



Report Summarizing Services Provided Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to Preschool Children with Disabilities 2024-25 School Year

Provided to the Interagency Coordinating Council, the Senate Finance
Committee, and the House Education and Public Works

Pursuant to Act 86, Chapter 36 of Title 59 of the Amended Code of Laws
of South Carolina, 1976

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February 1, 2026

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The Preschool Committee of the Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities (ACESD) is pleased to present the 2026 Annual Report outlining services provided to children ages three through five, along with corresponding recommendations to enhance outcomes for young children with disabilities across South Carolina.

The Preschool Committee is charged with the important responsibility of identifying and examining key issues in special education and early intervention. In alignment with this mandate, we offer guidance and support to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), Office of Special Education Services (OSSES). The recommendations and findings in this year's report are pursuant to Act 86 of 1993, Chapter 36 of Title 59 of the Amended Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976.

We acknowledge that current data continues to indicate that a significant number of preschool children with disabilities in South Carolina, particularly three-year-olds, are being served in separate classrooms, limiting their access to non-disabled peers. Based on research, this separation may have implications on children's social, communication, and academic development. The Preschool Committee of the ACESD respectfully submits the following recommendations:

- The Preschool Committee of the Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities will continue to serve as the Cross-Sector Early Childhood Inclusion State Leadership Team: In alignment with the updated 2023 Joint Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (originally issued by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education in 2015), the Preschool Committee will continue to provide leadership in this area. We have created the following goals for the next year:

- Collaborate with the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Early Transitions Initiative to create shared, universal language on the inclusion of young children with disabilities.
- Support the statewide implementation of high-quality, evidence-based practices through the Early Transitions Initiative and the Community Inclusion Team technical assistance project in partnership with the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA).
- To strengthen and sustain ongoing initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for preschool students, we recommend that OSES, including South Carolina Partnerships for Inclusion (SCPI) in its role as the state’s early childhood technical assistance center, continue providing robust support to school districts. Key priorities include:
 - Expanding placement options: Support LEAs in effectively implementing a full continuum of placement options for preschool children with disabilities.
 - Building district capacity: Equip local education agencies (LEAs) with the tools and guidance needed to expand access to the general education curriculum for preschool children with disabilities.

Where LEAs successfully adopt these approaches, we expect to see improved student trajectories beginning in early childhood, including increased graduation rates and more positive post-school outcomes.

We appreciate your attention to this report and the thoughtful consideration of our recommendations. We remain committed to supporting the SCDE and its efforts to provide effective early childhood education for all young learners in South Carolina.

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Background

Act 86 of 1993 requires LEAs to serve children with disabilities ages three through five. This state mandate represented a downward extension of all the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Public Law 101–476. One of the stipulations of the state mandate is the requirement for the submission of a report to the South Carolina General Assembly by February 1st of each year that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- the SCDE initiatives related to preschool programs for children with disabilities.
- data and program information from LEAs related to activities involving the Child Find process and LEA services.
- updates of policies and procedures for preschool programs for children with disabilities.
- financial information pertaining to implementation of preschool programs for children with disabilities.
- information collected from other state agencies providing services for preschool children with disabilities. Information collected includes pertinent program data, financial information, and pertinent policies and procedures related to programs for preschool children with disabilities.

The stipulations are outlined in the legislation for preschool children with disabilities, Act 86, Chapter 36 of Title 59 of the Amended Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the initiatives by the SCDE’s Office of Special Education Services (OSES) to provide a comprehensive system of service for preschool children with disabilities in the 2024–25 school year. The sections provide data on the number of preschool children with disabilities in South Carolina receiving special education during the school year; who they are and where they received their services; available state and federal funds; and initiatives and services provided on behalf of preschool children with disabilities and their families by LEAs, state agencies, and Head Start programs. Recommendations are included in the report based upon stakeholder feedback collected throughout the year.

Section I: Data for Programs for Preschool Children with Disabilities

Part B of the IDEA requires the SCDE to submit to the United States Department of Education (ED), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), a certified count, annually, of the number of children with disabilities receiving special education and related services through Individual Education Programs. Children ages three through five are included in this Child Count Report each year, based upon a child's age as of the data collection date (defined as the fourth Tuesday in October, annually). Preschool children can begin receiving services on their third birthday, regardless of when it occurs. Therefore, the annual Child Count information does not reflect the total number of students who received services during any entire school year. Data will be presented in each age category where available, as well as a total of all three age categories.

Population and Age

According to the Child Count data collected on October 22, 2024, for the 2024–25 school year, 7,209 children with disabilities ages three through five (not yet kindergarten) received special education services in South Carolina:

- 2,599 three-year-old's,
- 3,926 four-year-old's, and
- 684 five-year-old's (not yet in kindergarten).

Of the total number of three through five-year-old's (not yet in kindergarten), 2,157 were female and 5,502 were males. The four-year-old category is the age at which the largest number of students with disabilities are served.

Table 1. Five-Year Trend of Children Ages 3–5 (not yet kindergarten) Receiving Special Education Services

Age	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Age 3	1,586	2,150	2,593	2,757	2,599
Age 4	2,768	2,950	3,405	3,921	3,926
Age 5 (not yet kindergarten)	596	662	649	710	684
Total	4,950	5,762	6,647	7,388	7,209

Note: Source of data is IDEA, Part B, Section 618, 2024 Child Count.

Ethnicity or Race

The 2024 Child Count lists eight ethnic categories, with one being “unknown”. Specific numbers are not reported if there are 10 or less in a category for confidentiality reasons and are identified with an asterisk. No children were in the “unknown” ethnic category; thus, this category is not included below. Data indicates the following for three through five-year-old's (not yet kindergarten) with disabilities:

- 0.15 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native,
- 1.62 percent Asian,
- 34.33 percent Black or African American,
- 13.49 percent Hispanic or Latino,
- 0.05 Percent Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander,
- 7.47 percent Two or more races, and
- 42.86 percent White.

Primary Disability

Section §300.8 of the IDEA defines categories of disabilities for which a child may be evaluated and provided specialized services.

