



Meet our FY22-23 Community Partners

Health Programs

The Challenge: The first 2,000 days of a child's life are the foundation for long-term health and well-being – physically, mentally, and emotionally. And yet, many children experience barriers, individually and systemically, that put them at a lifelong disadvantage.

How We Help: All children deserve access to high-quality physical and mental health care, early identification of developmental delays and the intervention services necessary to catch them up, and healthy models for good habit formation. Therefore, Smart Start partners with programs that empower parents with information related to brain development and developmental milestones. Resources promote the adoption of innovative, evidence-based therapies by Charlotte providers and expand access to services and treatments children need to turn five ready to thrive.



Guiding Parents to Services



Guiding Parents to Services (GPS) supports children and their families as they transition from the Children's Developmental Services Agency (CDSA) at age 3 to potential programming with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Exceptional Children's program, which provides support for children in need of special education. GPS provides navigation, educational, and emotional support during this pivotal time. The goal is to empower families to get the services their child needs.

Community Literacy Impact Program



Charlotte Speech and Hearing Center provides evidence-based, early language intervention programs for children ages birth - 5 focused on building their skills in early communication, emerging receptive and expressive language. Participating preschools include: The Learning Collaborative, Charlotte Bilingual Preschool, Howard Levine Child Development Center, and selected Alliance Center for Education classrooms.

Bond with Me



This project of Myers Park Pediatrics identifies new parent-child dyads who are struggling with additional needs or challenges. These families are given extra support, to ensure that all of the social determinates of health are being addressed for both parent and child, to mitigate intergenerational trauma and build resilience. Through enhanced case management, parent education and short term counseling, parents are provided additional tools to meet their child's needs. The program tracks well child visits, immunizations, breastfeeding, weight, development, intervention services, access to benefits, postpartum depression and safety.

Family Support Programs

The Challenge: All families want their children to succeed, but given the inequities in our society, some families lack the necessary knowledge or resources to raise their young children optimally. Teen parents, adults with poor English literacy, families in poverty, and parents with trauma may need additional support to help them prepare their children for future success. Just as each family is unique, each family's need is exceptional. Therefore Smart Start partners with a wide range of programs so that all children turn five ready to thrive.



How We Help: We recognize that the responsibility for a family's success does not rest solely with the family; it is shared with the systems within the community and culture that either help or hinder a family's ability to succeed. Therefore, Smart Start invests strategically at all levels. This includes our partnerships with local agencies and early childhood experts, our convening work within the community, and on a systems level by identifying the gaps and barriers within our support networks and advocating for change and additional resources.

Child Adult Relationship Enhancement



Safe Alliance has adopted CARE for their Shelter, in an effort to create a trauma-informed environment. CARE is based on Parent Child Interaction Therapy and teaches these skills to all staff, in an effort to model and support healthy interactions for families in residence.



Nurse-Family Partnership

Helping First-Time Parents Succeed®

Nurse-Family Partnership

The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is designed for low-income mothers and their children. It includes one-on-one home visits by a trained public health registered nurse to participating clients. The visits begin early in the woman's pregnancy (with program enrollment no later than the 28th week of gestation) and conclude when the woman's child turns 2 years old. During visits, nurses work to reinforce maternal behaviors that are consistent with program goals and that encourage positive behaviors and accomplishments. Topics of the visits include prenatal care, caring for an infant, and promoting young children's emotional, physical, and cognitive development.



Communities In Schools

Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Safe Journey's Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers (PAT) works with teen parents, to ensure that they have the resources and knowledge they need to stay in and be successful in school, while providing for their child. The PAT model includes one-on-one home visits, monthly group meetings, developmental screenings, and a resource network for families. PAT may serve families from pregnancy to kindergarten entry.



YMCA Parents as Teachers

The goal of the YMCA Parents as Teachers (PAT) program is to provide Hispanic parents with child development knowledge and parenting support. The PAT model includes one-on-one home visits, monthly group meetings, developmental screenings, and a resource network for families. PAT may serve families from pregnancy to kindergarten entry.

The Basics Mecklenburg



The Basics is a public education campaign built on five evidence-based parenting and caregiving principles important for healthy brain development for children from birth to age three. Eighty percent of brain growth happens in the first three years of life, and every child from every background can benefit from routinely engaging in these fun, simple, and powerful learning experiences. The Basics brain development campaign is working through a variety of local partners to ensure that every parent and caregiver is fully supported by family, friends, and the community to use 'The Basics' practices in everyday life.



Child First

Child First is an evidence-based home visiting program, with proven effectiveness in achieving improved mental health outcomes for young children (0-5) and their caregivers. It is a psychotherapeutic, two-generation intervention, which helps build a nurturing, responsive, parent-child relationship. This protects the child's developing brain from the damage of chronic stress, heals the effects of trauma and adversity for both child and parent/caregiver, and promotes strong emotional health, cognitive growth, and resilience. This model is being implemented by Children's Home Society.

Moms Moving Forward



Freedom Communities' *Moms Moving Forward* program takes a holistic and community-based approach to drive upward mobility and family stability for single mothers and their children in 28208. Participants meet weekly with Transformation Coaches who are trained in the evidenced-based EMPATH model to support moms in setting and achieving goals related to housing, employment, wages, well-being, support, and financial capability. During the 12-month paid program, mothers and their children build a network of support with other program participants and connect to resources that address each social determinant of health.

