



Meet our FY23-24 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, both 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, 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 navigate the evaluation process provided by CMS for a potential developmental delay. Families get connected to GPS via referral from the Children's Developmental Services Agency (CDSA) or from a Meck Pre-K classroom. The goal is to empower families to get the early interventions services their child needs and GPS fosters this through navigation, educational, and emotional support during this pivotal time.

Community Literacy Impact Program



Charlotte Speech and Hearing Center provides no cost screenings for over 2,000 young children in Mecklenburg, and connection to evaluation services for those children who need further assessment. Additionally, CSHC delivers evidence-based, early language intervention services for high risk preschool enrolled children, that builds their skills in early communication, emerging receptive and expressive language - skills critical for early literacy success.

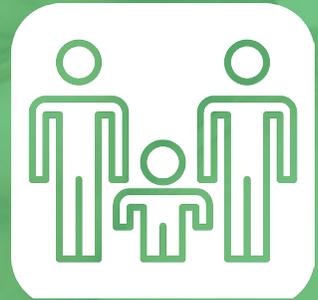


Parent Child Interactive Therapy

The Novant Health Center for Pediatric Development, a local clinic supporting children with developmental delays and other deficits contributing to poor school readiness, has added a mental health therapeutic component - Parent Child Interaction Therapy. This demonstration project seeks to reduce the behavioral challenges young children and their families face.

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



Child-Adult Relationship Enhancement (CARE) is a agency wide adaptation of Parent Child Interaction Therapy, designed to model the skills taught to enhance the adult-child relationship. CARE is to be used by non-clinical professionals working with traumatized children and their adult caregivers to foster a trauma-informed environment. Skills are taught via live coaching, and caregivers practice the skills in pairs and small groups while trainers observe and coach.



**Communities
In Schools**

Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Safe Journey Parents as Teachers

Safe Journey uses the evidenced based Parents as Teachers (PAT) model to provide teen parents with child development knowledge and parenting support so that they can successfully stay in school. Case Managers provide one-on-one home visits, monthly group meetings, developmental screenings, and a resource network. Safe Journey may serve families from pregnancy to kindergarten entry, or until parent graduation, whichever comes first.



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 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 encouraging the emotional, physical, and cognitive development of young children.



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.



Moms Moving Forward

Freedom Communities' Moms Moving Forward Program uses the evidenced based EMPATH model to take a holistic and community based approach to drive upward mobility and family stability for single mothers and their children in the 28208 zip code. During the 12 month, paid program, mothers build a network of support with other program participants and make connections to resources to address their area(s) of need, as identified on the Bridge to Self Sufficiency.

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 and 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.



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.



Child Care Health Consultants

The Mecklenburg County Health Department employs highly trained nurses and health educators to work with child care facilities to ensure the health and safety of all children in their care. These professionals provide training, ongoing coaching and technical assistance on a wide variety of topics related to health and safety, including safe sleeping, sound nutrition, disease prevention, supporting a child with special health care needs, and much more.



Social Emotional Teacher Coaching

Young children are learning how to deal with strong emotions in themselves and others and often need help in learning regulation skills; and yet preschoolers are expelled at three times the rate of K-12 students. Social Emotional Teacher Coaching (SETC) recognizes this as gap in early care providers' 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.



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 ongoing involvement in their child's education.



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.



MECK Pre-K

MECK Pre-K is a Mecklenburg County-funded program that offers a high-quality Pre-K experience to ensure children are academically and developmentally prepared for kindergarten. Classrooms are located in 4 and 5 star child care centers and children attend a 6.5 hour school day program.



North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K)

Offers a high-quality pre-k option for at-risk children and 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 Start programs.



Early Childhood Workforce Development

This new project recruits individuals who are interested in becoming childcare teachers in Mecklenburg County, provides them access to the required training, and gives them on the job experience by placing them in participating member centers as substitute teachers.

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, and so Smart Start provides access to engaging children's books, with practical suggestions for parents, so that 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 sending home weekly, rotating bags of high quality books to children enrolled in targeted child care centers and by offering onsite early literacy workshops, to enhance the shared reading skills of parents and teachers.

Ready4K

Ready4K

A research-based, free, text-messaging program for parents with young children, aged birth to five. Each week, parents receive age-appropriate facts, tips and easy to use suggestions to boost their child's learning by building on existing family routines.