For 2024–25, the data below indicates the number of children identified in each category:

Table 2. Number of Children Ages 3-5 (not yet kindergarten) Receiving Services by Area of Disability on 2024 Child Count

Primary Disability	Male	Female
Autism Spectrum Disorder	1,347	505
Deaf-Blindness	*	*
Developmental Delay	2,020	826
Hearing Impairment	49	35
Intellectual Disability	*	*
Multiple Disabilities	24	20
Orthopedic Impairment	12	*
Other Health Impairment	70	67
Speech or Language Impairment	1,512	681
Traumatic Brain Injury	*	*
Visual Impairment	11	*

Note: Source of data is IDEA, Part B, Section 618, 2024 Child Count.

Cells containing less than ten students are suppressed for confidentiality purposes and are denoted with an asterisk. Per the data, Developmental Delay, Speech or Language

Impairment, and Autism Spectrum Disorder continue to be the categories with the highest numbers.

The percentage of students identified with a Developmental Delay compared to the other categories is due to an IDEA regulation. This regulation allows for the wide definition of the disability and the time allowed for a student to remain in this category before a more specific identification is required.

Educational Environment

The educational environment in which students with disabilities are served in South Carolina includes eight settings. All LEAs must ensure that preschool children with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment, regardless of whether the LEA operates public preschool programs for children without disabilities. To accomplish this, an LEA may provide services to a preschool child with a disability in a variety of settings which includes a regular early childhood class, public or private preschool program, community-based child care facility, or in the child's home. A child may attend at least 10 hours per week or less than 10 hours per week. Should a LEA not have a public preschool program, other alternative programming must be explored to ensure preschool children with disabilities are placed in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

LEAs should consider the following:

- providing services in preschool programs offered by other public agencies,
- enrolling children in private preschool programs for children without disabilities,
- locating classes for preschool children with disabilities in regular elementary schools,
- providing home-based services.

It is required by IDEA that LEAs provide a continuum of service delivery environments in the early childhood sector so that children with disabilities are supported appropriately in the LRE. Additional information may be found in the [Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs](#). This joint statement was recently updated in November 2023 and reiterates the expectation for inclusion in high-quality early childhood programs as well as the recommendation for increasing inclusive early learning opportunities.

The following table denotes the numbers of three, four, and five-year-old's (not yet kindergarten) in each setting for the 2024–25 school year:

Table 3. Children Ages 3–5 (not yet kindergarten) Educational Environments

Least Restrictive Environment	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5 (not yet kindergarten)
Home	26	33	*
In Regular Education at Least 10 hours per week – EC Program	149	689	174
In Regular Education at Least 10 hours per week – Other Location	441	747	126
In Regular Education less than 10 hours per week – EC Program	182	447	69
In Regular Education less than 10 hours per week – Other Location	81	166	22
Residential Facility	*	*	*
Separate Class	1,267	1,433	226
Separate School	30	38	11
Service Provider Location	422	372	54

Note: Source of data is IDEA, Part B, Section 618, 2024 Child Count.

Cells containing less than ten students are suppressed for confidentiality purposes and are denoted with an asterisk. Of all preschool children receiving special education services, the three largest disability categories are Autism Spectrum Disorder, Developmental Delay and Speech-Language Impairment, representing 95.58 percent of preschool-aged children served in South Carolina. Children with these top three primary disabilities are served in various educational environments across the state. Table 4 shows the top preschool diagnoses by educational environment.

Table 4. Top Preschool Diagnoses by Educational Environment for 2024–25

Educational Environment	Autism	Developmental Delay	Speech-Language Impairment
Ages 3–5: Home	10	10	31
Ages 3–5: In Regular Education at least 10 hours per week – EC Program	124	435	426
Ages 3–5: In Regular Education at least 10 hours per week – Other Location	196	323	751
Ages 3–5: In Regular Education less than 10 Hours per week – EC Program	169	343	148
Ages 3–5: In Regular Education less than 10 Hours per week – Other Location	78	99	78
Ages 3–5: Separate Class	1,231	1,512	34
Ages 3–5: Separate School	18	32	*
Ages 3-5: Service Provider Location	26	89	719

Note: Source of Data is IDEA, Part B, Section 618, Table 1 (Child Count), 2024 Child Count

Cells containing less than ten students are suppressed for confidentiality purposes and are denoted with an asterisk. A significant number of children with autism and developmental delay continue to be served in separate classes.

Limited English Proficiency

Of the preschool age children, 7,058 children, or 97.9 percent do not have Limited English Proficiency, and 151 children or two percent do have Limited English Proficiency.

Section II: Financial Information

Federal Funds

For the 2024-25 school year, the OSES received \$7,859,585 in funds under the IDEA federal preschool. The allocation was the same as last year's funding (no decrease or increase).

Federal regulations allow the SCDE to retain a portion of the funds for administrative costs; in 2024-25, the agency elected to flow through \$7,311,880.47 (93%) of these funds to LEAs for the provision of direct services to preschool age children. The remainder of these funds support South Carolina Partnerships for Inclusion, the early childhood technical assistance center funded by the OSES.

State Funds

State funds are appropriated through the State Aid to Classrooms (SAC) program which represents the State's contribution to the Aid for instruction of students. LEAs receive funds based on the number of weighted pupil units with the State Aid to Classrooms representing the state share of the total Aid to Classrooms program, which is 75 percent. Each LEA receives a proportionate share of the total cost of the State Aid to Classroom program. The weighting factor applied to all SPED categories is 2.60.

South Carolina's funding system under the Education Finance Act (EFA) and the State Aid to Classrooms (SAC) formula implemented in SFY 23 is based on weighted pupil units generated primarily by school-age children. An exception is made for four-year-old students who are vision or hearing impaired, who are also included in this formula.

Due to changes in preschool Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) reporting introduced in the 2020 annual Child Count, this report includes only those students who are not yet of kindergarten-age. However, the majority of funding is generated by five-year-olds enrolled in kindergarten. As a result, per-pupil funding amounts cannot be calculated from this data.

Fiscal Monitoring

The IDEA requires that the SCDE monitor LEAs regularly to ensure fiscal compliance with state and federal laws, rules, and regulations that govern the provision of special education and related services to appropriately identified children. The purpose of this

monitoring is to focus federal, state, and local resources on improved results for children with disabilities and their families.

The OSES is responsible for conducting IDEA fiscal monitoring activities. The goal of the OSES's Fiscal Monitoring is to ensure that LEAs are meeting the requirements of federal, state and IDEA regulations. The OSES's fiscal monitoring approach is outcome oriented. However, if noncompliance is identified through any of the OSES's monitoring activities, the OSES will require the LEA to correct the noncompliance as soon as possible, but in no case later than one year after the identification of the noncompliance.

