



# Annual Report

**2021-2022**



## OUR MISSION

From Day 1 to Grade 1, Richland First Steps empowers our community to nurture children, so they are ready to thrive in school.

## OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Young children are ready for school
2. Advocacy for caregivers, educators and young children
3. Fully engaged RFS Board of Directors and Staff

## OUR APPROACH



High quality programs and services for children and families



Intensive training, resources and support for childcare providers



Strategic partnerships and community education



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.

## OUR OVERARCHING MEASURES OF SUCCESS

### INCREASE THE REACH OF FIRST STEPS SERVICES

By the end of FY23, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by Richland County First Steps will increase from 6% to 8%.

### IMPROVED KINDERGARTEN READINESS

By 2023, the percentage of children who score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment will increase by 2% each year.

## OUR VALUES

**TRUST** | We will foster trust within the organization and the community.

**LOVE** | "Love is the best motivator for learning and growth." *Dr. Becky Bailey, founder of Conscious Discipline*

**RESPECT** | We value the feelings, wishes, rights and traditions of others.

**RACIAL EQUITY** | We will work to change the systems that keep families from having the tools and resources to equip their children for success in school and life.

**QUALITY** | Quality + Readiness = Success

## JOIN US



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](https://scfirststeps.org/AmeriCorps).

# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

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**MARCIA BACON**  
CEO  
Richland First Steps

Our word for the coming year is **EMPOWER**. I have challenged our amazing staff to think about this each day: "Who can I empower today?" Throughout Richland County, we are empowering our community, helping people develop the skills and knowledge they need to nurture children, so they can thrive. Our teachers and home visitors are helping families set goals for themselves and their child's development and giving them tools they need to achieve those goals. Our early learning coaches are working with center and home-based child care providers to share best practices and learning materials to create environments where children can grow socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically. Our Family Support Advocates are connecting parents with resources that could change the trajectory of their career and family stability. This is what First Steps is all about.

Our goal is to empower our community – to get *everyone*, from business leaders to non-profit organizations, all working together to make Richland County an environment that supports school readiness. By empowering the adults in the lives of Richland County's children and the community that they live in, we are helping our county's children be ready to thrive when they get to school.

Richland First Steps invites you to think about this: Who can **you** empower today?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marcia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

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**AMANDA GLOWACKI**

Chair  
Richland First Steps Partnership Board

I recently read an article by a leadership trainer who hates the word "empower." The definition used was "to give power to someone to make them stronger and more confident." The author writes, "The keywords here are 'give' and 'make' ... You think someone else needs you - your permission, your influence, your talents - to do something."

While I see the concern, Richland First Steps and other First Steps programs across South Carolina **do** empower families and communities to nurture children, so they are ready to thrive. Many children throughout our community face significant struggles, whether it's income and housing instability, food insecurity, or living with disabilities; they need more help than some of their peers do to be ready to thrive. Through our programs, we empower families to make the changes they need to build a brighter future. Then, we go *beyond* empowering. We support families through tough times. We celebrate their joyous moments with them. We develop nurturing relationships. All of this leads to stronger families, whose children will thrive in school and beyond.

Throughout this report you'll see all the ways we are empowering our community to nurture children. First Steps programs in Richland County touched the lives of more than 3,000 adults and children during the last year. We are making connections and making a difference.

*Amanda ('Mandy')*

# 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

A community committed to the school readiness of its children



# 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 BY THE NUMBERS 2021-2022

**28**

families served

**676**

total home visits

**22**

total group sessions



These are the 2022 graduates of our Parents as Teachers program in the Lower Richland area of Richland County. We are so proud of their families who made a commitment to give their child a strong foundation to help them thrive in school!



# CONNECTED FAMILIES



*an evidence-based program*

This year, we launched **Connected Families**, a partnership with the SC Department of Social Services to expand our PAT program to families involved with DSS Family Preservation services. The intensive home visitation program that works to strengthen parents' and caregivers' bonds with their children is expected to grow significantly this year.



