



NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2027 – 2029



Message from the Executive Director



Candi Lalonde

Executive Director
Edgefield County First Steps

Every three years, the First Steps legislation requires that each First Steps Partnership Board identify the county's needs and resources. We use this time to review data relevant to the health and well-being of families with young children in our county, ascertain ideas about school readiness of young children, and determine the greatest needs of families with young children.

While we spend time with our community partners and families on a regular basis, our Board and staff look forward to this activity as it affords us the opportunity to formally recognize the resources located in our county and evaluate the needs of the families with young children.

The feedback we receive during this process is used to inform our programs and services for the next three years so that we are better able to meet the needs of families with young children. We do all this in support of our vision that every Edgefield County child will be prepared for success in school.

Candi Lalonde

Needs Assessment Process

SURVEY

Distributed a community survey to determine the needs and resources for young children and their families

September 2025 – October 2025

PRIORITIZE

Organized the insight gathered to prioritize the concerns, needs, and gaps the partnership wants to address in order to formalize the Needs Assessment

November 2025

UNDERSTAND

Reviewed local data and assets to understand the state of young children, their families, and the early childhood system

October 2025 – November 2025

“Lack of transportation to medical and dental services, lack of parental knowledge related to health and safety, low literacy levels, lack of sufficient medical outreach programs, lack of pediatricians who accept Medicaid, inadequate low-income housing, and other issues related to poverty are some of the biggest health or safety challenges young children face in Edgefield County” –
Community Survey Participant Response

“First Steps, local library, Head Start, Early Head Start, schools, childcare centers, and the recreation department are some resources in our community that help families with young children” -
Community Survey Participant Response

Edgefield County Asset Map



Priority Area One:

Quality and Affordable Childcare

In South Carolina, among parents of children younger than six, 81% pay for childcare and they primarily pick their childcare provider based on affordability.

Data source: U.S Chamber of Commerce Foundation in partnership with SC Chamber of Commerce and SC DSS

On the community survey completed by Edgefield County residents, over 66% stated that the support that families with young children most need is affordable childcare.

There are 3 licensed childcare centers in Edgefield County. All are enrolled in the ABC Quality program and all are rated at the C level.

“The scholarship I receive has been such a blessing to our family. It eases the financial pressure and allows my child to participate and learn without me having to worry about how we’re going to make ends meet. We’re truly grateful for the support.” – S. Kirk, Edgefield County First Steps ABC Scholarship Recipient.



Priority Area Two: Provide Programs for Parent Education and Support

In the past 2 program years, 63 parents have completed an intensive, evidenced-based parenting program offered by Edgefield County First steps

Data source: Edgefield County First Steps program records

On the community survey completed by Edgefield County residents, over 53% stated that the support that families with young children most need are parenting education classes.

“I love the classes – just the fact that we are learning different ways to handle our kids and listening to others knowing that we are not alone in this struggle of raising our kids.” – N Martin, Triple P Parenting Participant



Priority Area Three: Provide Tutoring, Training, and Support for Children to Master Age-Appropriate Skills

Only 40% of Edgefield County Kindergarteners demonstrate Readiness on the Most Recent SC Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

Data Source: South Carolina Department of Education

During our 2024-2025 program year, more than 100 developmental screenings were done for children under age 5. Suspected delays were shared with parents and childcare center staff along with age-appropriate developmental activities and/or referrals to outside agencies for further assessment.

“The First Steps Enhanced Early Education program provides personalized and focused support that we can see improves the academic performance of our students.” – Laura Meteraud, 4K teacher at Merriwether Elementary School



Next Steps

PLAN

Write the partnership's three-year Strategic Plan using the Needs Assessment

January 2026 – February 2026

APPLY

Utilize the Strategic Plan to inform the partnership's three-year Grant Application

March 2026

IMPLEMENT

Execute the programs and services outlined in the Strategic Plan

July 2026 – June 2029

MONITOR

Track the partnership's progress on implementing programs to fidelity and on achieving the Strategic Plan

July 2026 – June 2029