Contrary to the perception that monitoring is an annual on-site process, the OSES employs several monitoring activities to ensure compliance with federal and local regulations and improve educational results and functional outcomes for students with disabilities. Monitoring activities include grants accounting processing system (GAPS) reviews, Maintenance of Effort calculator review, on-site fiscal monitoring, virtual fiscal monitoring, desk audits, LEA self-assessments, grant applications, and audit findings reviews.

The OSES has an established risk-based tiered fiscal monitoring protocol where LEA fiscal processes, policies, procedures, budgets, and expenditures are reviewed. The fiscal monitoring process includes three tiers with increasing scrutiny of processes and documentation through the tier progression. A risk assessment rubric has been established to make determinations as to progression from Tier 1 to Tier 2 and from Tier 2 to Tier 3. Scores will be assigned for all monitoring components. Data is collected during the early fall for Tier 1; and Tier 2 monitoring begins in late fall. The Tier 3 monitoring process begins in January.

Section III: Office of Special Education Services Initiatives and Partnerships

Data Collection and Reporting

To ensure the validity and reliability of data, OSES staff worked collaboratively with school and preschool personnel to accurately capture, and report data related to Preschool LRE, Childhood Outcomes, and Early Childhood Transition. All LEAs and state-operated programs received comprehensive reporting guidance, including materials, training, technical assistance, and guidance from OSES to facilitate appropriate data collection for preschool indicators. Additionally, the OSES data team conducted thorough quality checks prior to the public release of the data. OSES staff remain available to support LEAs throughout both the data collection and reporting processes.

The OSES ECSE Coordinator continued to partner with the Part C Director to provide training to LEAs, parents and higher education institutions regarding the transition from Part C to Part B services. OSES also maintained active collaboration with the national

technical assistance centers ECTA (Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center) and DaSy (Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems) on two key initiatives:

- Promoting and increasing participation in the Child Outcomes Summary (COS) course within the Learning Management System, as well as completion of the COS Knowledge Check; and
- Exploring options to restructure the state's Early Childhood Performance Factor, which plays a direct role in LEA determinations.

South Carolina Partnerships for Inclusion (SCPI)

South Carolina Partnerships for Inclusion is the early childhood technical assistance provider through the South Carolina Department of Education's Office of Special Education Services. As part of the state's technical assistance network, SC TEAMS, SCPI supports OSES to increase the local capacity of districts and schools to improve outcomes for children ages three through twenty-one with disabilities in South Carolina. Specifically, SCPI's mission is to increase inclusive opportunities and school readiness for preschool children with disabilities to lead to more positive outcomes for children and families. SCPI's goal is for LEAs to be better positioned to increase access to the general education curriculum for preschool children with disabilities. Together, the OSES and the University of South Carolina implement the SCPI initiative. SCPI's current five-year contract cycle began on October 1, 2021.

Regarding tiered, targeted, and intensive support, SCPI had the opportunity to provide voluntary tiered technical assistance to twelve LEAs in the 2024–25 school year. Tier 2 Targeted Support was provided to six districts, and six districts were supported with Tier 3 voluntary intensive technical assistance services.

In addition to tiered support, SCPI also offered universal support to all LEAs which included in-person and virtual professional development opportunities and resource sharing, as well as their annual Early Childhood Inclusion Conference. In October 2024, SCPI hosted its 3rd Annual Early Childhood Inclusion Conference. The conference was designed to support early childhood leadership teams in building program capacity to increase inclusive preschool practices. A total of 249 participants attended, and the largest role present was special education teachers.

The Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) Academy is a virtual continuing education series designed to promote and support the implementation of a special education itinerant model as part of the continuum of services for preschool children with disabilities. This was originally supported by funding from the Preschool Development Grant (PDG), but in April 2023, OSES agreed to fund the continuation of the SEIT Academy as part of SCPI's scope of work. The fifth cohort consisting of 20 participants across five school district teams began in May 2025 and concluded in August 2025. This brings the total number of districts supported through the SEIT Academy to 27. SCPI's TA specialists provide coaching supports for SEIT alumni. This continuity ensures that districts will

maintain access to coaching, consultation, and implementation supports as they work to sustain and expand itinerant service delivery models. The SEIT Academy will also continue collaborating with four districts who are currently participating in the Early Transitions initiative. The aim of this initiative is to expand placement options for three-year-old children eligible for Part B619 services by leveraging Child Care scholarships, enabling eligible children to access general education settings, and receive services within those inclusive environments.

As part of SCPI's scope of work, they promote the expansion of Pyramid Model implementation in South Carolina across the early childhood mixed delivery system through the work of Pyramid PIECES; Promoting Integrated Early Childhood Emotional and Social supports. Specifically, SCPI provides support for program-wide implementation in LEAs, and for LEAs to develop tier-3 policy infrastructure to prevent and appropriately respond to challenging behavior in early childhood classrooms. SCPI has continued to provide implementation support for the district cohort that began the process in the 2022-23 school year. One district is in the exploration phase, one is in the installation phase, two districts are in the initial implementation phase, and one is in the full implementation phase. Part of SCPI's scope of work is to facilitate the State Leadership Team (SLT), a cross-sector organization. This team met seven times over the course of this year.

Section IV: Programs/Services for Preschool Children with Disabilities – Information on Other Offices within the South Carolina Department of Education, Other State Agencies and Head Start Programs

The SCDE is required to work with other state agencies through partnerships and other collaborations to service the three through five-year-old population. Collaborating with partner state agencies creates a continuum of services that provide support, evaluation, education, and resources to the three through five-year-old population. By continuing to develop and offer a continuum of service delivery environments and services and programs, preschool children with disabilities have increased access and equity in programming as well as access to typically developing peers and preschool activities while also receiving appropriate specialized services to meet individualized goals. Ongoing collaborative work allows for the continuum of service delivery environments in early childhood years to maintain relevance in terms of need and quality in terms of services. The continuum of services also supports several priorities surrounding IDEA compliance and high-quality early childhood education including inclusion programming and a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). Many agencies and departments work with OSES to support this continuum of services to the three through five-year-old population. Included below are individual agency reports.

