

**RICHLAND COUNTY**



**Getting children ready for school.**



**Child Care Quality Enhancement**

**Child Care Training**

**Early Head Start**

**Family Strengthening**

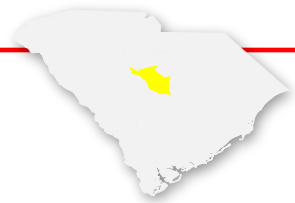
# **Annual Report**

**2015-16**



## **OUR VISION:**

**Every child in Richland County will arrive at first grade healthy and ready to succeed in school.**



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Richland County
Children under five	289,990	23,752
Children in poverty	26.4%	22.2%
3 <sup>rd</sup> graders below standard in reading	21.1%	22.1%
Births to mothers with less than a high school diploma	15.7%	11.3%

KIDS COUNT data provided by



- Since its inception, Richland County First Steps has leveraged \$14,124,048 from sources outside state government. **That's \$.97 for every dollar received.**
- **3,158 home visits** were provided to 133 families in our Family Strengthening Program.
- **Childcare professionals received 1,251 hours** of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- **Childcare professionals received 45 hours** of certified training for early care staff annual recertification requirements.
- Improved parenting practices through **67 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 571**

### Richland County First Steps

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**Board Chair**

Penny Dininny

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Richland County First Steps

**Rick Noble**

**Chief Executive Officer**

*"We cannot change unless we survive, but we will not survive unless we change."* - Anonymous

First Steps began in 1998 as an idea, a campaign theme which became law in 1999 and started serving children and families across the 46 counties in South Carolina in 2000. Like a child, First Steps was born, survived its vulnerable early years and has now grown into a teenager. We've changed along the way, but the truth is that to continue to survive we're going to need to continue to change. Many teenagers (and many organizations who have survived) are not particularly interested in changing, believing they pretty much know it all. Wisdom comes to each on its own schedule.

Before I continue, let me acknowledge that RCFS excels because of its amazingly talented staff and its dedicated Board of Directors. They are the heroes, the true champions for children and families, and RCFS's greatest asset.

So do we need to change even more to survive? Absolutely, more change for First Steps is mandatory, and here's why:

- 1) Competition for limited public and private resources will continue to be intense. Education requires and consumes large quantities of these resources. It is spread across a wide spectrum of age groups, even though there is widespread agreement that the best investment of a dollar is in the early years.
- 2) We need to form partnerships that are more economical and effective.
- 3) Education needs to be viewed along a continuum beginning as early as birth.
- 4) Fragmentation of service is recognized by all, including funders (private/public), as unnecessary and correctable. Why can't everyone commit to doing a better job of collaborating?
- 5) Our knowledge of what works has increased dramatically, yet we're slow to adapt our approaches to implementation.

While those are daunting challenges facing our future, we shouldn't lose sight of the positive changes that have already occurred. The good news is that our awareness of the importance of early childhood development and education has increased exponentially over the last 17 years. Parents are much more aware and committed to developmentally appropriate child-rearing. They are gaining a better understanding of realistic expectations for children's growth. The general public, including elected officials, are more supportive of early childhood investment.

Still, I believe there is a continuing underlying requirement for change and improvement.

Now is no time to rest on any laurels that we might have received.

Now is the time to ask ourselves, "If we had it to do over again what would we do differently?"

Given where we are today, what must we do to not only survive, but to thrive?

We have to continue to change and adapt. It's the only way to survive those awkward teen years.

# 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, Richland County First Steps focuses its investments in Healthy Start, Family Strengthening, and Quality Child Care.**



# Child Care Quality Enhancement

**Excellence in Care and Early Learning (ExCEL) - School readiness through high quality child care**

## ExCEL's Program Description

The quality of care received by young children is crucial to their healthy development and school readiness. Child care providers strive to provide high quality care, but may lack the resources that are commonly available to publicly-funded early childhood programs, such as educational materials, on-site professional development, and other support.

