



Getting children ready for school.



- Early Identification and Referral
- Parents as Teachers with Family Literacy
- Book Flood
- Nurse Family Partnership
- Child Care Scholarships
- Child Care Training

Annual Report

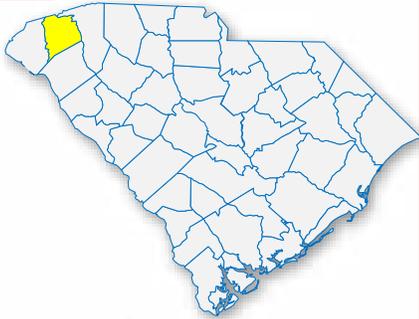
2015-2016



OUR MISSION:

Creating a community where children are ready for school!

First Steps WORKS for the children of Pickens County.



By The Numbers

| Indicator | SC | Pickens County |
|--|---------|----------------|
| Children Under Five | 290,519 | 6,074 |
| Children In Poverty | 27.3% | 21.9% |
| 3 rd Graders Below Standard in Reading | 21.1% | 20.2% |
| Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma | 15.7% | 18.4% |



- Since inception, Pickens First Steps has leveraged \$1,812,105.04 from sources outside state government. **That's \$.31 for every dollar received.**



Pickens County First Steps continues to focus on the importance of early experiences because we know these experiences affect the brain for decades to come.

This year we continued to invite our community members of all ages to become a super hero for our youngest learners. Our weekly blog post focused on everyday ways our local super heroes could help improve school readiness. You can read more on our blog by clicking [here](#).

With each community outreach event, we provided all our young children with a brand new book. PCFS integrated literacy within all of our programs. We partnered, built and installed 6 Little Free Libraries at each Born Learning Trail in the county. We began offering childcare scholarships to families seeking to become financially stable. We partnered with the YMCA to offer trainings for their child watch, after-school care and summer camp staff.

As we continue to meet needs in our county, I invite you to join Pickens County First Steps in being a super hero for our youngest learners, our future. Their voice is not always heard and they do not get the opportunity to choose their family. Read a book, ask questions, listen, speak the truth, encourage young parents, volunteer. Show a child that they are valued. Early experiences matter!

Thank you for the continued privilege of serving as a voice for the least of these.



County Programs

- Book Flood
- Child Care Scholarships
- Early Identification and Referral
- Parents as Teachers
- Community Education
- Child Care Trainings

State Programs

- BabyNet
- Nurse Family Partnerships

What We Do

Each of the six color blocks of the First Steps logo represents a core area of service, outlining our comprehensive strategy to prepare children for long-term school success.

With **measurable outcomes across each of its six school readiness strategy areas**, First Steps is getting results.



Healthy Start

We begin with a focus on providing a healthy start to life. This includes prenatal and post-partum services for both mother and baby. In 2007, First Steps collaborated with key philanthropic and agency partners to bring Nurse-Family Partnership to SC having a significant impact on reducing premature births and Medicaid costs.



Quality Childcare

Quality childcare starts with quality childcare providers. Our quality enhancement and training strategies lead to improved teacher-student interaction, which research shows has a significant impact on a child's development and success in school.



Family Strengthening

Our home visitation strategies, such as Parents as Teachers, Parent-Child Home and Early Steps to School Success, are helping parents understand their responsibilities to care for and be positive models for their children. As a result of First Steps' intervention and parenting support, 66% of clients initially assessed at "low" levels of parenting have achieved moderate or high levels of parenting skill.



Early Education

Private-public partnerships through First Steps 4K have led to significant cost efficiencies in the delivery of publicly funded 4K. One recent analysis suggests First Steps is achieving comparable results, without the need for costly capital construction, for 80 cents on the dollar.



Early Intervention

According to recent federal evaluations, outcomes for clients participating in BabyNet early intervention programs are above national averages. BabyNet matches the special needs of infants and toddlers who have disabilities and/or developmental delays with customized, community-based resources.