BabyNet

The most recent Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS)/BabyNet and the SCDE was signed in December 2020. This MOA is a five-year agreement outlining the responsibilities for SCDHHS/BabyNet and the South Carolina Department of Education. The identification, location, and evaluation of each child eligible for services under Parts B and C of the IDEA as well as the timely exchange of information ensures a smooth transition for children and their families from Part C to Part B in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

From July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, a total of 3,770 transition conferences were held in South Carolina. The following table shows the number of timely and untimely transition conferences held.

Table 5. Part C Transition Data

Point of Entry Office	Timely Transition Conferences Number (%)	Untimely Transition Conferences Number (%)	Total Number of Transition Conferences Number
Anderson	283 (93%)	19 (6%)	302
Charleston	643 (95%)	37 (5%)	680
Colleton	158 (98%)	3 (2%)	161
Horry	664 (92%)	58 (8%)	722
Richland	734 (89%)	88 (11%)	822
Spartanburg	786 (96%)	34 (4%)	820
York	230 (87%)	33 (13%)	263
Total	3,498 (93%)	272 (7%)	3,770

Early Childhood Advisory Council

The ECAC is a council that includes SC state agencies which have responsibility for early childhood programs and services. The vision of the ECAC is: “We will be successful when all children reach their highest potential.” The ECAC is responsible for the state’s early childhood strategic planning and in 2022 approved “For Our Future: South Carolina’s Birth through Five Plan.” The Plan focuses on addressing the needs of families and children, with particular emphasis on SC’s most vulnerable children and families. The plan includes but is not limited to promoting and supporting transitions from 4K to 5K (see the Palmetto Pre-K site), a cross-agency approach to supporting families via the First Five website and developing and implementing an integrated data system.

Palmetto Pre-K is a statewide initiative that connects families of 3- and 4-year-old children with free educational preschool programs in South Carolina. The Palmetto Pre-K Portal is a

one-stop shop for finding free educational preschool programs in South Carolina. At PalmettoPreK.org, families can check their eligibility and search for programs by zip code to see available options at a glance. In the fiscal year 2024-2025, Palmetto Pre-K was visited by more than 63,000 unique visitors. As importantly, Palmetto Pre-K serves as the proof of concept that state agencies can successfully collaborate and serve parents across a range of programs. From the success of Palmetto Pre-K First Five SC was built.

First Five SC transforms the way families access publicly funded early childhood programs and services in South Carolina. Through a single, online portal, families and their advocates can find information about publicly funded child care, health, early intervention, nutrition, and parenting support programs in their area. A single online application makes it easy to apply for multiple programs in just a few minutes. First Five SC engages parents and caregivers as active partners in making South Carolina's early childhood system work for young children and families. By streamlining eligibility screening and application processes, First Five SC helps families better understand their options and choose the programs and services that best meet their needs. In FY24-25, First Five SC received more than 111,000 unique website visitors and 5566 families completed the screener. Of those families, 77% were eligible for at least one publicly funded early childhood program. During FY 24-25, 1169 applications were completed and submitted.

In March 2020, the state received federal grant funding to expand the current state longitudinal data system (SLDS) to include children in early childhood programs, including First Steps. The inclusion of early learners will improve the data available to policymakers and program coordinators and will align early childhood center data collection with K-12 school systems. The federal grant was scheduled to expire in February 2025 but received a no-cost extension through February 2026. The Office of Research and Data Analysis (ORDA) is currently leading the collaboration between early childhood agencies, the SCDE, and the Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA) to collect student identifiers to streamline data collection and sharing. This work falls under the scope of the Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) Program. In 2024, the state was also awarded the Preschool Development Grant, which provides financial support for one of the ECIDS initiatives.

The ECIDS Program includes both the Palmetto Drive to Five (PDt5) initiative, a state and county-level data dashboard including disaggregated early childhood program data, and the Early Learning Extension (ELE), an integration of early learning data from entities in the K-12 Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The ELE includes Head Start (22 grantees), First Steps (both 4K and Partnerships) and SC DSS Child Care Scholarships. PDt5 includes 11 agencies with a total of 20 programs participating to date. The ECIDS Program has also established a data governance framework for all initiatives, which can be found on the South Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council's website.

More information about ECAC may be found on the [website](#).

First Steps 4K

South Carolina First Steps 4K is a comprehensive, results-oriented initiative for improving early childhood development. First Steps 4K partners with high-quality private for-profit, private non-profit, faith-based, and other eligible providers to expand four-year-old kindergarten programs through South Carolina’s Child Early Reading and Education Program (CERDEP). Programs focus on the developmental and learning supports that children must have to be ready for school. These programs incorporate research-based practices, ongoing assessment, and parenting education.

Demographics

A total of 283 four-year-old children with disabilities were served in First Steps facilities during the 2024–25 school year. This is an increase of 126 children from the 2023-24 school year. The table below has the number of preschool children served by ethnicity.

Table 6. Number of Preschool Children Served by Ethnicity

Age	American Indian or Alaskan	Asian	Black or African American	Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Two or more races	White
Age 4	3	3	151	0	39	87

Finances

Tuition for children participating in First Steps 4K is covered by CERDEP state funding. The amount of funds expended for 2024–25 was \$2,333,965.40.

Agency Information

South Carolina First Steps 4K Guidelines are published [here](#).

Head Start

The Head Start program is a federally funded initiative dedicated to promoting school readiness for children from birth to age five in low-income families. Through a comprehensive service model that includes early learning and development, health, and family well-being, Head Start helps young children prepare for academic success and life beyond the classroom. Since its inception in 1965, Head Start has served over 40 million children and their families across the United States. The program emphasizes strong family engagement, recognizing that active parent participation is essential to achieving positive child outcomes.

In Fiscal Year 2024, the Head Start program was funded to serve a total of 715,873 children and pregnant women across the United States. Services were delivered in a variety of settings, including centers, family homes, and family child care homes, ensuring

accessibility for families in urban, suburban, and rural communities nationwide. The program is administered by the Office of Head Start (OHS), which operates under the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Federal funding for Head Start is authorized annually by the U.S. Congress. These funds are awarded directly to a wide range of local entities—including public agencies, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, Tribal governments, and school systems—to operate Head Start programs in their communities. The total federal budget for FY 2024 was \$12,271,361,085.00.

South Carolina demonstrates a robust and widespread Head Start presence, with services reaching 45 of its 46 counties. Sixteen Head Start programs in South Carolina provide services to children ages 3-5. Twelve of these programs are under the sponsorship of Community Action Agencies (CAAPS), and three are with school districts. Funding for these programs comes from the Office of Head Start.