## CONNECTED FAMILIES BY THE NUMBERS 2021-22

**35**

home visits

**12**

group meetings

**19**

children served

**10**

families served



# EARLY HEAD START



*an evidence-based program*

Early Head Start is a federally funded program that is designed to promote healthy outcomes for pregnant women and newborns, support the healthy development of babies and toddlers, and foster relationships and self-sufficiency within families. Program options include no-cost child care or weekly home visits. Both options include regular opportunities for parents and children to engage in group learning and social connections.

## EARLY HEAD START BY THE NUMBERS 2021-2022

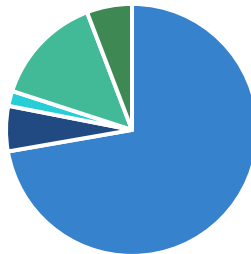
# 157

children served

# 31

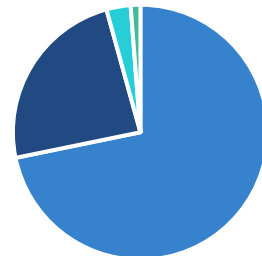
volunteers

### ENROLLED CHILDREN BY ELIGIBILITY TYPE



- At or below 100% FPL
- Public Assistance (TANF/SSI)
- Foster Care
- Homeless
- Other qualifying factors

### PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME



- English
- Spanish
- East Asian
- Native North American



Through a partnership with **Dental Access Carolina**, 19 children at our two no-cost child care centers were able to receive dental screenings on site when the dental bus came to visit.





## EARLY HEAD START



*an evidence-based program*

Young children in our community have experienced impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. In observational assessments using the Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP), our infant toddler teachers and home visitors are reporting increased delays in motor skills, language, and social and emotional skill development. In response to this data, our team has implemented strategies to help parents make sure children reach school ready to thrive.

## CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE



RFS staff are using Conscious Discipline®, a trauma-informed, evidence-based social and emotional learning method created by Dr. Becky Bailey. It is an adults first approach that teaches parents and caregivers to regulate their own emotions so they can help children learn to regulate themselves.

In July 2021, a group of RFS staff from all program areas participated in a multi-day intensive Conscious Discipline training. These staff shared what they learned with their colleagues to support our ongoing implementation of Conscious Discipline.



## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SPECIALIST

In 2021 we added a Behavioral Health Specialist to help our classroom teachers and home visitors with challenging behaviors. Since joining the team in November 2021, the Behavioral Health Specialist has provided targeted training and support for 14 teachers, four home visitors, and five parents (meaning three or more interventions). The BHS provides monthly mental wellness tips for families and caregivers, as well as mentoring and coaching for staff.



Parents, children, and community partners came to EdVenture Children's Museum in May 2022 for **Come Play With Me**, a day of activities and information designed to help strengthen relationships between parents, caregivers, and children.



# 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 2021-2022

# 14

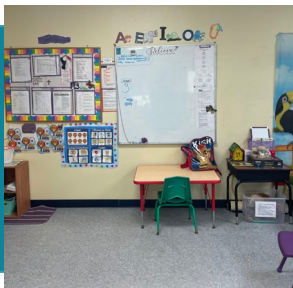
child care providers served

# 321

number of TA visits provided

# 398

number of children 0-5 enrolled in provider classrooms



BEFORE



AFTER

### ROOM ARRANGEMENT - BEFORE AND AFTER

The teachers in this classroom were looking for a way to ensure children could access their storage cubbies safely and with supervision. With the help of their early learning coach a great solution was found!



# CHILD CARE TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



*an evidence-based program*

Child care training programs aim to advance the early care and education profession, creating pathways to success for early childhood educators and the children and families they serve. Our affordable, high-quality professional development offerings are certified through SC Endeavors and include topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, and program administration.

## TRAINING AND PD BY THE NUMBERS 2021-2022

**314**

total training attendance

**121**

child care teachers and directors served

**20**

number of training sessions offered

**28.5**

total training hours



During the COVID-19 pandemic, we moved our training and professional development classes online. We found that many teachers liked the flexibility of participating in virtual workshops, like our Tuesday Night Training Series. We hosted three multi-part training series on Health and Safety, Language and Literacy, and Using Music in the Classroom. The music sessions were led by the **BenAnna Band**, a Vermont-based duo that focuses on "inclusion and music for kiddos of all ages, abilities, and identities!"