School Transition

Each of the corresponding blocks of services leads ultimately to the goal of transitioning children successfully to school. Programs like Countdown to Kindergarten and From Day One to Grade One are ultimately preparing children for school success.

Based on the needs of our community, Pickens County First focuses its investments in:
Quality Childcare, Family Strengthening, Early Education, Early Intervention and Community Engagement.

Helping vulnerable first-time mothers empowers them to achieve a better life for themselves and their children.

Program Description

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) helps transform the lives of vulnerable first-time mothers and their babies. Through ongoing home visits from registered nurses, low-income, first-time 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 the first-time moms, instilling confidence and empowering them to achieve a better life for their children and themselves.

In Pickens County, Nurse-Family Partnership is implemented through the Greenville Hospital System.



Pickens First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our NFP families:

- 100% of clients live in poverty.
- 43% are teen moms.
- 80% delivered full term, healthy babies.

NFP by the Numbers, 2015-16

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Moms Served | 30 |
| Number of Home Visits | 562 |

Be a Great Mom!

This year, our NFP program:

- ✓ 100% of children with a developmental delay were identified and referred.
- ✓ 16 healthy babies were delivered

Thank you to our partners!

BabyNet
 School District of Pickens County
 Greenville Hospital System
 Pickens County DSS

Pickens County First Steps

PO Box 1113
 Central, SC 29630
 864-654-3000
www.PickensCountyFirstSteps.org

Early Identification and Referral

Identifying and referring children with possible developmental delays can help assure school readiness.

Program Description

Early Steps Identification (ESI) serves families with young children with suspected delays in development and coordinates public awareness for BabyNet services. ESI acts as a local portal to connect families to community-based services they may need or services they may desire to ensure the school readiness of their children.

EI&R services include:

1. **Screenings** (developmental, vision, hearing) for children ages birth to 5 years with suspected delays in development
2. **Referrals**, based up the screening results, to appropriate community resources. This could include the local BabyNet System Point of Entry Office, the local school district, and/or support services such as speech therapy, physical therapy, and programs in libraries and other community resources.
3. **Parent information** including strategies to monitor growth and development.

Our EI&R program:

- ✓ Provides early detection of developmental delays and health issues
- ✓ Promotes services and activities that promote child development
- ✓ Increases children's school readiness and school success



Research tells us that the time between birth and 36 months is a critical developmental period in a child's life. These months offer a window of opportunity that will not be available later.

EI&R by the Numbers 2015-16

| | |
|---|------|
| Children Served | 427 |
| Materials Distributed | 2271 |
| Children Referred to BabyNet, Local School, or Other Services | 26 |

This year, ESI:

- ✓ Screened children for hearing concerns
- ✓ Screened 26 children for developmental delay
- ✓ Referred 91 families to community resources

Thank you to our partners!

| | |
|---|--|
| Ahead Start | Help Me Grow |
| Fundament Communications | Pickens County Board of Disabilities and Special Needs |
| Family Connection of SC | Pickens YMCA |
| Children's Services Council of Pickens County | School District of Pickens County |
| United Way of Pickens County | SC Inclusion Collaborative |

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Parents are their first and best teachers.

Program Description

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

1. **Personal Visits** at least twice monthly
2. **Monthly Group Connections** with other PAT families
3. **Screenings and Assessments** to identify developmental concerns
4. **Connections to Outside Resources** that families may need to succeed

Pickens First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our PAT families:

- 100% live in poverty.
- 48% were teen parents.
- 42% are single-parent homes.



"The first 5 years have so much to do with next 80."

--Bill Gates

PAT by the Numbers 2015-16

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Families Served | 30 |
| Children 0-5 Served | 33 |
| Total Home Visits | 735 |
| Hours Spent Serving Families | 735 |

This year, our Parents as Teachers program:

- ✓ Averaged 3 home visits per month per family
- ✓ Conducted over 75 developmental screenings
- ✓ Identified and addressed 10 children with potential developmental delays
- ✓ Improved parenting practices scores by an average of 86%
- ✓ Distributed over 300 books to families
- ✓ Made 205 connections for families to community resources

Thank you to our partners!