**First Steps' Child Care Quality Enhancement (QE) is intended to produce measurable improvements in the quality of care provided to young children.** Participating child care providers must serve a high percentage of at-risk children, and are selected through a competitive process that requires a strong level of commitment to the QE process.

### ExCEL Program Components for our ENHANCEMENT TEAM:

- \* On-site technical assistance (TA) once a week for 3 hours to one classroom for 6 months, then a second classroom for 6 months.
- \* Pre/post assessments of the classroom environment and teacher-child interaction, using nationally-recognized observational tools for infant/toddler and preschool settings (ITERS, ECERS).
- \* Equipment and materials funding based on the plan of action developed from the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) assessment.
- \* Demonstration of Conscious Discipline® skills to teachers in the classrooms.

## QE by the Numbers, 2015-16

Child care providers served	9 centers, 18 classrooms
Number of TA visits provided	445 TA visits
Number of children 0-3 enrolled in provider classrooms	343 children age 0-3
Number of TA hours	1,251 hours of TA

### Congratulations to our high achieving QE participants for 2015-16!

Child Care Provider	Pre/Post Improvement
St. Michael's ELC, infant room	From 2.73 to 5.3
St. Paul's Lutheran, toddler room	From 2.43 to 5
Union St. EHS, Yellow Room	From 3.24 to 5.77
Tiny Creators, infant room	From 2.38 to 4.21
Kingdom Kids II, toddler room	From 3.1 to 4.97

### This year, our ExCEL program:

- ✓ Improved quality, on average, by 1.53 based on pre/post Environment Rating Scale assessments (7-point scale).
- ✓ Provided over \$16,500 in materials grants to participating child care providers.
- ✓ Continued our Mentoring Initiative by taking the classroom teachers with whom we worked to see high quality in action at NAEYC center classrooms with the same age children as their class. We were accepted to make a presentation on our Mentoring Initiative at the Environment Rating Scale Institute's conference in Atlanta in April of 2016.
- ✓ Our ExCEL staff attended Conscious Discipline I in Orlando, FL in June 2015 and added a focus on Conscious Discipline to our ExCEL program. Our goal is to show teachers how to teach self-regulation skills to children instead of punishing them for behavior that is usually developmentally appropriate or that is unfortunately learned.

### Thank you to our partners!

Susanna Watson, Certified Child Care Nurse Consultant

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# Child Care Training

**Excellence in Care and Early Learning (ExCEL) – High quality child care trainings for our Enhancement Team centers and directors on our Directors’ Team**

**Child Care Training Sponsored by Richland County First Steps, 2015-16**

**DIRECTORS’ TEAM TRAININGS** | For the first time ever, we opened our Directors’ Team to ANY CHILD CARE DIRECTOR in Richland County. We had 33 directors sign up and around 20-25 attended our semi-monthly trainings regularly. We did a book study of *Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms* to teach them about Conscious Discipline with the goal of it being implemented in their centers. There were 7 trainings plus the Directors’ Retreat.

**DIRECTORS’ RETREAT** | We received a grant from SC CCCC for our Directors’ Retreat – an overnight event at White Oak Conference Center for directors who had attended 4 of our CD trainings. We had 18 participants including some RCFS EHS staff. Susan Kirby, certified CD trainer, led our trainings plus we had relaxing and fun activities to foster and strengthen relationships between staff and directors we serve.

**ExCEL CONFERENCE** | 45 child care providers participated in a Saturday training to receive 4.5 certified hours. The keynote by Crystal Campbell was a huge hit. Then participants chose from three 1.5 hour classes that were repeated.

**PLAY TO LEARN, LEARN TO PLAY** | We offered a Saturday training through a grant from the county to teach child care providers the importance of play for children, how to play with children and demonstrated how easy and fun play can be in the classroom. It is surprising how many teachers think play is only chaos or something children only do outside. Play is primarily how children learn!!



