

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2024 – 2026



Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to the staff of Charleston County First Steps. They were diligent in making sure everyone had the opportunity to give feedback and a voice to the early childhood needs in Charleston County. Without their help and dedication, I would not have been able to put this report together.

I am also grateful to the Charleston County First Steps Board of Directors, Board Chair and previous Executive Director who laid the groundwork for this project in recognizing and identifying the needs of families of the youngest children in Charleston County.

Many thanks to the parents, community stakeholders, child care providers, and small businesses that took the time to answer our survey and meet with me to discuss the early childhood needs in Charleston County.

The project described was supported through South Carolina First Steps by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0080-02-01 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Needs Assessment Process

CONVENE

We heard from over 120 participants by holding one group meeting, individual interviews, and completed surveys from local business, child care, parents, and community partners to develop a vision for young children and their families.

January 2023 – February 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



UNDERSTAND

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

January 2023 – March 2023

“So many good topics discussed”
-Group Participant

Asset Map





Priorities: Summary

- 1. Parents actively engage as their child's first teacher and advocate**
- 2. Access to high quality child care that include family child care homes, infant/toddler, preschool, and 4K classrooms**
- 3. Children's social-emotional development is supported through anti-bias practices.**

Parents actively engage as their child's first teacher and advocate

Data point

There are an estimated 23,828 children under the age of five in Charleston (American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2016-2020, Table B01001).

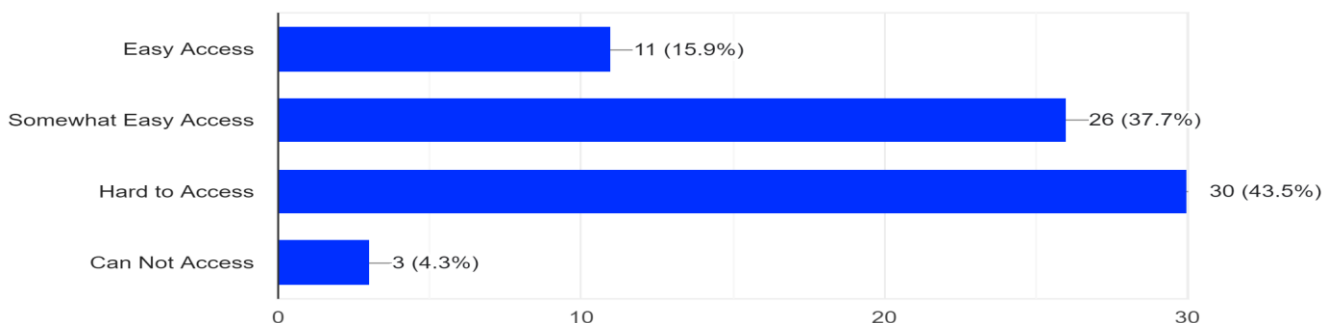
Based on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment only 51% of children entering school demonstrate being ready for Kindergarten - Education Oversight Committee 2021.

Most children under the age of five are not enrolled in an educational program. According to the American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016-2020 (Table S1401) 46% of three- & four-year-old children are not enrolled in a child care or an educational program. This percentage is higher among infants and toddlers due to lack of access, affordability and availability of infant/toddler slots. This means a significant number of children are at home with a parent or guardian.

Studies show a child's success in school is based on the mothers' education. In Charleston, there were 497 (10%) births among mothers with less than a high school education. Of those births 52% were Hispanic and 33% were Black woman. Additionally, 1849 (39%) expected births in Charleston are Medicaid. Of those 48% are Black and 24% Hispanic women. - SC DHEC Vital Records via South Carolina Community Assessment Network 2020

According to a survey distributed among parents in Charleston, 40% of respondents stated the top two significant reasons they feel children are not ready for Kindergarten are parents needing parenting skills and single parents needing support. In addition, most parents find resources hard to access with 65% saying transportation being the main obstacle.