Children's Services Council of Pickens County
SC Resource and Referral Network
School District of Pickens County
Safe Kids Upstate
Pickens County Library System

Pickens County First Steps

PO Box 1113
Central, SC 29630
864-654-3000
www.PickensCountyFirstSteps.org

Child Care Scholarships

Many families in Pickens County cannot afford quality care for their children.

Program Description

Access to quality childcare is essential for children while away from their primary caregivers. Yet, of those families income-eligible for child care assistance in South Carolina, only a small fraction receive it due to lack of funds. In the absence of nurturing and consistently available family, friends or neighbors, parents are faced with few or no affordable care options.

Pickens County First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our scholarship families:

- 100% live in poverty.
- 100% are single parent homes.
- 10% had developmental delays.

In addition to regular monitoring of child care providers that receive First Steps scholarships, First Steps conducts at least two developmental screenings each year with scholarship children and connects families to needed services within the community.

Scholarships by the Numbers, 2015-16

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Children Served | 9 |
| Providers Served | 3 |

“The PCFS scholarship program allowed me to go back to school! I knew my baby was safe and loved while I was at a school.” -C’s mom



[I CAN] get off to a great start because I attend a quality childcare center!

This year, our scholarship program:

Provided 9 children with scholarship assistance so their parents could work or attend school

- Identified and addressed potential developmental delays among scholarship children
- Connected families to community resources
- Supported 3 small businesses in Pickens County by subsidizing child care tuition for families who would not otherwise be able to afford quality care
- Provided training on the importance of Quality Child Care to parents

Thank you to our partners!

- United Way of Pickens County
- Clemson Child Development Center
- Geer Memorial CDC
- Small World of Easley
- Pickens Presbyterian CDC

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Child Care Training

Those who care for young children need high-quality, accessible, and affordable professional development.

Program Description

High-quality child care hinges on high-quality professional development that meets the needs of the local childcare workforce.

First Steps-sponsored training is certified through the SC Center for Child Care Career Development and includes topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, professional development and program administration. Best practices in training include not only the training itself, but follow-up in the classroom.

"Intentional Teachers are playful, purposeful and thoughtful! I'm learning how to apply that in my classroom."
 -Robbie



Training by the Numbers, 2015-16

| | |
|--|----|
| Total Training Attendance | 50 |
| Child Care Teachers and Directors Served | 50 |
| Hours of Training Offered | 8 |

This year, our Training program provided:

- ✓ 50 early childhood staff with high quality training
- ✓ 8 hours of certified training for staff to meet annual requirements
- ✓ 16 follow-up visits with training participants to help put training into practice

Thank you to our partners!

- Pickens County Library System
- SC Child Care Resource and Referral
- Zero to Three
- SC Center for Child Care Career and Development
- SC Inclusion Collaborative

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Book Flood

Children's reading scores improve dramatically when parents are involved in helping them learn to read.

Program Description

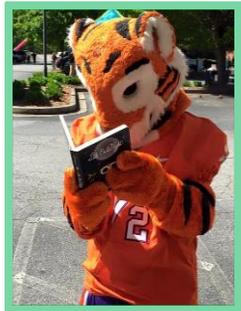
According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, the peak period for brain development related to language is around nine months of age. One of the easiest and most effective ways to build this capacity in young children's brains is to read to them.

Book Flood is a literacy model designed to enhance book exposure and increase shared reading time at home. It also develops, enhances, and increases literacy awareness skills in a home / school collaboration while fostering a love of reading. It is implemented in the public 4K classrooms in the School District of Pickens County.

Age-appropriate books are distributed by rotation among 4K teachers/providers in the county. Students take home a different book each school night to read with a family member.