**ExCEL staff at Conscious Discipline I**

*Shina McMillian, Dr. Becky Bailey – Conscious Discipline founder, Marcia Bacon and Catherine Nolan*

**Training by the Numbers, 2015-16**

Total training attendance	424
Child care teachers and directors served	156
Number of training sessions offered	32

**This year, our training program provided:**

- ✓ 156 (424 total duplicated) early childhood staff received high quality training.
- ✓ 45 hours of certified training and 10.5 hours of registered training (our conference) offered to staff to meet annual re-certification requirements.
- ✓ 10 hours of on-site health and safety training offered by our certified Child Care Nurse Consultant, Susanna Watson.

**Thank you to our partners!**

- Shandon Presbyterian Church
- Ridgewood Missionary Baptist Church Conference Center
- Susan Kirby, Conscious Discipline Trainer

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# Early Head Start

**Children and families thrive when they are physically and emotionally safe and secure.**

## Program Description

Early Head Start (EHS) is a federally funded, community-based program for low-income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers. The four broad goals of EHS are:

- Provide early, continuous, intensive, comprehensive and high-quality services;
- Promote positive parent-child interactions;
- Respond to the needs/circumstances of families in the community; and
- Establish a recruitment plan to serve children with the most urgent needs.

To achieve these goals, the RCFS EHS program uses four program models: 1) prenatal; 2) home-based; 3) center-based; and 4) a combination of both center- and home-based. Each model is designed to meet the needs of the families when they enter the program. As the needs of the family change, they are able to transition from one program to the other, leading to new expectations and roles.

### Early Head Start by the Numbers, 2015-16

Funded Enrollment	96
• Home-based	56
• Center-based	40
• Combination and/or Prenatal	As Needed

*We are thankful for all the love and support we get from our Early Head Start family.*  
 Parent, Early Head Start

*I am thankful for my school family at First Steps, which is a great support system.*  
 Parent, Early Head Start



*Emerging literacy, demonstrated above, lays the foundation for reading, writing, and later success in school.*

**This year, our Early Head Start program:**

- ✓ Served 26 children with a written Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).
- ✓ Screened all enrolled children in the areas of development, social-emotional, nutrition and health.
- ✓ 90% of families completed at least one self-set goal of their Family Partnership Agreement.

### Thank you to our partners!

- Early Head Start Policy Council
- Reformation Lutheran Church
- Richland Library
- Ridgewood Missionary Baptist Church

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*Parents play an irreplaceable role in their child's development.*

## Program Description

The Family Strengthening program uses the Parents as Teachers (PAT) model, which is an evidence-based early childhood home visiting framework for families with children prenatal through kindergarten entry that builds strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to learn. The Family Strengthening program includes:

1. **Personal visits** depending on risk factors parents receive weekly or bi-weekly visits in the client's home
2. **Group connections** with other program families at least monthly
3. **Screenings and assessments** to identify both child and family concerns early
4. **Resource and referral network** connecting families to needed resources
5. **Socializations** activities throughout the month to connect parents and families

Our family strengthening program:

- ✓ **Increases parent knowledge of child development and improves parenting practices**
- ✓ **Provides early detection of developmental delays and health issues**
- ✓ **Prevents child abuse and neglect**
- ✓ **Increases children's school readiness and school success**

*"When you know better,  
you do better!"*

Rosa, mother of 4-year-old daughter

## FS by the Numbers 2015-2016

Families Served	133
Children Served	154
Total Home Visits	3,158

**Richland County First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our home visitation families:**

89% ... **live in poverty**

27% ... **didn't graduate high school**

7% ... **were teen parents**

## This year, our Family Strengthening program:

- ✓ **Averaged 22 home visits per family**
- ✓ **Identified and addressed 9 potential developmental delays (BabyNet)**
- ✓ **Improved parenting practices (KIPS pre to post) – Parents are more involved with the child(ren): playing and following their lead, encouraging the child more, using appropriate discipline, and increasing language skills.**
- ✓ **Improved literacy skills: Parents allow children to 'read' to them, turn pages of books, ask open-ended questions, create books from PAT curriculum (zip-bag books, lunch bags, using family photos). Books are given to children through RCFS and My First Book monthly.**
- ✓ **Made 110 connections for families to services from organizations such as WIC, Wateree Community Actions, Cooperative Ministries and local churches**