# ExCEL FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME



*an evidence-informed program*

Many families in Richland County use family child care home providers. This year, we expanded our Excellence in Care and Early Learning (ExCEL) program to start serving these programs.

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## ExCEL FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME BY THE NUMBERS 2021-22

**8**

child care providers served

**42**

total hours of visits

**21**

total children enrolled with providers



I think the coaching is great. I like the resources that come along with the program.



**LASHAWN SHAW, FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME PROVIDER**



## OTHER CHILD CARE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT EFFORTS



an evidence-based program

This year, we expanded our work with child care providers to include several new programs and projects:

### LENA



Language **EN**vironment Analysis (LENA) uses technology to count “conversational turns” between children and their caregivers. These interactions are key to language development; data collected can help child care teachers, like these two from Hope Academy who completed the program, become more effective communicators.

### Learners

**Learners** is a Continuous Quality Improvement process that allows child care directors and teachers to understand the “why” behind the Environment Rating Scales, the assessment tool used by our Early Learning Coaches. With that knowledge, they can implement action plans based on their classroom assessments.



### Center to Home Book Program

To help support early literacy and increase the number of books in homes and classrooms, the **Center to Home Book Program** gives each child in participating classrooms a copy of the books their teachers read with them. We give teachers tips on how to use their new read-alouds to support the **SC Early Learning Standards**.



**SHARING BOOKS, BUILDING READERS.** Parents, children, and child care teachers are the beneficiaries of our Center to Home Book Program. Our frequent partner **Richland Library** provides a bookmark for parents with conversation starters and other suggested titles they may enjoy.



## COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN - 4K



*an evidence-informed program*

Countdown to Kindergarten 4K (CT4K) is a home visitation program pairing the families of rising 4-year-old kindergarteners with their future teachers during the summer before school entry. Teachers complete six visits with each family, establishing strong connections during the summer that facilitate classroom learning throughout the year.

### COUNTDOWN TO 4K BY THE NUMBERS 2021-2022

**4**

kindergarten teachers  
trained as home visitors

**18**

children served





# FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN



an evidence-based program

First Steps 4K provides eligible children with free enrollment in full-day four-year-old kindergarten. In coordination with First Steps local partnerships and more than 250 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
- Be a South Carolina resident

# 487

children enrolled

# 32

First Steps 4K providers

With First Steps 4K, families are in the driver's seat. They choose the school that best meets their needs. Families can enroll in any participating private, non-profit, or faith-based preschool provider. The majority of First Steps 4K providers offer an 8 hour instructional day with a year-round calendar, including summers. Through a partnership with SC Voucher, First Steps 4K families can also enroll in the First Steps 4K + Siblings scholarship program which provides whole care and education for all children, ages 0-12, in the household.





## PUBLIC AWARENESS

Richland First Steps is always looking for opportunities to meet the community and share information about programs and resources that can aid families with young children. Our Intake Specialist doubles as our Outreach Coordinator, participating in community fairs and public gatherings.



**Start Off Strong**, an outreach event held in April 2022 with support from Children's Trust of SC, Richland Sheriff's Department, and others gave parents a chance to get needed items like food and cleaning supplies while learning about services for which they may qualify.

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### COMMUNITY OUTREACH BY THE NUMBERS 2021-2022

