



# Annual Report

2020-2021







## OUR MISSION

**To prepare children for school success by delivering, enhancing, and expanding high-quality early childhood services.**

## OUR VALUES

The years of early childhood are critical windows of development during which much of human potential is shaped.

All children are inherently worthy of receiving the best possible start in life and are the most valuable resource for the future of our community. Responsive, nurturing relationships with consistent caregivers in a safe, stimulating learning environment create the best possible chance for children's healthy development and school readiness.

Families are the single most important influence on the development of young children.

The work of supporting families and caregivers is a collaborative effort between state and local stakeholders within the public, private, and faith sectors.

School readiness is the result of a child's development in many areas - including physical development, approaches to learning and inquiry, social and emotional development, language and literacy development, and mathematical thinking - with each contributing to the child's success.

We value and demonstrate diverse perspectives in the development of programs. Services must be individualized and adaptable to meet the unique needs of children and families and we ensure that all families have the opportunity to be successful.

## OUR OVERARCHING MEASURES OF SUCCESS

**Increase the reach of Edgefield County First Steps services**

**Increase the number of children enrolled in high intensity programs funded by Edgefield County First Steps**

## OUR OBJECTIVES

**Educate community about programs and services offered by Edgefield County First Steps**

**Ensure that high quality programs will be accessible, equitable, and affordable for Edgefield County families**

**Support families 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).

# First Steps successfully gets children ready for school.

## South Carolina

**341,977**  
children under age 6

**46%**  
of young children live in poverty  
or low-income households

Data Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey

In fall 2020, **27%** of entering  
kindergartners were ready.

Data Source: [2020 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results](#)

Compared to their like peers, children  
who received First Steps services  
were...

**34%** less likely to be chronically  
absent in kindergarten.

**74%** more likely to enter  
kindergarten ready.

Data Source: [2019 External Evaluation of First Steps](#)

## Edgefield County

**1,194**  
children under age 6

**51%**  
of young children live in poverty  
or low-income households

Data Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey

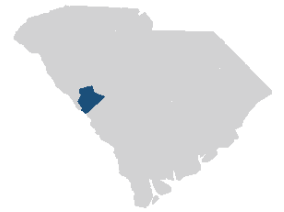
In fall 2020, **16%** of entering kindergartners  
in Edgefield County were ready.

Data Source: [2020 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results](#)

**8,573**  
children, adults, and workforce members were served  
by Edgefield County First Steps in FY20-21.

Since inception,  
Edgefield County First Steps  
has leveraged  
**\$2,272,770.25**  
from sources outside of  
state government.

That is  
**\$0.64**  
for every  
state dollar.



School District	# of children <6	% of young children living in poverty or low-income households	# entering kindergartners tested	% ready
Edgefield	1,194	51%	238	16%



# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

---



## **Candi Lalonde**

Executive Director  
Edgefield County First Steps

Wow, what a year we just finished. Our 2020-2021 year began still in the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, and it ended the same way. While our new normal is now social distancing, masks, and virtual meetings, our mission remains the same – addressing and meeting the needs of young children and their families.

We are so appreciative of the support we have received, not only this past year, but throughout our more than 20 years of serving Edgefield County. I thank our legislators who work so hard to ensure that we have funding for our programs. I thank our community agency partners for providing much needed referrals and support services for our programs. I thank our vendors who provide the direct services to our families. I thank our Board members, who volunteer their time and expertise to guide the programs and operations of Edgefield County First Steps.

It is through the hard work and dedication of many that we continue to remain a strong presence throughout our county, working toward our vision of having every Edgefield County child be prepared for success in school.

***Candi Lalonde***

# 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**

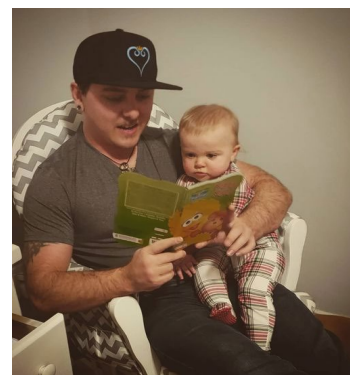


**Language & literacy development**



## OUR VISION

Every Edgefield County  
child will be  
prepared for  
success in school.





# NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP



*an evidence-based program*

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) helps transform the lives of first-time mothers and their babies. Through ongoing home visits from registered nurses, moms receive the care and support they need to have a healthy pregnancy, provide responsible and competent care for their children, and become more economically self-sufficient. From pregnancy until the child turns two years old, Nurse-Family Partnership Nurse Home Visitors form a much-needed, trusting relationship with their clients, instilling confidence and empowering them to achieve a better life for their children – and themselves.

## BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

**12**

children served

**128**

number of home  
visits provided



My nurse has taught me things I had no idea about before I had my baby.



Her advice on baby foods and what to feed my baby has been so helpful.

**Quotes from Edgefield County NFP mothers**





## AMERICORPS

First Steps AmeriCorps provides part- and full-time service opportunities with Local Partnerships across South Carolina. Participating Local Partnerships, or AmeriCorps Service Sites, are selected through applications submitted as part of South Carolina First Steps' grantmaking process. There were 3 member roles during the 2020-21 program year: Community Education and Outreach, Family Support, and Parent Educator. AmeriCorps member activities ranged from providing one-on-one support for families using the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) International curriculum to hosting events about school readiness and local early childhood services.



### Number of Edgefield County AmeriCorps Members

**1**

### Hours served in the community

**546**

Edgefield and Saluda County First Steps shared an AmeriCorps Family Support member during the 2020-2021 program year. She was invaluable in working with our current families and assisting with outreach and recruitment efforts in the community and at local events.

### Segal Education Award

**\$3,097.50**

total in Segal Education Awards  
received by all members serving  
at the Local Partnership





# IMAGINATION LIBRARY



*an evidence-based program*

As the local affiliate of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, we provide free, high-quality books to children from birth until age five, no matter their family's income.

Children enrolled in our Imagination Library program receive one book per month by mail. Each title is selected by a panel of early childhood literacy experts, who are responsible for choosing books that meet the age-specific developmental needs of young children.

## IMAGINATION LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

**285**      **2,456**

children served

books distributed

Books are 100% free to children in Edgefield County because Edgefield County First Steps secures the funds to cover the cost of books and shipping fees.

**Sponsor a child for just \$27 a year.**





# CHILD CARE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT



*an evidence-based program*

Many private child care centers strive to provide high quality care but lack the resources often available to publicly-funded early childhood programs. Our Child Care Quality Enhancement (QE) program aims to produce measurable improvements in the quality of care provided to young children.

Our services include:



Rigorous quality assessments



On-site technical assistance at least twice monthly



Funding for equipment and materials



Training and workforce development



Coordination with community partners

## QE BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

**2**

child care providers served

**67**

number of TA visits provided

**79**

number of children 0-5 enrolled in provider classrooms



Joy Burge, QE Coach/TA for Edgefield County First Steps, works with Aramis Hillary, Director of Little Folks Day Care, as part of follow-up from a recent training.



## 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 2020-2021 trainings included:

**Our training theme this past year was:**

**“Themes in Early Care and Education”**

**Workshop topics included using themes in the classrooms, social-emotional skills, classroom arrangement, stress management, developmental milestones, using redirection to reinforce limits, fine and gross motor skills, meal-time success, building and maintaining relationships, bloodborne pathogens, and engaging in continuous quality improvement.**

### TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

**447**

total training attendance

**104**

child care teachers and  
directors served

**34**

number of training  
sessions offered



I love all the trainings provided by Edgefield County First Steps. I learn new things at each class and I really enjoy listening to and talking with fellow teachers from other centers and family homes. It really helps me grow as an early childhood teacher.



**Kathy Doran, Family Child Care Provider, Edgefield County**



## CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS



*an evidence-based program*

For many families in Edgefield County, the cost of quality child care is out of reach.

Our scholarship program makes payments to child care providers to care for children from families who have risk factors that might impact their child's success in school.