There are three South Carolina Migrant Head Start sites. The East Coast Migrant Program, based in North Carolina, serves as the grantee. Services are provided to children ages 0-5, and funding is awarded from the Office of Head Start.

There are twenty-one Early Head Start programs providing services to children ages 0-3. Funding is processed through the Office of Head Start. Sponsorship includes: CAAPS, school districts, local First Steps School Readiness Partnerships, and a United Way affiliated agency.

There is one federally recognized American Indian Head Start program in South Carolina that serves children ages 0-5. The South Carolina recognized tribe is ISWA, the Catawba Nation. Funding is made possible through the American Indian Program Branch of the Office of Head Start located in Washington, DC.

Early Head Start/Childcare Partnership grants have been awarded to two local First Steps Partnerships and the South Carolina Association of Community Action Partnerships. These grantees, as a group, are expected to serve 660 children, ages 0-3 in private settings.

The OSES works in partnership with Head Start to ensure Child Find responsibilities are fulfilled and to ensure that children who qualify for services under Part B of the IDEA are served in their least restrictive environment. Federal guidelines require at least 10% of Head Start's service population to be comprised of students with an identified category of disability under the IDEA.

Demographics

As of May 1, 2025, a total of 8,768 received Head Start services in 231 centers in South Carolina. Of the total children served, 78 children were served in American Indian Head Start/Early head Start and 273 children were served in home-based settings. Of the total

served, 2,852 were age four. In addition, one grantee served as a state funded 4K provider, serving a total of 20 children.

Federal data reported as of May 12, 2025, provides information regarding preschool services for children with disabilities in South Carolina's Head Start and Migrant Head Start programs. This information may be found in the tables below.

Table 7. Preschool Disabilities Services (HS and Migrant Programs)

Eligible Children	# of children	% of children
Number of children enrolled in the program who had an Individualized Education Program (IEP), at any time during the program year, indicating they were determined eligible by the LEA to receive special education and related services under the IDEA.	626	8.43%
a.1. Of these, the number who were determined eligible to receive special education and related services prior to this program year.	315	50.32%
a.2. Of these, the number who were determined eligible to receive special education and related services during this program year	311	49.68%
b. Of these, the number who have not received special education and related services.	18	2.68%

Table 8. Preschool Primary Disabilities (Head Start and Migrant Programs)

Primary Disability	# of children determined to have this disability	% of children determined to have this disability	# of children receiving special education services	% of children receiving special education services
Autism Spectrum Disorder	51	0.69%	50	0.67%
Deaf-Blindness	1	0.01%	1	0.01%
Developmental Delay	140	1.88%	136	1.83%
Emotional Disturbance	19	0.26%	19	0.26%

Primary Disability	# of children determined to have this disability	% of children determined to have this disability	# of children receiving special education services	% of children receiving special education services
Hearing Impairment	2	0.03%	2	0.03%
Intellectual Disability	2	0.03%	2	0.03%
Multiple Disabilities	7	0.09%	7	0.09%
Orthopedic Impairment	1	0.01%	1	0.01%
Other Health Impairment	1	0.01%	1	0.01%
Specific Learning Disability	1	0.01%	1	0.01%
Speech or Language Impairment	384	5.17%	368	4.95%
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Visual Impairment	2	0.03%	2	0.03%

Finances

Funding for each type of Head Start program in South Carolina is described above. The FY 2024 federal operational funding awarded to the state was \$155,528,308.00. Sponsoring programs must acquire a 20% local match. The State Head Start Collaboration Office grant is awarded to the Governor, designated to a state agency and is under the oversight of the agency and an advisory committee. The table below illustrates the funded enrollment and funding by program type.

Table 9. Funded Enrollment and Funding

Program Type	Funded Enrollment	Annual Operations Funding
Head Start Preschool	8,257	\$103,148,286.00
Early Head Start (EHS)	2,720	\$52,642,604.00
AIAN Head Start Preschool	54	\$1,194,213.00
AIAN Early Head Start	24	\$871,170.00
Total State Funding (All Programs)	-	\$155,528,308.00
Total Funded Slots	10,888	-

Agency Information

Information regarding South Carolina’s Head Start may be found [here](#).

Pyramid Model Partnership: Pyramid PIECES

Pyramid PIECES is a cross-sector organization that promotes Pyramid Model implementation across the early childhood landscape in South Carolina. Organizations involved in the State Leadership Team (SLT) are: the OSES, the OELL, South Carolina Infant Mental Health Association, Head Start, South Carolina Child Care Inclusion Collaborative, The University of South Carolina Center for Disability Resources, South Carolina Program for Infant/Toddler Care, Children’s Trust of South Carolina, Family Connection of South Carolina, PASOs, First Steps, ABC Quality, University of South Carolina Team for Early Childhood Solutions, BabyNet, and South Carolina Partnerships for Inclusion. As part of SCPI’s scope of work, they provide facilitation of the State Leadership Team (SLT) activities.

The State Leadership Benchmarks of Quality tool was most recently completed in the spring of 2025. Significant progress has been made in the percentage of indicators both in place and emerging since the addition of the state Pyramid Model Coordinator Role and the revitalization of the SLT.

The Pyramid PIECES website was developed in 2023 to raise awareness of the impact of the Pyramid Model and streamline communication across sectors. Pyramid Model [modules](#) are available at no cost for anyone in the state.

South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB)

South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB) believes it is crucial for children with vision loss to begin learning the independence skills necessary for future success as early as possible. SCCB’s Children’s Services Program provides services to eligible children who are blind or visually impaired to support them in adjusting to their vision loss, learning skills that will help them achieve independence, and connecting with a variety of community resources. To be eligible for the Children’s Services Program, applicants must be ages 3-12

and meet the definition of legal blindness (visual acuity of 20/200 in the better eye, with correction or a visual field of 20 degrees or less) or have a progressive visual condition that may lead to blindness within 24 months.

Children's Services Counselors work with consumers and their families to conduct thorough assessments to identify each consumer's strengths and specific needs. Counselors request input from families during the assessment to help identify appropriate independence goals and services for the consumer. Once the assessment is completed, the counselor will collaborate with the family and consumer to develop the consumer's Individualized Service Plan (ISP). These plans are individualized based on the needs of the individual, can be amended as needed, and are reviewed annually.