## *Thank you to our partners!*

BabyNet, WIC

Richland County School District One (Gadsden, Horrell Hill & Webber Elementary schools)

Harvest Hope, Eau Claire Community Health, Shelter for Battered Women, Magic Johnson's Center

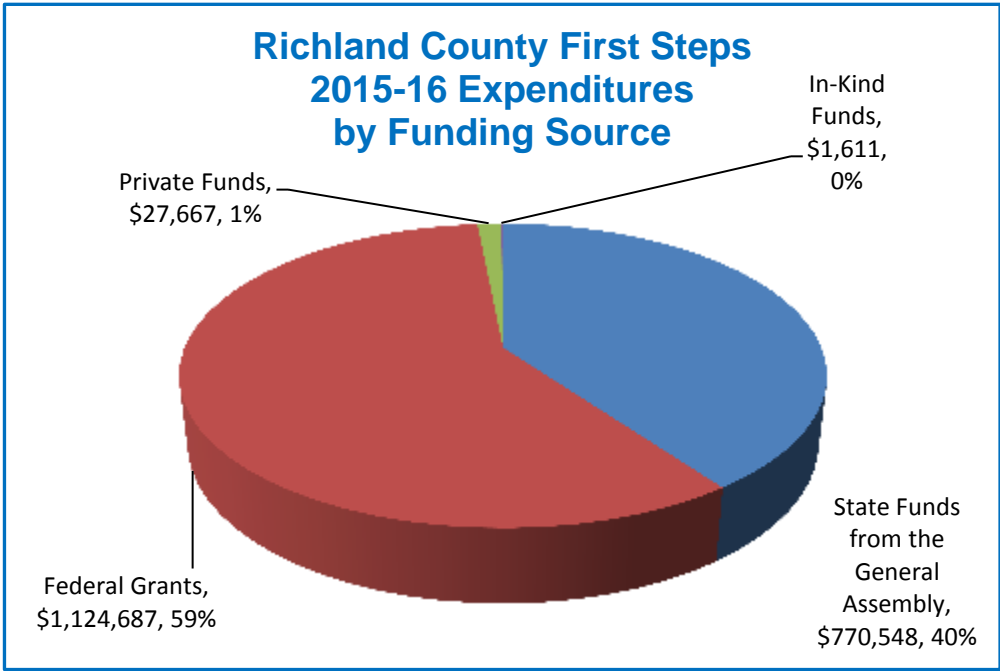
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# Financial Impact



**Total 2015-16 Expenditures: \$1,924,513**

**State Funds Leveraged in 2015-16\*: 150%**

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

### 2015-16 Expenditures by Strategy

	State \$	Federal \$	Private \$	In-Kind \$	Total \$	% of 2015-16 Expenditures
Parents as Teachers	\$232,533	\$0	\$3,343	\$0	\$235,876	12%
Early Head Start	\$47,199	\$1,119,918	\$16,006	\$0	\$1,183,123	61%
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0%
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$219,221	\$0	\$3,339	\$1,611	\$224,171	12%
Child Care Training	\$39,115	\$0	\$1,266	\$0	\$40,380	2%
Nurse Family Partnership	\$0	\$0	\$1,727	\$0	\$1,727	0%
Program Support	\$168,376	\$0	\$1,259	\$0	\$169,636	9%
Administrative Support	\$64,104	\$4,769	\$725	\$0	\$69,599	4%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$770,548</b>	<b>\$1,124,687</b>	<b>\$27,667</b>	<b>\$1,611</b>	<b>\$1,924,513</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Unaudited numbers for the period July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016*