The children in this program receive developmental screenings and are enrolled in our Imagination Library program.

The parents of our scholarship children also attend classes through our Nurturing Parenting program.

---

### SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

**23**

number of children  
served

**2**

number of providers  
served

**26**

number of  
developmental  
screenings provided

**100% of the money paid to child care providers  
goes back into our local economy  
and benefits the citizens of Edgefield 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 EDGEFIELD COUNTY 2020-2021

**6**

children enrolled

**1**

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.



## NURTURING PARENTING PROGRAM



*an evidence-based program*

The Edgefield County First Steps Nurturing Parenting Strategy is designed to empower individuals and families with new knowledge, beliefs, strategies, and skills to make good and healthy lifestyle choices through group -based parenting sessions.

Our child care scholarship families are referred to this program and we receive referrals from community partners such as the Edgefield County Department of Social Services and the local physicians' offices.

### NURTURING PARENTING BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

**19**

families  
served

**36**

total group  
meeting hours



All the knowledge and skills I learned from these classes, I will be able to use in my everyday life, not just with my kids, but with people in general. I appreciate these classes. They have taught me that sometimes you just have to take a moment and breathe! Life is not fair all the time. Love on your kids and always encourage them. Be their biggest fan! I thank you from the bottom of my heart.



**Shaunte, Nurturing Parenting Participant**



## FAMILY LITERACY



*an evidence-informed program*

Family literacy programs offer an integrated and family-friendly approach, helping both parents and children improve their literacy skills. Family literacy services integrate all the following: adult education, early childhood education, parent education, and interactive parent/child activities.

Our family literacy program helps parents of young children increase their education levels; teaches parents how to support their child's literacy and overall development; and provides quality early learning experiences for children 0-5 while their parents attend adult education.

### FAMILY LITERACY BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

**18**

Number of  
families served

**860**

Adult education hours  
attended

**71**

Home visits  
completed

**566**

parenting hours  
attended

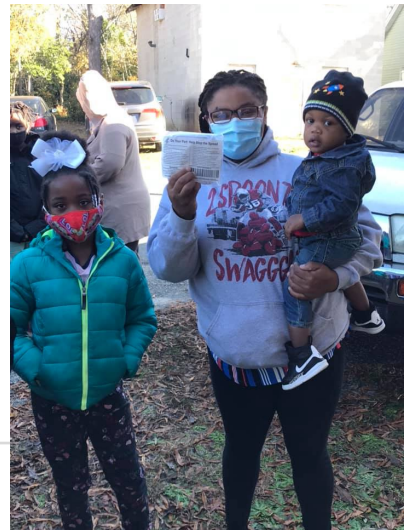


One of the most important components of the Family Literacy model is the parent/child together time. Each morning, parents sit with their child in the on-site early childhood classroom and spend some time playing with them and/or reading to them.





## PUBLIC AWARENESS



## COMMUNITY EVENTS BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

**2,000**

Materials  
Distributed

**23**

Participation  
Events

Edgefield County First Steps has developed a community education and outreach plan that includes the following activities:

1. Develop, produce, and/or distribute public education materials to promote our partnership's mission and inform the public of available resources.
2. Sponsor, co-sponsor, and/or participate in community events that reach our target audience, encourage community engagement, and create public awareness.
3. Use effective online and social media to communicate, inform, and activate.
4. Educate and engage local and state policymakers and other community leaders on the local impact of First Steps.
5. Network, coordinate, and convene local stakeholders to collaboratively build a system of care for early childhood.





## 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, Edgefield County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Edgefield County begin school ready to succeed.

### 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 SUPPORTERS

---

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

Additional support comes from local businesses, groups, and individuals.