Services provided to consumers of the Children's Services Program may include but are not limited to:

- counseling and guidance for students and parents,
- low vision evaluation,
- assistive technology assessments,
- low vision devices and equipment,
- orientation and mobility training,
- advocacy and support for the consumer and family, and
- consultation and coordination with community resources.

Children's Services Counselors also connect consumers with community-based early intervention programs to assist families in obtaining services from professionals who specialize in visual impairments as well as infant, toddler, and child development. Counselors coordinate with several agencies and organizations to ensure all family and consumer concerns are appropriately addressed. Such organizations include, but are not limited to, eye care professionals, SC Department of Social Services, SC Department of Health and Human Services, SC Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, SC School for the Deaf and Blind, National Federation of the Blind South Carolina, Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired South Carolina, and local school districts.

Initiatives During 2024–25 School Year Included:

- Worked with other community agencies such as the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired South Carolina, to provide orientation and mobility to preschool age children.
- Participated in conferences such as The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), community activities such as the Braille challenge, and public awareness events to promote the Children's Services Program.
- Maintained contact and interaction with appropriate referral sources such as eye care professionals, school districts, and other community resources.

Demographics

SCCB served seven preschool-age children during the 2024–25 school year. The tables below illustrate the number of children served in each age group as well as the breakdown by ethnicity.

Table 10. Number of Preschool Children with Disabilities Served by Age Group

Age	Total
Age 3	4
Age 4	2
Age 5 (not yet kindergarten)	1
Total	7

Table 11. Number of Preschool Children with Disabilities Served by Ethnicity

Age	American Indian or Alaskan	Asian	Black of African American	Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	White	Does not identify
Age 3	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
Age 4	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Age 5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total	0	0	3	0	0	3	1

Finances

The total funds expended on children ages 3-5 were \$2,761.94. Program expenditures for preschool children were an average of \$394.57 per child during the past fiscal year. This amount may vary among cases, due to the child's individual needs. State funds are appropriated for the SCCB Children's Services Program.

Agency Information

The guidelines for Children's Services are outlined in the program's policies and procedures manual. The information includes services provided to eligible consumers, as well as counselors' responsibilities to the consumers served. The program's services are also highlighted in agency literature and on the agency's website.

South Carolina Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD)

Effective April 28, 2025, Act No. 3 of 2025 established the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities which consists of Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (formerly the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs), the Office of Mental Health and the Office of Substance Use Services. DDSN is now the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

South Carolina Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD) provides Early Intervention services to children ages three through five. Early Intervention is a family-focused, natural environment-based service for children who experience disabilities or delays in their development. Regardless of age, all children are assigned an Early Interventionist (EI). The EI helps families understand their child's development and provides training to the parents/caregivers on ways that they can address their child's development in their daily routines. The EI also provides service coordination activities on behalf of the child/family. All services are provided according to the child's Family Service Plan (FSP). The child's EI is responsible for linking families to resources and making referrals for other needed services, as appropriate.

Initiatives During 2024–25 School Year Included:

- OIDD continued the process for qualifying providers. Nearly half of all applicants applied to be Early Intervention providers.
- Children were evaluated for OIDD eligibility through our Intake/Eligibility Division. Evaluations included psychological, adaptive and autism spectrum disorder testing.
- Once eligibility was determined, families were eligible to receive family training and service coordination from qualified providers.
- Families received family support funds, summer support funds, and respite. Note: Eligibility criteria applied.
- OIDD administered three waivers, the Intellectual Disability/Related Disability Waiver, the Community Supports Waiver, and the Head and Spinal Cord Injury Waiver.
 - Parents of children, ages three through five, were given the opportunity to apply for waivers at the Intake/Eligibility process and through their Early Intervention provider. Note: Eligibility criteria applied.
- OIDD identified children eligible to receive services from the American Printing House for the Blind and assisted in the application and ordering process.
- OIDD staff provided training to law enforcement agencies, medical professionals social workers and conference attendees regarding autism spectrum disorder.
- OIDD provided technical assistance and training to Early Intervention providers regarding OIDD standards and 'best practices.'

Demographics

OIDD served 7,160 preschool-age children during the 2024-2025 school year. The table below illustrates the number of children served in each age group.

Table 12. Number of Preschool Children with Disabilities Served by Age Group

Age	Total
Age 3	5,026
Age 4	3,709
Age 5 (not yet kindergarten)	2,141
Total	7,160

Note: Children may be counted in more than one age group due to their having a birthday during the sampling period.

Finances

OIDD is financially responsible for providing Family Training/Special Instruction and Service Coordination to eligible children. OIDD uses a combination of state funds and Medicaid funds to pay for services. The following table gives information regarding funding for children ages three through five served in Early Intervention.

Table 13. Funds Expended on Children Ages 3-5 Served in Early Intervention

OIDD Total Funds Expended	\$15,782,498.50
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Agency Information

Information about OIDD's programs for children ages 3 through 5 can be found on the website: <https://OIDD.sc.gov>

South Carolina Department of Education Office of Instructional Support Child Early Reading Development and Education Program

The Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP) provides eligible at-risk four-year-old children in South Carolina with access to full-day, high-quality early childhood education. Originally launched in the 2006–07 school year as the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP), CERDEP was created to serve children residing in school districts named in the *Abbeville County School District et al. vs. South Carolina* school funding lawsuit. On June 11, 2014, Governor Nikki Haley signed Act 284 (Read to Succeed) into law, with Section 2 formally establishing CERDEP for all Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with a poverty index of 60 percent or higher. As of the 2021–22 school year, all LEAs in the state became eligible to opt into CERDEP to serve income-eligible children in high-poverty schools.

CERDEP is designed for four-year-old children from families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines or those who are Medicaid-eligible. Participating students attend a full-day instructional program (180 days per year), receiving a minimum of six and a half hours of instruction per day, five days a week. The program aims to prepare

children to enter kindergarten ready to learn by offering comprehensive developmental and academic support.

Classrooms are staffed by certified early childhood educators, who are required to complete annual professional development in key instructional areas such as literacy, mathematics, and social-emotional learning. In addition, all CERDEP programs must offer parent education opportunities, with a focus on literacy and math. The Office of Instructional Supports (OIS) updates the CERDEP Program Guidelines annually; these guidelines are publicly available on the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) website.

Over the past decade, the South Carolina General Assembly has steadily expanded CERDEP funding, significantly increasing access to high-quality pre-kindergarten for children living in poverty. As of May 2025, the SCDE supported CERDEP programs in 69 school districts, one charter district, and one charter school, serving 14,671 students statewide.