**Since inception, Richland County First Steps has leveraged \$14,124,048 from sources outside of state government. That's \$.97 cents for every state dollar.**



## Planning Pays Off

*"Nurse Sue," Child Care Nurse Consultant Susanna Watson*

As a Nurse Consultant, my recommendations / suggestions for creating a healthier, safer child care environment are not always implemented. It is difficult to gauge immediate, concrete success.

But one story that comes to mind is the director who thought my suggestion of using a template for children with allergies was actually a good idea. Children in child care who are severely allergic to certain substances are prescribed an EpiPen to keep in the classroom in the event of an exposure. Some teachers are familiar with the use of an EpiPen, and may be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of a reaction. But there are many teachers who would feel very uncomfortable if the situation arose.

The Allergy Action Plan is completed by the child's doctor and gives guidance to the teacher specifying what needs to be done if the child is exposed. It is posted on the wall of the classroom near the EpiPen, under a cover (HIPPA Regulations). The teacher is guided (usually) to give an antihistamine for mild symptoms, and if the symptoms worsen, to then give the Epi injection.



Recently, the Allergy Action Plan was used, and instead of immediately giving the EpiPen, the teacher was guided to use the antihistamine first. The outcome was positive, and may have possibly saved the child from having to have a dose of Epinephrine.

## Dual Citizenship Help Families Stay Together

*Family Support Advocate, Family Strengthening*

In 2014, our organization found out that children with dual citizenship allowed families to stay together if immigration issues appear. We encouraged our families to contact their consulate offices. However, for my particular family, the closest consulate was in Raleigh, NC and this was a big obstacle because of time and the expense of traveling. Families couldn't afford it and the consulate mobile services didn't provide this specific service. However, after many requests from our families for the mobile units to add this service, it was added in the spring of this year. The parents acted with determination and patience. Our RCFS/EHS Hispanic families were part of this major improvement that will benefit many other families!

Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning.

*Mr. Rogers*

## Thank you to our partners!

### Funding Support

Department of Health & Human Services:  
 \$1,124,225

Richland County: \$10,387

State of South Carolina: \$762,944  
*(through South Carolina First Steps)*

SC Center for Child Care Career Development:  
 \$3,518

### In-Kind Support

Columbia College

EdVenture Children's Museum

Richland County School District One

Ridgewood Missionary Baptist Church

Support Richland County First Steps today through a tax-deductible donation, or volunteer.

## Parent Set Goals and Remains Focused!

*Family Service Advocate, Family Strengthening Program*

This story is about a single mother who is very determined to provide a better life and better opportunities for her two children. Her son Lamar is now in K5 where he is excelling and enjoying school. Lamar entered RCFS in 2012 and stayed with the program until he turned 5 years old. His younger sister Lamarie is still an active participant in RCFS. The mom had saved money from working 2 jobs to buy a car in 2014. A family member borrowed her car and got into a terrible accident, the car was totaled. These unfortunate circumstances caused her to lose her jobs because she did not have reliable transportation. The mom worked very hard, finding a new job. She rides the bus to keep her job. This summer all of her hard work paid off. She had a goal of buying a new car and she purchased a car this summer.

Mom had a lot of speed bumps along the way, but she remained dedicated and focused. The Family Strengthening Program uses the Parents as Teachers curriculum and the Life Skills Progression Model where goal setting is part of our program along with developing good parenting behaviors. During our home visitation sessions, we revisited mom's goals regularly to keep her focused and determined to make life better for Lamar and Lamarie. I am very proud of her for all of her hard work!



Play is our brain's favorite way of learning.

