PAT families



Screenings and assessments to identify developmental concerns



Connections to outside resources that families may need to succeed

PAT GOES VIRTUAL

Due to COVID-19, Parents as Teachers (PAT) National provided guidance for affiliates to deliver virtual services via interactive video conferencing and phone calls. South Carolina PAT affiliates rose to the occasion by engaging families in creative and meaningful ways while continuing to meet the Essential Requirements of implementing a quality PAT program during the pandemic.

PAT IN A LAURENS COUNTY 2019-2020

15

families served

296

total home visits

:
In October 2019, Laurens County First Steps earned Blue Ribbon Model Affiliate status for successfully completing the Quality Enhancement Improvement Process for FY19.



Parents as Teachers.
Model Affiliate



CHILD CARE TRAINING



an evidence-based program

High-quality child care hinges on high-quality professional development that meets the needs of the local child care workforce. Our training programs are certified through SC Endeavors and include topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, professional development and program administration. Our 2019-2020 trainings included:

Stress Management for Directors & Staff
Creative Activities for Children
Working with Socialization Disorders
The Incredible Preschool Years: Cognitive Development
Stress Management
Stress Can Affect Child Development
Orientation to the Regulations 101
Schedules, Routines, Transitions
Teaching Infants & Young Toddlers through Experience & Exploration
S.T.E.A.M. Infant & Toddler 101

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

359

total training attendance

178

child care teachers and
directors served

8

number of training
sessions offered

**We save money and time because of the provider training
that LCFS offers. And it's quality, useful topics.**
Regina, Child Care staff



CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS



an evidence-based program

For many families in Laurens County, the cost of quality childcare is out of reach. Our scholarship program makes payments to childcare providers to care for children from low-income families so their parents can return to school or work.

Laurens County First Steps offers scholarships to eligible families based on risk factors and income at or below 130% of the poverty level. Parents also must be in school and/or work at least 20 hours per week. All approved scholarship families are required to participate in our evidenced based Parents as Teachers program.

SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

19

number of children
served

4

number of providers
served

28

number of
developmental
screenings provided

The money paid to childcare providers helps to support local businesses to benefit the citizens of Laurens County.

4K

FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN



an evidence-based program

South Carolina First Steps provides eligible children with free enrollment in full-day four-year-old kindergarten. In coordination with First Steps local partnerships and more than 230 private, community and faith-based preschool providers, First Steps 4K expands access to quality early education across the state.



ELIGIBILITY

To qualify for enrollment, a child must be:



4 years old on or before September 1



Eligible for Medicaid, SNAP or TANF, experiencing homelessness or transiency, or in foster care

FIRST STEPS 4K IN LAURENS COUNTY 2019-2020

77

children enrolled

3

First Steps 4K providers

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When schools closed due to COVID-19, First Steps 4K classroom converted to distance-learning, with teachers creatively supporting their young learners through video chat, take-home materials, and hands-on projects that caregivers could facilitate at home.





COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Addressing the needs of young children is a shared endeavor. In addition to providing services to families and support for childcare providers, Laurens County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Laurens County begin school ready to succeed. We serve

as a:

LOCAL PORTAL

connecting preschool children and
their families to services

CONVENER

of community stakeholders to develop an effective
and comprehensive early childhood system

CHAMPION

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

OUR PARTNERSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

1626

Books Distributed

19

Child Care
Scholarships



**Laurens County First Steps Scholarships have made a huge
difference for many of our families.**
Child Center Director





OUR SUPPORTERS

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

FUNDING SUPPORT

State of South Carolina

Center for Child Care Career Development

Private Donations

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Laurens County Adult Education

Laurens County School District 55

The Lakelands Region YMCA of SC-Laurens Facility

JOIN US

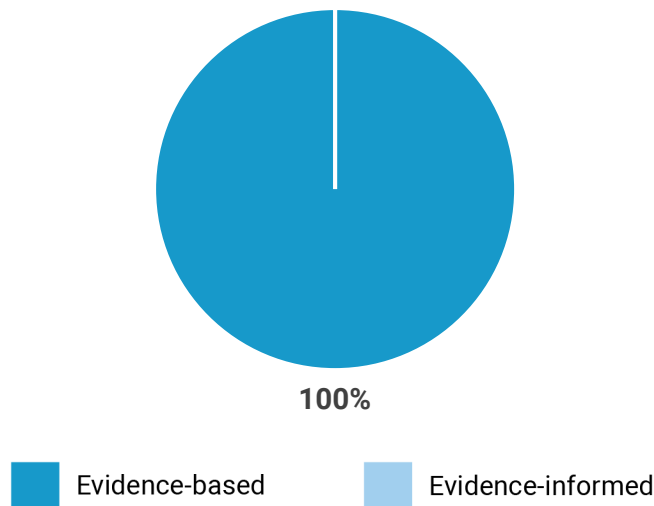
For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at
laurensfirststeps.com



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Laurens County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,526,629** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.46** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$75,646	0	\$651	\$3,814	\$80,112
Child Care Scholarships	\$98,447	\$1,516	\$9,467	\$1,399	\$110,829
Child Care Training	\$15,417	0	\$2,332	\$6,942	\$24,590
Nurse Family Partnership	\$733	0	0	0	0
Partnerships & Community Education	\$13,057	0	\$212	\$692	\$13,961
Administrative Support	\$8,527	0	\$285	\$5,153	\$13,966
Total Expenses	\$211,827	\$1,516	\$12,847	\$18,000	\$244,190



LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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STAFF

Rosemary C. Patterson, Executive Director
Sandra Owens, Administrative Assistant
Caroline Barker, Parent Educator
Kathryn Meadows, Parent Educator.

CONTACT US

1029 West Main Street Laurens, SC 29360 (864) 984-8130 laurensfirststeps.com
rpatterson@laurens55.org