**531**

materials  
distributed

**13**

events  
participated in

**335**

families served at  
events

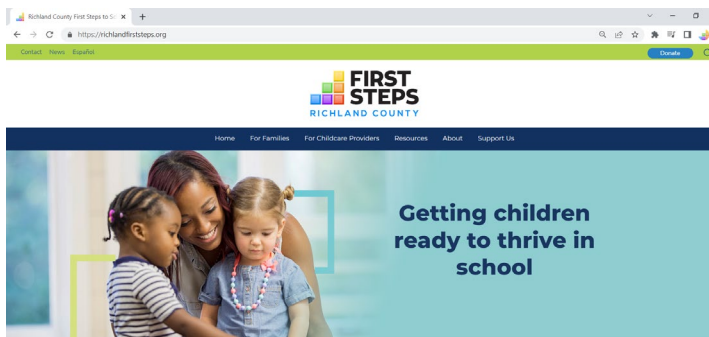




## PUBLIC AWARENESS

### A NEW DIGITAL HOME FOR RICHLAND FIRST STEPS

In early 2022, RFS unveiled a new look and new content on our website, [richlandfirststeps.org](http://richlandfirststeps.org). Here, parents, caregivers, and the community can learn, in English or Spanish, about our programs and services. Perhaps even more importantly, they can search our online **Resource Library**, which has more than 200 carefully curated articles on early childhood topics, with more being added every day.



# 3,338

website users between March 1  
and June 30, 2022

### MEET RICHIE

Richie is the newest member of the RFS family. He's a cute little guy who is *definitely* going to be ready to thrive in rhino school!

Richie and our new website help us engage with the community about school readiness and to be the local portal that helps parents and caregivers connect to information and resources so they can help children in our community thrive.





# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Our job is to help make our vision of a community committed to the school readiness of its children a reality, but that doesn't mean we can do it alone.

## OUR PARTNERS 2021-22





## OUR SUPPORTERS

Our individual sponsors and business partners allow Richland First Steps to leverage state dollars to enhance and expand our services to children and families.

## SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

### READINESS SPONSOR

Selina Stewart

### QUALITY SPONSOR

Rita Paul  
Sherry Whatley

### CONNECTION SPONSOR

Becky Massey-Allen  
Christopher Allen  
Lauren & Will Brennan  
Stacey & James Brennan  
William Jeter  
Joanne Kelleher  
David Lyon  
Heather McCue  
Jane B. White

### CONNECTION PARTNER



DUFF | FREEMAN | LYON  
ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS AT LAW

### IN-KIND PARTNER



## JOIN US

Be a part of making Richland County a place where all children are ready to thrive in school. Visit us online: [richlandfirststeps.org/support](http://richlandfirststeps.org/support)

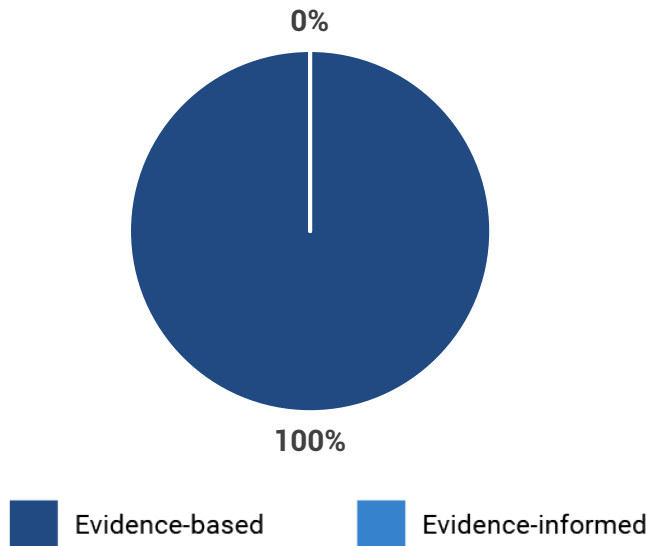




# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

## OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



## ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Richland First Steps has leveraged **\$24,203,521.99** from sources outside of state government.

That's an additional **\$1.24** for every state dollar invested.

## SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Early Head Start	\$206,992	\$1,861,841	-	\$20,585	\$2,089,418
Parents as Teachers	\$232,175	\$33,834	\$162,070	-	\$428,078
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$265,833	\$95,065	-	-	\$360,898
Child Care Training	\$40,810	\$7,460	-	-	\$48,720
Countdown to 4K	-	\$1,064	-	-	\$1,064
HIPPY	\$899	\$5,663	-	-	\$6,562
WIC	-	\$1,458	-	-	\$1,458
Partnerships & Community Education	\$82,389	\$10,934	-	-	\$93,323
Administrative Support	\$116,349	\$20,600	\$5,618	-	\$142,568
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$945,449</b>	<b>\$2,037,918</b>	<b>\$167,688</b>	<b>\$20,585</b>	<b>\$3,171,640</b>