*Diane Ackerman*

## Conscious Discipline in Action!

*Marcia Bacon, Early Care and Education Director*

A child care center director said that our Conscious Discipline (CD) training on the Brain States of Children and Adults changed her life. She realized that she had a certain person in her work life who would make her upset and send her into "Survival State." This a-ha moment during the training helped her to make a plan to face this person and let the person know she did not feel safe when confronted. It was a life changing experience for her, and she is now reading the Conscious Discipline book with her husband. Plus, she's told the local school district superintendent that the whole district needs to use Conscious Discipline in the local schools! One of our Enhancement Team centers is so committed to using Conscious Discipline that they used their own one-time ABC Quality money to purchase Conscious Discipline materials. They bought a copy of the book the directors studied in our Directors' Team meetings for each staff person, and the director is leading staff meetings using the book. She wants each teacher to implement CD in their classroom. We are giving that center extra Conscious Discipline training and technical assistance in order to help them to become a model Conscious Discipline site for our other Enhancement Team centers.

## Since 2000, how RCFS has changed...

Rick Noble, CEO

**Financial resources** | state dollars down ↓, private dollars down ↓, federal dollars up ↑.

**Personnel** | up and down but now very much in a growth mode ↗.

**Quality of services** | definitely up ↑. Use of evidence based, improved data/metrics up ↑. Analysis of impact and outcomes versus outputs up ↑.

**Quantity of services** | also up ↑, especially delivery of direct services to children and families through Early Head Start and Family Strengthening via home visitation.

**Collaboration** | Collaborating with partners in the early childhood development/education business up ↑.

**Use of Conscious Discipline® techniques** | Up ↑. Most recently, RCFS has embraced the philosophy and techniques of Conscious Discipline and we are integrating them into our day to day work, inside and outside the offices.

**Integration of services to meet family needs** | Up ↑. RCFS is transitioning in its operations and language from a group of services (Quality Enhancement, PAT, EHS, NFP) toward a more cohesive, comprehensive integration of services to children and families.

***We serve children by improving the environments young children experience.***

***We empower those who can have the greatest impact: parents/family/other caregivers.***

## Richland County First Steps Partnership Board, 2015-16

Name	Board Category	Employer
Patricia Armstrong	Richland County Public Health Department Appointee	SC DHEC Midlands Region
Ray Borders Gray	Legislative Appointee	City of Columbia
Jamie Browder	Pre-kindergarten through Primary Educator	Richland County School District One
Mahalie Davies	Legislative Appointee	Community Volunteer
Deborah DePaoli	Pre-kindergarten through Primary Educator	Richland School District Two
Penny Dininny	Local Government	Richland County School District Two
Amanda Glowacki	Family Education, Training and Family Support	Lexington Richland School District Five
Laura Hart	Business Community	Duff, White & Turner, LLC
Quantina Haggwood	Richland School District One Appointee	Richland County School District One
Glennith Johnson	Business Community	Retired
Walter McDaniels, MSgt.	Local Government	Richland County Sheriff Department
Marsha Moseley	Richland School District Two Appointee	Richland School District Two
Sabina Mosso-Taylor	Legislative Appointee	Center for Achievement, Richland School District Two
Henrietta Robinson	Family Education, Training and Family Support	Lexington Richland School District Five
Reese Palmer	SC DSS Appointee	Richland County Department of Social Services
Rita Paul	Nonprofit Organization that provides services to children	Retired
Davida Price	Lexington Richland School District Five Appointee	Lexington Richland School District Five
Barbara Scott	Childcare or early childhood development education	Myers Nursery
Chrishonna Sutton	Parent of Preschool Aged Child	Colonial Life
Janet Tapp	Health Care	Retired
Leslie Tetreault	Richland Library Appointee	Richland Library
Jane Wyatt	Legislative Appointee	Caughman Road Elementary School
Vacant	GLEAMNS Head Start	



# Getting children ready for school.

## The 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 Richland County:

**(803)734-0111**

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