To monitor student progress, CERDEP-participating LEAs are required to administer one of two state-approved assessments: the Individual Growth and Development Indicators (myIGDIs) or Teaching Strategies GOLD (GOLD). Students are assessed within the first 45 days of the school year and again within the final 45 days. Additionally, all CERDEP classrooms must implement curricula selected from the SCDE-approved list to ensure alignment with state standards and early learning best practices.

Initiatives During the 2024–25 School Year Included:

- Supported CERDEP programs in maintaining high-quality instruction.
- Supported CERDEP expansion of classrooms, extended day, and summer programs.
- Per Proviso 1A.74, supported the training of public-school educators and class aides working with children in the CERDEP and the Office of First Steps to School Readiness in foundational literacy skills through EC LETRS training. The Lexia LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) Suite is comprehensive professional learning designed to provide early childhood and elementary educators and administrators with deep knowledge to be literacy and language experts in the science of reading. Developed by Dr. Louisa Moats, Dr. Carol Tolman and leaders in the field of literacy, Lexia LETRS, teaches the skills needed to master the fundamentals of reading and writing instruction—phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and written language. LETRS for Early Childhood Educators is a professional learning experience for pre-K and Kindergarten teachers that provides deep knowledge of early literacy instruction. Teachers gain new skills to help young learners build a literacy foundation before they even learn to read or write. Successful completion of this training satisfies the requirements of the literacy teacher endorsement.

- Provided face-to-face learning opportunities at regional, district, and school levels on various topics such as the SC-ELS, creating literacy-rich environments, promoting literacy in math instruction, supporting writing and bookmaking, and providing early learning leader support, new teacher training, and teacher assistant sessions.
- Supported South Carolina Early Childhood Multi System of Support (SC EC MTSS) by collaborating with the state-level Pyramid PIECES team.
- Collaborated with other members of the ECAC on the state's spring and summer Palmetto Pre-K Jamborees.
- Continued work on the Palmetto Drive to Five Leadership Team and the South Carolina Longitudinal Data System Leadership Teams.

Finances

Public and private providers are funded for instructional costs at a minimum rate of \$5,100 per student enrolled. First Steps and the Department of Education must provide an equitable distribution above the minimum between public and private providers. New providers participating for the first time in the current fiscal year and enrolling between one and six eligible children shall be eligible to receive at a minimum of \$1,000 per child in materials and equipment funding, with providers enrolling seven or more such children eligible for funding at a minimum of \$10,000. Total expenditures for 2024-25 were \$77,042,964.52.

South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS)

The SCDSS Division of Early Care and Education offers the following programs and services for preschool children ages three to five.

The SCDSS Division of Early Care and Education provides access to quality child care through scholarships as financial assistance to eligible families so parents can work. Special Needs childcare scholarships help to provide childcare for eligible families of children from birth to age 19 who have a documented disability or special need.

The South Carolina Child Care Inclusion Collaborative (Inclusion Collaborative) provides individualized training, coaching, and consultation for childcare providers to support the inclusion of children with disabilities/developmental delays in childcare programs. The Inclusion Specialists collaborate directly with childcare staff and program administrators to increase the use of evidence-based practices that lead to access and meaningful participation for all children. This includes providing training and coaching on evidence-based practices related to the promotion of social and emotional wellbeing and prevention of challenging behaviors using the Pyramid Model framework.

Through active collaboration with partnering agencies and organizations, the Inclusion Collaborative helps childcare providers stay connected with resources and opportunities to increase the quality of care and education provided to children and families in South

Carolina. The South Carolina Department of Social Services Division of Early Care and Education supports this program using the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF).

Initiatives during the 2024-25 School Year Included:

- Child Care Scholarships: Provided childcare financial assistance for eligible families of children from birth to age nineteen who had a documented disability or special need.
- Developmental Screening: The Inclusion Collaborative provided training and coaching to childcare programs to conduct developmental screening (i.e., Ages and Stages Questionnaires – Third Edition), communicated with parents about results, and made appropriate referrals.
- CARA's Kit: The Inclusion Collaborative provided intensive training and coaching related to making adaptations and modifications using CARA's Kit framework.

Pyramid Model initiatives are also supported by the SCDSS Division of Early Care and Education. These initiatives support the inclusion of young children with disabilities into community-based programs.

Initiatives during the 2024-2025 School Year Included:

- Pyramid Model supports:
 - Program-wide Pyramid Model Implementation in Childcare: This provided program coach support for childcare programs to implement the use of Pyramid Model practices and strategies in their programs.
 - Behavior Support Network in Childcare: This initiative supported childcare programs to implement Tier 3 behavior interventions for children with challenging behavior.
- Child Care Ready for All (CRAWL): Provided nurse consultation for childcare providers to support children with chronic health conditions.

In addition, SCDSS is working with the SC Inclusion Collaborative, SC Partnerships for Inclusion, OSES, and Able SC to provide contracted slots in childcare programs for three-year-old children with disabilities to assist LEAs to expand their continuum of support to include inclusive placements for preschool children.

One strategy that is offered to districts who have completed the Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) Academy is the Early Transitions Initiative. The Early Transitions Initiative aims to expand the continuum of placements for 3-year-old children eligible for Part B 619 services by offering Child Care Scholarships administered by SC DSS Division of Early Care and Education using CCDF funds so that eligible children have access to a general education setting and can receive their services in their general education placement. Early Transitions is a collaborative between local school districts and community child care programs in their attendance area. Child care programs receive an accessibility assessment and training from the SC Child Care Inclusion Collaborative (SCIC) prior to children being placed in their program. This is a new initiative that is helping

school districts include general education settings on their continuum of placements for three-year-old children with IEPs.

Eligibility criteria for the Early Transitions Initiative are described in the table below.