9. How would you rate your ability to get to (have access to) the resources in your community?
69 responses



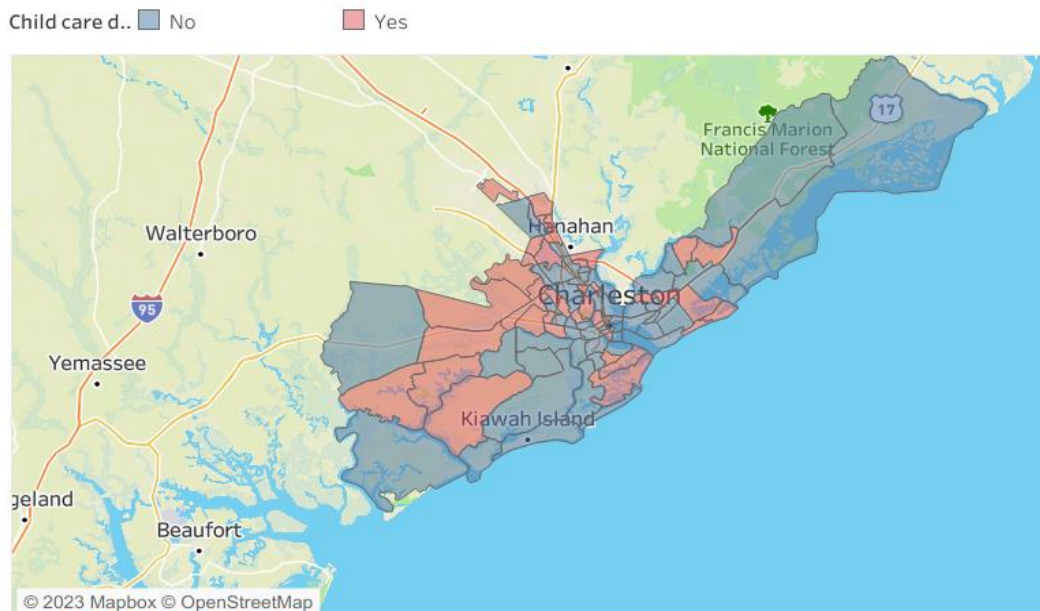
Access to high quality child care that include family child care homes, infant/toddler, preschool, and 4K classrooms

Data point

There are 188 licensed child care facilities in Charleston. Of those licensed child care centers 60% are not currently enrolled in ABC Quality according to the South Carolina Department of Social Services 2022, scchildcare.org.

Only 5 facilities currently hold an A/A+ rating, 34 sites hold a B/B+ rating, and 26 hold a C rating. Information gained from the parent survey showed 60% of parents believe the quality of child care is poor or low. Additionally, 94% of parents reported the cost of child care being too high.

There are 42 census track areas (43%) (as seen in red below) in Charleston that are considered child care deserts based on provider location and center capacity obtained from scchildcare.org. Definition of a child care desert obtained from the Center for American Progress, “A child care desert is any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots” (<https://www.childcaredeserts.org/>). Population under age 5 by census tract obtained from the American Community Survey 2016-2020 Five Year Estimates (Table B01001). US Census Bureau.



Children's social-emotional development is supported through anti-bias practices.

Data point

A survey distributed to child care providers in Charleston showed 82% of providers strongly agree professional development is needed for teachers/providers around social emotional health and children with challenging behaviors. Additionally, during the group convening there was discussion regarding early trauma and generational poverty with effects on brain development and learning among young children. The group felt parents and child care providers need more education and professional development around social emotional health in young children.

There are 9,344 (34%) children under the age of 6 that are <185% federal poverty level in Charleston.

In 2022 there were 311 open Department of Social Services Abuse & Neglect Investigations involving 722 children. According to DSS Reporting Data 41% were children under 6 years of age.

There are potentially **1,593 pupils in poverty** not being reached by **CERDEP** which is **98% of eligible pupils in poverty** - South Carolina Education Data Dashboard for 4K- 5 students in Charleston.

The below map shows the location of the Title I schools with the Charleston County School District. Within Title I schools families tend to have multiple stressors that come with poverty.

Select a Dis.. Charleston County School District

Title I school?
 Yes



Next Steps



PLAN

Write 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