Early Care & Education Programs

The Challenge: In Mecklenburg County, most infants and young children live in families where all caregivers work outside the home. To have peace of mind, families want conveniently located, high-quality care for their young children, delivered by educated professionals at a price that doesn't break the bank. Yet, too often, families are forced into situations where care is unstable, unaffordable, or of questionable quality.

How We Help: Smart Start recognizes the high cost of poor childcare. It invests 80% of its funds accordingly: to educate families on how to locate good childcare, to increase access to high-quality childcare for low-income families through subsidies and accessible, high-quality pre-school, to offer teacher training, and bonus payments for teachers intent on attaining higher education levels, and on supporting the licensure and safety of childcare centers with technical assistance.



Child Care Health Consultants

Through consultation, health education and technical assistance, nurses and health educators work with individual child care facilities to help create environments that best support the healthy growth and development of young children.



• CHARLOTTE •
BILINGUAL
• PRESCHOOL •

Charlotte Bilingual Preschool

A 5-star program that provides high-quality, tuition-free preschool education to low-income, at-risk Hispanic/Latino children. Charlotte Bilingual Preschool prepares students for a successful transition to kindergarten and offers parent training and engagement.



The Learning Collaborative
Nurturing young hearts and minds

The Learning Collaborative

Serves preschool children from at-risk families through a 5 star, tuition-free program with literacy-rich activities that address their educational and social needs. A Family Support Specialist builds and nurtures relationships with parents to lay the foundation for on-going involvement in their child's education.



Child Care Resources

The Child Care Resource and Referral Program educates families about quality child care in their communities. The families are provided referrals to local child care options through informative resources. They can attend workshops focusing on financial assistance. Enhanced services are accessible to teen parents, grandparents raising their grandchildren, and parents of children with identified special needs.



Social Emotional Teacher Coaching

Young children are learning how to deal with strong emotions in themselves and others and can need help understanding the required skills. Yet, preschoolers are expelled at three times the rate of K-12 students. Social Emotional Teacher Coaching (SETC) recognizes this as a gap in adults' capacity to meet this need and strives to 1) improve Mecklenburg licensed child care professionals' knowledge and skills to provide consistent pro-social environments that foster children's social-emotional development and 2) nurture teacher practices that appropriately and constructively address children's behaviors and maintain their child care placements.



Quality Everyday

Helps directors and teachers improve each child's experience in the classroom through supportive adult-child interactions and high-quality learning environments. Specialists deliver in-depth training on various topics and on-site coaching to help achieve identified goals. Various tools guide the coaching process, including Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development, Environment Rating Scales, Program Administration Scale, and Business Administration Scale. QED partners with Central Piedmont Community College to deliver a 2-credit course on making the most of classroom interactions and also engages local wellness experts to support staff resilience. 3-, 4- and 5-star child care centers, family child care homes, and new operating programs with a temporary license in Mecklenburg County are eligible.



Early Childhood Teacher Education

The most critical element in any early childhood education setting is the quality of the teacher. Yet, in Mecklenburg county, many ECE professionals lack the formal education to deliver high-quality care. CPCC encourages staff from local child care settings to participate in the Early Childhood Education Program. The Professional Development Specialist recruits and provides resources and assistance to access higher education coursework. The Student Success Coach guides each participant through the challenges of working and being a full-time student. Both offer support for successful completion, and students are eligible to receive a completion bonus when achieving a B or better on related coursework. This ensures that more of our children receive the quality care they deserve.



MECK Pre-K

MECK Pre-K is high-quality, free pre-k education for eligible four-year-old children in Mecklenburg County. Classes are taught by licensed teachers and highly qualified teacher assistants. Classrooms are located in four- and five-star child development centers.



North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K)

An income-based high-quality pre-k option for for eligible four-year-old children which prepares them for success in school. Children attend a 6.5 hour school day program following the CMS schedule. Classrooms are located in 4 and 5 star child care centers and Head

Child Care WAGES[®] Program

WAGES NC

The Child Care WAGES[®] Program provides education-based salary supplements to qualifying teachers, directors and family child care providers working with children between the ages of birth to five. The program is designed to provide preschool children more stable relationships with better-educated teachers by rewarding teacher education and continuity of care.

Literacy Programs

The Challenge: Children must learn to read so that they can read to learn. Yet, many families do not realize that language and literacy skills begin early, years before entering kindergarten.

How We Help: Children need daily access to high-quality picture books and a loving adult to share them with. Therefore, Smart Start provides access to engaging children's books with practical suggestions for parents. This way, caregivers can share them in loving, everyday interactions that expand a child's understanding of the world.



Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Provides books, free of charge, to children living in Mecklenburg County until their 5th birthday. Enrolled children receive one age-appropriate book in the mail each month until their 5th birthday.



Raising a Reader

Promotes literacy between parents and children by providing rotating bags of high quality books to children enrolled in child care centers and by offering onsite early literacy workshops.

The logo for Ready4K. It consists of a blue speech bubble with rounded corners, containing the text "Ready4K" in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

Ready4K

Ready4K

A research-based text-messaging program for parents with young children. Each week, you will receive age-appropriate facts, tips and opportunities to boost your child age birth to five's learning by building on existing family routines.