



Our Mission

Build a stronger, better coordinated and more accessible network of early childhood services that has broad community and legislative support, so that every child in Kent County will have the opportunity to succeed.

First Steps is supported by our generous community partners. We would like to offer a special thank you to our inaugural funders whose dedication and commitment is helping to ensure that all of our children are ready to succeed in school and in life:

- Heart of West Michigan United Way
- Frey Foundation
- Steelcase Foundation
- Early Childhood Investment Corporation

First Steps would also like to thank the Early Childhood Children’s Commission and the Great Start Collaborative of Kent County.



Who We Are

First Steps is a partnership of parents, community agencies, business leaders, healthcare providers, educators, foundations, faith leaders and individuals who are investing in our youngest children to ensure a better future for all of us.

Our Vision—Every young child in Kent County will be ready to succeed in school and in life.



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The Great Start Collaborative of Kent County is a major partner of First Steps.





Every child comes into the world bearing the gift of potential, and in Kent County we believe every child deserves the opportunity to grow that gift.



Why It Matters

Children learn more before their 3rd birthday than during any other time in their life.

The brain is not fully developed when a child is born, and the first few years are critical. This is the time when children learn how to think, solve problems, cope with stress, be creative and communicate.

“Invest in the very young.”

– *James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics*

An investment in the early years pays off for the whole community: higher graduation rates, a better-trained workforce, a decline in crime and welfare dependency.

What We Do

- Help all children access quality healthcare
- Give families the tools they need to provide opportunities for their children
- Improve the early learning opportunities that build healthy brains
- Make children and families an urgent community priority

What You Can Do

- Talk, sing, read and play with your child every day
- Volunteer your time to support our community’s children
- Invite First Steps to speak to your church, civic group or organization
- Be an informed advocate about the urgent need to invest in our youngest children and their families

For more information, please go to www.firststepskent.org or call 616-632-1011.