### FUNDING SUPPORT

South Carolina First Steps: \$200,000  
Center for Child Care Career Development: \$2,000  
Preschool Development Grant - \$1,000  
Women in Rural Electrification (W.I.R.E.) – Aiken Electric Cooperative  
United Way of Edgefield  
Beth McLeod, Fulcher Law Firm  
Dr. G.L. Rainsford  
Heather Highsmith  
Dr. Jeffery Gosney  
Town of Trenton  
Reel Insurance Agency, Inc.  
Edgefield Educational Consulting Services, LLC  
Sumner Law Firm, LLC  
Amazon  
100% of Edgefield County First Steps Board Members  
Over 30 additional individual sponsors

### IN-KIND SUPPORT

Edgefield County School District  
Carolina Health Centers, Inc.  
Edgefield County Chamber of Commerce  
First Book  
Foster Grandparent Program

## JOIN US

For more information on partnership opportunities, contact 803-275-0800

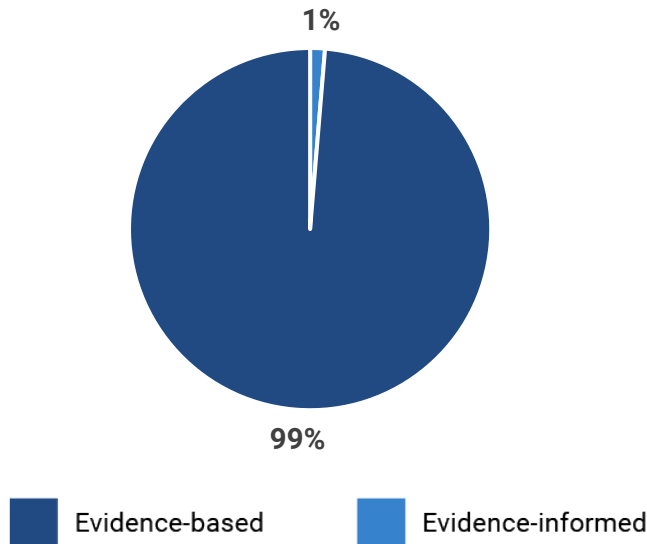
or go to our website at [www.edgefieldfirststeps.org](http://www.edgefieldfirststeps.org)



## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

### OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

#### Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



### ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Edgefield County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,272,770** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.64** for every state dollar.

### SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Family Literacy/Early Education	\$37,108	\$0	\$8,113	\$107,653	\$152,874
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$24,529	\$0	\$40	\$288	\$24,857
Imagination Library	\$3,458	\$0	\$3,802	\$72	\$7,332
Child Care Training	\$16,128	\$0	\$1,462	\$540	\$18,130
Nurse Family Partnership	\$26,179	\$0	\$10	\$5,172	\$31,361
Nurturing Parenting	\$7,017	\$0	\$281	\$144	\$7,442
Child Care Scholarships	\$64,622	\$0	\$49	\$360	\$65,031
Partnerships & Community Education	\$16,373	\$1,000	\$3,620	\$20,731	\$41,724
Administrative Support	\$21,239	\$0	\$357	\$1,260	\$22,856
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$216,653</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$17,734</b>	<b>\$136,220</b>	<b>\$371,607</b>



## LEADERSHIP

---

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Betsy Painter, Chair	Phyllis Lott
Renee Williams, Vice-Chair	Blair Massey
Janice Cleveland, Secretary	Elizabeth Posey
Jaime Creasy	Jennifer Satterwhite
Carla Dorn	Moronda Talley
Cynthia Howard	Heather Trotter
Jenny Herlong	Stephanie Wallace
Aramis Hillary	Amy Wilhelm
Gail Jackson	

### STAFF

Candi Lalonde, Executive Director  
Joy Burge, Quality Enhancement Coach/Technical Assistant  
Deborah Padgett, Nurturing Parenting Instructor

### CONTACT US

**Office Location - 416 Calhoun Street, Johnston, SC 29832**

**Mailing Address - P.O. Box 295, Edgefield, SC 29824**

**[candi@edgefieldfirststeps.org](mailto:candi@edgefieldfirststeps.org)**

**803-275-0800**









## **Edgefield County First Steps**

654 Youngblood Road  
Edgefield, SC  
29824

(803) 275-0800

**SCFIRSTSTEPS.ORG**