Pickens First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our family literacy program families:

- 95% ...live in at risk situations
- 70% ...come from literacy deficient homes
- 10% ...have a documented developmental delay



"When I say to a parent, 'Read to a child,' I don't want it to sound like medicine. I want it to sound like chocolate. " - Mem Fox

Book Flood by the Numbers, 2015-16

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Children Served in Public/Private 4K | 701 |
| Hours Reading | 11,216 |
| Books Lent | 6,094 |
| New Public Library Cards | 21 |

This year, our Book Flood program:

- ✓ Provided each participating child the opportunity to read an average of 20 different books a month
- ✓ Received donations book from multiple community members and organizations in support of children's literacy
- ✓ Provided a literacy rich home-school connection

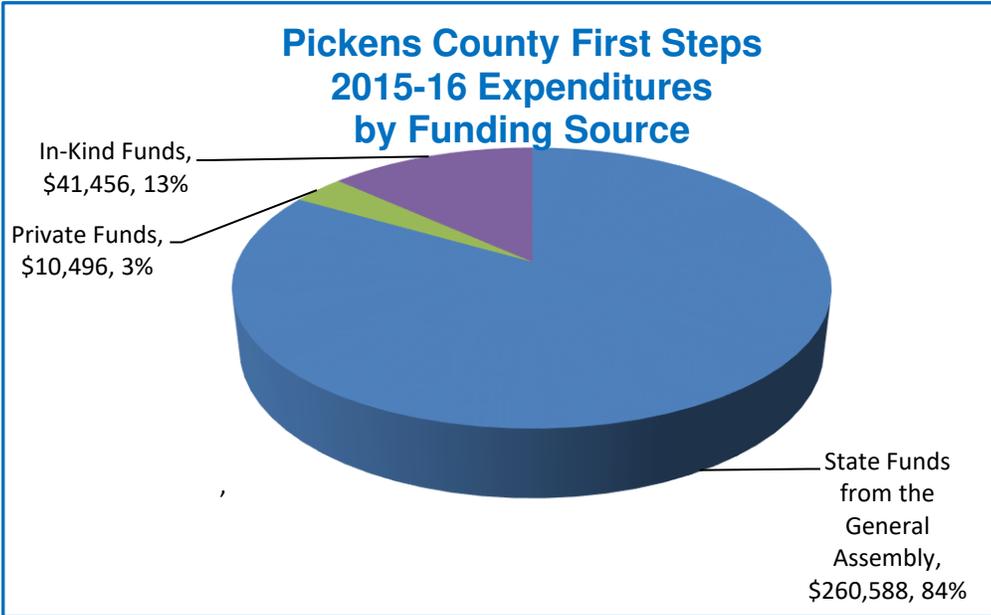
Thank you to our partners!

- Pickens County Library System
- School District of Pickens County
- United Way of Pickens County

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Financial Impact



Total 2015-16 Expenditures: \$266,701

State Funds Leveraged in 2015-16*: 20%

*Percentage of state dollars matched by additional federal, private, and/or in-kind funds

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| Parents as Teachers (PAT) | \$99,456 | | \$0 | \$25,386 | \$124,842 | 40% |
| PAT/Family Literacy | \$2,653 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$2,653 | 1% |
| Book Flood | \$16,381 | \$0 | \$832 | \$0 | \$17,213 | 6% |
| Child Care Scholarships | \$20,868 | \$0 | \$2,413 | \$0 | \$23,281 | 7% |
| Child Care Trainings | \$17,785 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$17,785 | 6% |
| Community Outreach | \$55,214 | | \$5,198 | \$16,070 | \$76,483 | 24% |
| Early Identification and Referral | \$20,373 | \$0 | \$2,052 | \$0 | \$42,198 | 14% |
| Program Support | \$9,035 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$9,035 | 3% |
| Administrative Support | \$18,824 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$18,824 | 6% |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURES | \$260,589 | \$0 | \$10,496 | \$41,456 | \$312,541 | |

Since inception, Pickens County First Steps has leveraged \$1,812,105.04 from sources outside of state government. That's 31 cents for every state dollar.

Pinwheels for Prevention

Over half of children that enter school not ready to learn have experienced some type of abuse or neglect. Pinwheels for Prevention is a community engagement campaign to raise awareness and help promote the everyday things families can do to keep children happy and healthy. In April 2016, Pickens County planted over 6,000 pinwheels, one for every child, birth to age 5, at 75 sites around the county.



