



South Carolina
**Early Childhood
Advisory Council**

ANNUAL REPORT

2018-2019



SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS | 2019 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

South Carolina First Steps thrives on the dedication, input and guidance of our Board of Trustees. The Board represents a statewide group of leaders consisting of legislators, state agency directors, early childhood educators, members of the business community and parents of young children. These individuals make up a cohesive board that mirrors the diversity of the families we serve throughout the state.

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DR. SHELLEY CANRIGHT
Early Childhood Educator

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Parent of Young Child

DR. AMY WILLIAMS
Medical Provider

"I joined my local First Steps' county board when my children were 1 and 3, and the state board when they were 5 and 7. They are now in high school; not only have they matured over the years, so has First Steps. While the commitment to brain development 0-5 has stayed the same, First Steps has prioritized evidence based programing driven by local needs, professionalized training and partnership support, and collaborated with partner agencies to serve more and more families across the state."

—Julie Hussey

"South Carolina's children, our most valuable and precious assets, must have access to quality services from birth to kindergarten. First Steps must be a leader in making sure children, particularly those up to three years of age, are given the resources they and their families need."

—Rep. Rita Allison

"Every child deserves access to life changing benefits of early education. SC First Steps brings critical early education and resources to children and families that it serves. First Steps opens the door to a better future."

—Dr. Shelley Canright

"First Steps and Head Start is a natural partnership bringing state, local and federal assets together, enabling us to serve more families and children with early childhood services."

—Walter Fleming Jr.

"Understanding that parents and family caregivers are a child's first and very best teachers, I am excited for the expansion of successful programs like Parents as Teachers and Nurse-Family Partnership which enable parents to better support their child's development and enhance their readiness for school."

—Timothy Holt



AS THE CONNECTOR AND CONVENER OF ALL EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVING AGENCIES, South Carolina First Steps is the home of the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), which works to develop and implement a coordinated, comprehensive system for early childhood services in our state.



The ECAC includes the directors of state agencies, elected officials, and other state-level early childhood leaders. ECAC partner agencies providing services to young children include the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Social Services, Department of Education, Department of Health and Environmental Control, Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, Children’s Trust of SC, SC Head Start Collaboration Office, and SC First Steps.

OUR VISION

» We will be successful when all children reach their highest potential.

OUR SHARED GOALS

- » South Carolina’s children arrive at school ready to reach their highest potential.
- » South Carolina’s youngest children are healthy and safe.
- » South Carolina’s youngest children are actively supported by their families and communities.



BUILDING ON SOUTH CAROLINA'S EARLY CARE AND LEARNING INVESTMENTS

THE PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT BIRTH THROUGH FIVE

In 2019, the collaborative work of the ECAC was fueled in large part by the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through 5 (PDG B-5), a \$3.5 million competitive grant awarded to South Carolina. As the grantee, the Department of Social Services administers the grant, which is designed to strengthen and streamline the early childhood state system. South Carolina First Steps provided all of the required matching funds for the grant.

OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A STRATEGIC PLAN

To better understand the needs of young children and their families in South Carolina, a group of collaborative partners conducted a statewide needs assessment to solicit input directly from parents, child care providers, and community stakeholders. The findings of this assessment informed the state’s strategic plan for South Carolina’s early childhood system.

4,609 voices heard from every county in the state

15 regional meetings held across SC

440 focus group attendees
3,114 survey responses



PALMETTOPREK.ORG

Launching December 2019, the Palmetto Pre-K web portal gives families an easy way to access free and subsidized, publicly-funded 3 and 4-year-old pre-k programs.

[PALMETTO PRE-K JAMBOREE](#)

This ongoing series of professional development workshops is designed specifically for teachers in the state’s publicly-funded 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten programs. This year, more than 1000 teachers participated.



[FIRST 5 SOUTH CAROLINA](#)

Currently under development and coming in 2020, First 5 South Carolina is a comprehensive early childhood portal, a one-stop shop for families to find publicly-funded early childhood services and resources in their communities. By answering a few questions, families and their advocates will be able to locate services for which they may qualify.

“Our children are South Carolina’s greatest resource, and this grant gives us an opportunity to dramatically change their lives for the better. That makes everyone’s future brighter.”

—Gov. Henry McMaster