



# 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](http://scfirststeps.org/AmeriCorps).



# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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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

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Rosemary C. Patterson'.

# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

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**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

<b>Families and children served</b>	<b>12 Families</b>
	<b>19 Children</b>
<b>Total number of "home visits"</b>	<b>277 Total</b>
	<b>4 In Person</b>
	<b>273 Virtual</b>

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**

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## 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

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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

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## 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**

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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**

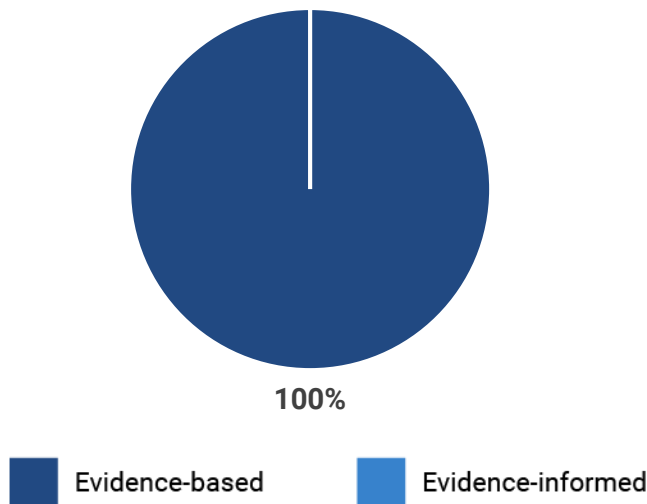
For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at  
**[laurenscountyfirststeps.org](http://laurenscountyfirststeps.org)** or call **864-984-8130**



# 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
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$213,240</b>	<b>\$2,864</b>	<b>\$18,785</b>	<b>\$18,000</b>	<b>\$252,889</b>



## LEADERSHIP

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Carol Anne Barnes, *Chair***

**Kena Cox *Vice-Chair***

**Jennifer Abercrombie**

**Jenn Adams**

**Laurie Seawright, *Secretary***

**David Leslie**

**John Stankus**

**Melodie Edwards**

**Meredith Hutchinson**

**Jervelle Fort**

**Elizabeth Franklin**

**Shawn Brown**

***Christie Coates***

**Katelyn Crews Tollison**

**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

1029 West Main Street | 864-984-8130 | [laurensfirststeps.org](http://laurensfirststeps.org)

