

Funded Programs

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 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 targets children in need of special education support. GPS provides navigation, educational, and emotional support during this pivotal time. The goal is to empower families to get the services their child needs.

Sound Beginnings and APPLE A Day



Charlotte Speech and Hearing Center provides an evidence-based, early language intervention program for preschoolers 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 Bethlehem Center-Early Head Start classrooms.

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 form of intervention that utilizes live coaching of adult caregivers and their children. CARE is skill-based intervention to enhance the adult-child relationship. Skills are taught by live coaching and caregivers practicing skills in pairs and small groups while trainers observe and coach. CARE is developed to be used by non-clinical professionals working with traumatized children and their adult caregivers to provide a whole trauma-informed environment.

Family Education Services



THOMPSON
Strengthening Children, Families & Communities

Thompson Child & Family Focus provides a series of parent education classes, parent and grandparent support groups, and community referrals for parents of children ages birth to five referred from the Department of Social Services. Thompson uses three evidence-based models, Nurturing Skills for Families, Incredible Years: BASIC Parent Training Program, and the Circle of Parents Family Support. Thompson is also a Triple P provider. Parents participate in role-playing/group discussion and practice activities within sessions and at home to learn additional approaches to support positive parenting outcomes.



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



**Communities
In Schools**
Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Safe Journey's Parents as Teachers

The goal of the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program is to provide 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.



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.

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 preschool education to low-income, at-risk Hispanic/Latino children, ages 3-5. Charlotte Bilingual Preschool prepares students for a successful transition to kindergarten and offers parent training and engagement.



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.



Child Care Resources

Helps low-income families pay for quality care in 4 and 5 star child care centers, which allows them to work or attend school. The program is administered through Child Care Resources Inc.



Early Childhood Teacher Professional Development

Offers courses designed to prepare early care and education teachers to work in their field. Activity supports a coach/recruiter and a variety of classes for early childhood professionals.



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.



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.



THOMPSON
Strengthening Children, Families & Communities

The Polliwog Project

This program provides behavior support and developmental therapies to children experiencing challenging behavior in their early childhood school setting and prevents expulsion. A behavior specialist works with the teacher, parent, child, and other professionals to support success for the child.

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

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.