## LEADERSHIP

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Patricia Armstrong  
Mary Bailey  
Lauren Brennan  
Quinne Evans  
Rachael Fulmer, Treasurer  
Mandy Glowacki, Vice Chair  
William Jeter  
Dr. Kimberly Johnson  
Dr. Christine LeBlanc  
David Lyon  
Heather McCue

Rita Paul, Board Chair  
Davida Price, Past Chair  
Henrietta Robinson  
Barbara Scott  
Charla Simmons  
Brittany Singleton  
Scott Smoak  
Terri Thompson  
Sherry Whatley  
Rhonda Wiley



## CONTACT US

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RICHLANDFIRSTSTEPS.ORG



# OUR STAFF

Jill Aderholdt  
*Family Support Advocate*

Rebecca Allen  
*Behavioral Health Specialist*

Doris Alverson  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Jasmine Archie  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Marcia Bacon  
*CEO*

Pamela Barnes  
*Family Support Advocate*

Allyson Boone  
*Technical Assistance Provider*

Kourtney Bouie  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Brendisha Brown  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Lindsay Byars  
*Center Director*

Lydia Carnesale  
*Education Coordinator*

Jennifer Carter  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Alicia Cheeseboro  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Daisy Colon  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Sarah Conrad  
*Communications Specialist*

Alice Cook  
*Classroom Caregiver*

DeAndra Corbit  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Allison Coxon  
*Family Support Advocate*

Monica DeJesus  
*Family Support Advocate*

Anett Espinosa  
*Family Support Advocate*

Imaikop Etim  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Renee Eubanks  
*Program Support*

Annette Evans  
*Technical Assistance Provider*

Megan Fryar  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Jeanette Furtick  
*Classroom Floater*

Brenda Gaskin  
*Education Accountability*

Rebecca Gibson  
*Director of Home Visitation*

Vasiliki Harbour  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Cotrina Harley  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Gail Harrell  
*Center Director*

Shannon Helton  
*Family Support Advocate*

Jasmine Huggins  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Arianna Holoman  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Kelly Jones  
*Family Support Advocate*

Laran Jones  
*Family Support Supervisor*

Xenia Jones  
*Family Support Advocate*

Danaya Kennedy  
*Custodian/Dishwasher*

Christine Lang  
*Family Support Advocate*

Leberta Livingston  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Abbagaille Long  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Lakeema Maybank  
*Technical Assistance Provider*

Salli McCartha  
*HR Manager*

Ashley McDaniel  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Charshina McMillian  
*Director of Care and Early Learning*

Lynette Mills  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Meredith Mobley  
*Executive Assistant*

Cari Moyer  
*Early Head Start Director*

Catherine Nolan  
*Senior Technical Assistance Provider*

Shannon O'Berry Hammond  
*Director of Finance*

Amanda O'Kelley  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Cheryl Osborne  
*Family Support Advocate*

Nomaneka Parker  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Doris Patterson  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Shanika Pinkney  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Amy Raynor  
*EHS Program Support*

Ashley Reasor  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Keisha Richardson  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Yanira Rivera Navarro  
*EHS Intake Coordinator*

Jessica Robledo  
*Classroom Floater*

Jasmine Rodgers  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Trista Henderson  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Jasmine Rucker  
*Family Support Advocate*

Patrice Scott  
*Training Coordinator*

Keira Session  
*HR Administrator*

Megan Smola  
*Assistant Center Director*

Nikiyah Spearman  
*Family Support Advocate*

Barbara Stephenson  
*Family Support Advocate*

Amber Tanner  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Sammantha Truesdale  
*Health Coordinator*

Vega-Graciano, Tanya  
*Family Support Advocate*

Patricia Ware  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Tymeisha Washington  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Jodie Watson  
*ExCEL Health Coordinator*

Sigourney Zacharski  
*Classroom Caregiver*

Joanna Zaleski  
*Technical Assistance Provider*