

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026



Mission

To collaborate with other entities, First Steps helps Allendale County families and caregivers prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance and expand high-quality early childhood services.

Vision

Our vision is that every Allendale County child will be prepared for success in school.

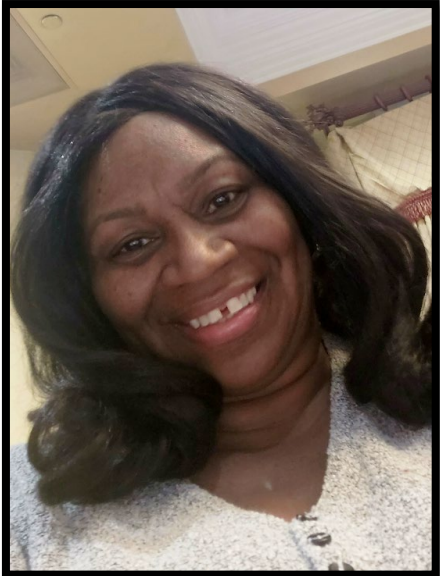
Values

We believe all children can learn and have potential for academic, social, emotional and physical greatness.

We believe family engagement is the glue to helping families grow and achieve.

We believe collaboration with agencies and other non-profits helps us deliver sustaining care to families and children at-risk for not being successful in school.

Message from the Executive Director



PATRICIA HALL

Executive Director

Allendale County First Steps

I have been in this position for 22 years. The need for a high-quality childcare center open to all Allendale County residents has never been greater than it is now in 2023. We do not have the resources to make that happen on our own, but we can push our partners in the right direction to eventually make that dream a reality. Working together with our board and partners, we plan to start laying the groundwork this year.

The Strategic Planning process allows us to make sure we are aware of the needs and gaps in Allendale County that impact our mission of optimizing school readiness for all children. This allows us to provide our services to as many clients as possible. Thanks to everyone who helped in this effort.

Patricia Hall

Strategic Plan Process

CONVENE

Held community convenings to develop a vision for young children and their families

October 2022 – January 2023



UNDERSTAND

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

October 2022 – March 2023



PRIORITIZE

Organized the insight gathered from the convenings and data to prioritize the concerns, needs, and gaps the partnership wants to address and formalized Needs Assessment

January 2023 – March 2023



PLAN

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

March 2023 – May 2023



APPLY

Utilize the Strategic Plan to inform the partnership's Annual Formula Funding Grant Application

May 2023, May 2024, May 2025



IMPLEMENT

Execute the programs and services outlined in the Strategic Plan

July 2023 – June 2026



MONITOR

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

July 2023 – June 2026



Priority Needs: Summary

Through a series of community convenings, a needs assessment and asset mapping process, the following needs were prioritized for Allendale County.

1. Quality and availability of childcare

33% of census tracts are considered childcare deserts in Allendale County. 51% of parents surveyed stated that quality and availability of childcare was their number one concern.

2. Lack of transportation

Allendale County is highly rural and has extreme poverty levels. The County does not have a public transportation network. Few parents own a car or have consistent access to be able to borrow a car or to afford gas when they have access to a car. This creates a true barrier to decent work and educational opportunities, access to medical care and childcare.

3. Parenting skills and help for single parents.

42% of the parents surveyed in our Needs Assessment said that they believe help is needed to teach parenting skills and provide basic services to assist single parents.

Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1: Families are supported as their child's first and most important teachers.

Strategy 1.1. Provide parents with access to support and resources that strengthen their families; build their confidence, knowledge and skills; and promote the optimal development of their children.

Strategy 1.2. Ensure access to parenting programs, offered at no charge, to all parents that want to participate in Allendale County.

Strategy 1.3. Increase the number of families participating in evidence-based and evidence-informed parenting programs.

Strategy 1.4. Cultivate a community of champions and advocates for children and their families.

OBJECTIVE 2: Children are healthy and safe.

Strategy 2.2. Provide parents with access to support and resources that strengthen their families; build their confidence, knowledge and skills; and promote the optimal development of their children.

Strategy 1.2. Ensure access to parenting programs, offered at no charge, to all parents that want to participate in Allendale County.

Strategy 1.3. Increase the number of developmental assessments done with newborns to age 3 in Allendale County..

Objectives

OBJECTIVE 3: Literacy is improved for both children and adults in Allendale County.

Strategy 3.1. Work with the school district and the community to explore programs for adult literacy.

Strategy 3.2. Continue to offer age-appropriate books at no cost for children.

Objective: Families are supported as their child's first and most important teachers.

STRATEGY 1

Nurturing Parenting Program

SMART GOAL

- By the end of FY26, we will increase the number of families served by 5%.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with OCAD Headstart and the Allendale County School District.

STRATEGY 2

Community Education

SMART GOAL(S)

- Each year, we will participate in at least two community health fairs.
- programs to possible partner by the end of FY25, we will disseminate what we have learned about sister county transportation s and elected officials to see if Allendale County can duplicate their efforts here.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- We will partner with the local WIC/DHEC office in planning the community health fairs.

Objective: Children are healthy and safe.

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STRATEGY 2

Community Education

SMART GOAL

- Each year, we will participate in at least two community health fairs.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- We will partner with the local WIC/DHEC office in planning the community health fairs.

Objective: Children are healthy and safe.

STRATEGY 3

Childcare Center Exploration

SMART GOAL

- By 2026, working with our partners, we will have a plan in place to increase the childcare opportunities in Allendale County.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- We will begin by exploring interest from local colleges and universities, including USC-Salkehatchie, using the USC-Aiken childcare center as a model.
- Other community partners include the Allendale County Inter-Agency Council, BabyNet and Save the Children.

Objective: Literacy is improved for both children and adults in Allendale County

STRATEGY 1

Enhanced Early Education Book Programs

SMART GOAL(S)

- Each year, we will participate in at least two community health fairs
- We will continue to offer age-appropriate books at no cost for children (Parent Educators)

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- We will partner with the local WIC/DHEC office in planning the community health fairs.

Overarching Measure(s) of Success

INCREASE THE REACH OF FIRST STEPS SERVICES

By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by Allendale County First Steps will increase from 4% to 5%.

MORE CHILDREN ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN READY FOR SUCCESS

By 2025, the percentage of children who score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment will increase by 2% each year to 32%. (26% in Fall, 2021 KRA)

Acknowledgments

Allendale County First Steps would like to acknowledge the families, partnering agencies, the communities that utilize our resources and for time and input implemented to the Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning process. Thank you to the Board of Directors for their continuous support and participation. A special thank to our program manager, who was instrumental in ensuring a successful process, and to Trish Wampler from Kulik Strategic Advisers.

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