Every elementary school in the county planted pinwheels for prevention!

Pinwheels for Prevention by Numbers for 2015-2016:

| | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Number of Sites | 75 |
| Materials Distributed | 1000 |
| Pinwheels planted | 6,070 |

To kick off Child Abuse Prevention Month, we partnered with Behavioral Health Services, Pickens County DSS, Pickens County Friends of the Guardian ad Litem and Prevent Child Abuse Pickens County to host the 3rd annual Partners for Prevention lunch and learn. Over 150 service providers, community members and elected officials gathered to join our voices for prevention.



All pinwheel proceeds go to support our new child care scholarship program!

Week of the Young Child

The national Week of the Young Child is celebrated in April of every year for one week. During that week we place particular focus on the importance of early experiences and important role that those experiences play in the lives of our youngest learners. We host special park days, restaurant nights and publish daily blog posts. This year our theme was "[I CAN] be a super hero!"



Week of the Young Child is a national celebration that takes place in April that celebrates our youngest citizens. This year we choose the theme

"[I CAN] be a super hero."



In partnership with the United Way of Pickens County, BB&T Clemson and the Clemson Rotary Club, we installed 2 new born learning trails in the county. One at Tottie's Trail in Clemson (pictured above, left) and the other at Jaycee Park in Pickens (pictured above, right).

Community Impact



Each grand opening celebration was complete with storytelling, crafts and super hero play.

(pictured above)

A partnership with the School District of Pickens County's Career and Technology Center allowed us to install Little Free Libraries at all 5 Born Learning Trails in the county. (below)



Early Experiences Matter!



What is Readiness?

A child's readiness is determined by many critical components including good health, nurturing parenting, and positive learning environments. High quality early experiences at home, in child care and in school allow children to thrive at a time when their brains are most formative.

The goal of our board of directors is to encourage and support families in these early experiences through each of our programs. Partnering with other agencies in the county is one of the best ways that we can support families. One of our strongest is our decade old partnership with the United Way of Pickens County. Our partnership has fruited the construction of 5 Born Learning Trails, billboards, Little Free Libraries, as well as hundreds of books being distributed to vulnerable families in our county. We salute the United Way of Pickens County for being Super Heroes for our county's youngest learners!

Pickens County First Steps Board of Directors:

| Name | Position | Board Category |
|---------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Bowling, Mandy | | Child Care |
| Brock, Christinia | | Family Educator |
| Brown, Diane | | Legislative Appointment |
| Childers, Susan | | ECE provider |
| Clamp, Harriett | | Primary Educator |
| Ducworth, Julie | Secretary | Non-profit |
| Harrison, Nikita | | DSS representative |
| Hays, Erika | | Family Training/Support |
| Hicks, George | | Family Training/Support |
| Hopkins, Sheryl | | Healthcare Provider |
| Jacks, Lyle | Chair | Healthcare Provider |
| Kastner, Susan | | Family Educator/Support |
| Kelley, Tammy | | Library Representative |
| Ley, Edith | | Faith |
| Steadham, Cheryl | | ECE provider |
| Snipes, Daby | | Healthcare |
| Weinmueller, Teresa | | Primary educator |
| Wiley, Carol | | Legislative Appointment |
| Young, Greta | | Non-Profit |

Goals of First Steps:

- (1) provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want** to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
- (2) increase comprehensive services** so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
- (3) promote high-quality preschool programs** that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
- (4) provide services** so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and
- (5) mobilize communities** to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed.

-- Section 59-152-30



Interested parents can contact any participating 4K providers to complete an application. To view a list of participating First Steps 4K providers, visit:

<http://scfirststeps.org/4k>



BabyNet

South Carolina's Early Intervention System

BabyNet in Greenville/Pickens County:
1-864-331-1450

<http://scfirststeps.org/babynet/>

[YOU CAN] be a Super Hero for Our Youngest Learners!