Table 14. Early Transitions Eligibility Criteria

School Districts	Child Care Programs	Child/Family
Completed the Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) Academy	Located in a SEIT Academy school district attendance zone	3-year-old child with an IEP
Implementing an itinerant teacher model for special education service delivery	Accessibility Evaluation – Able SC	General Education is the Least Restrictive Environment determined by the IEP team including the child’s parent(s)/guardian(s)
N/A	Professional Development from SCIC: • ADA Basics for Child Care Providers: 2 hours • IDEA Part B 619 Overview: 1.5 hours • Building Blocks Basics for Child Care Providers: 1.5 hours • Promoting Engagement Using the Pyramid Model: 2.5 hours • Cara’s Kit: 7.5 hours + follow-up consultation	N/A

Table 15. Early Transitions Participation by District

Table 15.a. Greenwood 50 School District Early Transitions Participation

Year	# of Early Transition Initiative Community Child Care Placements
2023	1
2024	1
2025	1
Total	3

Table 15.b. Spartanburg 5 School District Early Transitions Participation

Year	# of Early Transition Initiative Community Child Care Placements
2022	2
2023	1
2024	2
2025	2
Total	7

Demographics

SCDSS Division of Early Care and Education served a total of 362 preschool children with disabilities during the 2024-25 school year. The tables below illustrate the number of children served in each age group as well as the breakdown by ethnicity.

Table 16. Number of Preschool Children with Disabilities Served by Age Group

Age	Total
Age 3	238
Age 4	185
Age 5 (not yet kindergarten)	15
Total	438

Table 17. Number of Preschool Children with Disabilities Served by Ethnicity

Age	American Indian or Alaskan	Asian	Black of African American	Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	White
Age 3	0	1	143	0	18	38
Age 4	0	1	98	0	22	33
Age 5	0	0	7	0	3	4
Total	0	2	248	0	43	75

Finances

The SCDSS Division of Early Care and Education is financially responsible for providing the South Carolina Voucher Program with Special Needs Vouchers for eligible families of children from birth to age nineteen who have a documented disability or special need. The following table gives information regarding expenditures for 9/1/2024-5/31/2025 by age group.

Table 18. Funds Expended by Age Group

Age	Amount of Funds Expended
Age 3	\$837,137.00
Age 4	\$568,254.00
Age 5 (not yet kindergarten)	\$42,458.00
Total	\$1,447,849.00

Agency Information

Additional information regarding the South Carolina Voucher Program may be found on the SCDHHS Division of Early Care and Education's [website](#). Information regarding the South Carolina Child Care Inclusion Collaborative may be found on their [website](#).

South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind (SCSDB)

The SCSDB provides a comprehensive preschool special education day (ages three through five) and residential (ages four through five) program for students identified as deaf/hard of hearing and/or blind/visually impaired. Staples of the preschool program include communication support via American Sign Language, current technology including FM systems, sound fields, low vision aids and Braille resources, extensive related services including Orientation and Mobility, audiology services, and Occupational/Physical Therapy, and low teacher-to-student ratios. Students go through an application process to attend SCSDB. The school serves students on campus who come from the entire state of South Carolina. Currently, all preschool students are day students; none are residential students.

Initiatives During the 2024–25 School Year Included:

- Increased parental involvement through technology,
- Continued focus on emergent literacy skills and language development, and
- Expanded core curriculum for Vision Impaired and Deaf and Hard of Hearing students.

Demographics

For 2024-25, seven children in the three through five-year-old (not yet kindergarten) category of students were served. The tables below show how many children there were in each age group and information about ethnicity.

Table 19. Number of Preschool Children with Disabilities Served by Age Group

Age	Total	Number Served by LEA
Age 3	4	4
Age 4	1	1
Age 5 (not yet kindergarten)	2	2
Total	7	7

Table 20. Number of Preschool Children Served by Ethnicity

Age	American Indian or Alaskan	Asian	Black or African American	Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Two or more races	White
Age 3	0	1	0	0	0	3
Age 4	0	0	1	0	0	0
Age 5 (not yet kindergarten)	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	0	1	1	0	0	5

Finances

The SCSSDB is financially responsible for providing the following programs and services for preschool students identified as deaf/hard of hearing and/or blind/visually impaired:

- Full day preschool special education program (3-year-olds; day students only and 4 through 5-year-olds; day and residential students),
- Audiology services,
- Occupational Therapy,
- Physical Therapy,
- Orientation and Mobility,
- Speech-Language Therapy,
- Nursing Services, and
- Transportation.

Program expenditures are not delineated between preschool and school-age populations. Funding sources include state appropriations and IDEA funds.

Agency Information

The agency [website](#) includes additional information regarding program policies, procedures, and services.

Summary

The Office of Special Education Services (OSES) remains committed to providing comprehensive, high-quality support and fostering collaboration to serve children ages three through five. Our efforts emphasize access and excellence in early childhood education. In partnership with other agencies, OSES has established and implemented consistent yet adaptable strategies to engage families, support early childhood educators and develop programs aimed at improving outcomes for young children across South Carolina.

Continued support for preschool programs and educators is essential to ensure that children receive the necessary foundation from birth, enabling them to enter preschool with the tools and resources needed for success. These coordinated early intervention efforts are critical to preparing children to start school ready to learn, advance confidently through each grade, and acquire the knowledge, skills, and supports necessary for kindergarten readiness and long-term success.

Recommendations

Based on information in the annual report, we, the Preschool Committee of the South Carolina Advisory Council on the Education of Students with Disabilities, make the following recommendations and plans for the 2025-26 school year.

- The Preschool Committee of the Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities will continue to serve as the Cross-Sector Early Childhood Inclusion State Leadership Team: In alignment with the updated 2023 Joint Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (originally issued by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education in 2015), the Preschool Committee will continue to provide leadership in this area. We have created the following goals for the next year:
 - Collaborate with the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Early Transitions Initiative to create shared, universal language on the inclusion of young children with disabilities.
 - Support the statewide implementation of high-quality, evidence-based practices through the Early Transitions Initiative and the Community Inclusion Team technical assistance project in partnership with the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA).
- To strengthen and sustain ongoing initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for preschool students, we recommend that OSES, including South Carolina Partnerships for Inclusion (SCPI) in its role as the state's early childhood technical assistance center, continue providing robust support to school districts. Key priorities include:

- Expanding placement options: Support LEAs in effectively implementing a full continuum of placement options for preschool children with disabilities.
- Building district capacity: Equip local education agencies (LEAs) with the tools and guidance needed to expand access to the general education curriculum for preschool children with disabilities.

Where LEAs successfully adopt these approaches, we expect to see improved student trajectories beginning in early childhood, including increased graduation rates and more positive post-school outcomes.

References

Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA, U. S. Department of Education. Section 300.8, Child with a Disability. Website: (2025). <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/a/300.8>

Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs Website: (2023). <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/policy-statement-on-inclusion-11-28-2023.pdf>