



Annual Report 2020-2021





OUR MISSION

Laurens County First Steps works with community partners, local families, and caregivers to prepare their children for school success by providing high-quality early childhood resources.

OUR VALUES

Laurens County First Steps will:

- *Deliver high quality services & strategies*
- *Engage collaborative community partners*
- *Support parents as their child's first teacher*
- *Support diversity, equity, and inclusion*
- *Serve as a community portal and convener for services available to families*
- *Support all state school readiness priorities*

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 OVERARCHING MEASURES OF SUCCESS

INCREASE THE REACH OF LAURENS COUNTY FIRST STEPS SERVICES

OUR OBJECTIVES

1. **CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY LITERACY MATERIALS**
2. **PARENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO RESOURCES THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF THEIR CHILDREN**
3. **FAMILIES ARE SUPPORTED AS THEIR CHILD'S FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT TEACHER.**

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.



Gain valuable experience and give back to your community through service with First Steps AmeriCorps. Our AmeriCorps members **engage directly with families and communities**, helping to ensure that all children start school ready to reach their highest potential. Apply at scfirststeps.org/AmeriCorps.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Laurens County First Steps Staff participating in a job fair event.

FY21 like FY20 was a very interesting year of virtual meetings and attempting to keep up with the latest COVID protocols and learning more about vaccinations.

It has taken a lot of planning to assure that our programs would operate with fidelity. As in previous years we were able to meet all the standards for programs as well as governance for FY21. We began making plans for accomplishing goals in our 2020-2023 Comprehensive Plan. It remains to be seen if we will be able to resume "normal" operations in FY22, but we do know that we now have the experience to make our agency perform as intended regardless of the challenges.

Rosemary C. Patterson
Executive Director
Laurens County First Steps

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Carol Anne Barnes, Ed.S.

Chair

Laurens County First Steps Board of Trustees

The past year brought us many challenges. While some aspects of our operations were able to go back to normal, many did not. Our board meetings remained virtual, and many events were not held as usual.

The board worked throughout the year to ensure they provided support and encouragement for the director and staff. Covid has certainly made an impact on everyone. We did receive grants to support our objectives, specifically in providing access to literature to the young children of Laurens County.

Carol Anne Barnes

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 VISION

Every Laurens County child will enter school healthy and ready to succeed.

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 LAURENS COUNTY 2020-2021

Families and children served 12 Families 19 Children

Total number of “home visits” 277 Total
4 In Person
273 Virtual

At the end of the FY21 program year, we had 6 who aged out of our program. Each of these had been served by LCFS for 4 years.

This is a great retention rate in serving children and families effectively.



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:

- Childhood Illness & Foundations of Guidance
- Recruiting and Retaining Staff
- Biting & Toilet Learning
- Motivating Staff
- Integrating More Nature into Your Learning Environment
- Let's Play

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

31

total training attendance

31

child care teachers and directors served

6

number of training sessions offered



This has been such a confusing time for everyone. Thanks to LCFS we were able to complete our required professional development through online resources provided by them.

Child Care Center Director





CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS



an evidence-based program

Laurens County First Steps (LCFS) provides scholarships for children of eligible families in quality childcare centers in Laurens County. Our goal is to serve the most at risk families. The families participate in the "Parents as Teachers" program which includes a nationally recognized curriculum to help parents to be the best "first teacher" for their children. Parents and children work with a Parent Educator who provides experiences and learning activities in all developmental areas. Parent Educators work with families during home visits and parent group connections. LCFS's PAT program is designed to serve families from birth until the child can begin in a 4K program.

Through collaboration with Laurens County School District 55, Laurens County First Steps provides the "Parents as Teachers" program to teen parents who attend the local high school. We work with Stepping Stones Learning Academy, Tender Loving Child Care, Big Blue Marble Academy, and Young World.

Childcare in Laurens County for children 6 weeks to 36 months costs approximately \$5,480 to \$6,000 per year. Eligible families have a co-pay of \$15 weekly and LCFS pays the rest!

SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

19

number of children served

4

number of providers served

21

number of developmental screenings provided

100% of the money paid to child care providers goes back into our local economy to benefit the citizens of LAURENS County.



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
2020-2021**

66

children enrolled

3

First Steps 4K providers

PREPARING FOR STATEWIDE EXPANSION

With First Steps 4K, families are in the driver's seat. They choose the program that best meets their needs. Families can enroll their child in any of the 244 private, nonprofit, or faith-based child care centers or schools participating in the program. The majority of First Steps 4K providers offer 8-hour day and year-round instruction, including summers, which is at no cost to parents.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Addressing the needs of young children is a shared endeavor. In addition to providing services to families and support for child care 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 2020-2021

1,957

Books given to
families we serve
as well as
community
members

19

Scholarships for
At Risk Children



**I could not work to support my family if I didn't have the
scholarships for my 2 youngest kids.**
Single mom of 4





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
Federal PDG Funds
Private Donations**

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Laurens County School District 55

Laurens County Lifelong Learning/Family Literacy

The Lakelands Region YMCA of SC-Laurens Facility

JOIN US

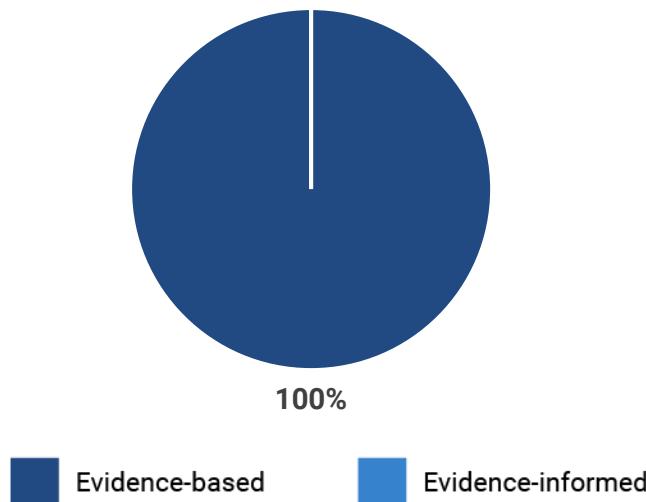
For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at
laurenscountyfirststeps.org or call 864-984-8130



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 **\$2,566,277.94** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.45** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$73,693	\$2,000	\$4,042	\$3,813	\$83,548
Child Care Scholarships	\$106,640	\$	\$12,218	\$1,400	\$120,258
Child Care Training	\$12,855	\$	\$949	\$6,942	\$20,746
Partnerships & Community Education	\$12,001	\$864	\$659	\$692	\$14,216
Administrative Support	\$8,051	\$	\$917	\$5,153	\$14,121
Total Expenses	\$213,240	\$2,864	\$18,785	\$18,000	\$252,889



LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Renita Barksdale
Valerie Gaines
JC (Calvin) Whitmire

STAFF

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

CONTACT US

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