



## Smart Start

### WHAT is Smart Start?

- Smart Start is North Carolina's signature early childhood and education system.
- Smart Start's 77 local partnerships serving all 100 North Carolina counties provide the network on the ground that is needed to produce efficient and effective results for children birth to five.
- Local partnerships serve as a system to convene stakeholders to assess local needs; ensure accountability; and leverage private, community, state and federal resources.

### WHY is Smart Start so important?

- Research shows the achievement gap appears long before children reach kindergarten –it can become evident as early as age nine months.
- Neuroscience has changed how we think of the earliest years. Images of the brain show that the experiences children have early in life literally shape the wiring of the brain and strongly affect whether a child grows up to be a healthy, productive member of society.
- The social, educational, and economic benefits of quality early education are so clear that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce released a 2010 report saying, "Early childhood education has a tremendous impact on the national economic security and the viability of the American dream."

### HOW does Smart Start work?

- The power of Smart Start is in its public/private partnership that mandates outcomes, while giving communities local control to determine the best approach to achieving them.
- Smart Start helps keep the cost of high quality care manageable for working families.
- In addition to the millions of dollars Smart Start raises in cash and in-kind donations in each year, Smart Start leverages millions more from federal and private funders. In FY 2009/10, Smart Start funds leveraged more than \$15.8 million additional dollars for North Carolina's early childhood system.
- The community-based programs funded by Smart Start improve early care and education quality, health and wellness, and support parents in fulfilling their responsibilities as parents—ensuring that children have the early experiences needed to develop a healthy foundation for all future learning.

### WHAT DIFFERENCE is Smart Start making?

- 64% of all children birth to five in early care and education attended high quality 4- and 5-star programs as compared to 33% in 2001.
- 94% of children with special needs birth to five from low-income families were in high-quality programs as compared to 61% in 2001.
- 74% of children birth to five whose families receive help paying for early childhood care and education attended high quality 4- and 5- star centers as compared to 30% in 2001.
- 98% of children received recommended developmental screening at their most recent well-child visit after Smart Start launched the Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD) program (compared to 81% before ABCD) in participating counties.
- Parents who described their children as having above normal challenging behaviors decreased from 41% to 15% after participation in the Incredible Years parent education program.



**North Carolina is a leader in early childhood education initiatives.**



#### **The N.C. Child Care Coalition: working to improve the quality and affordability of early childhood services in North Carolina:**

Kaplan Early Learning Company • NC Early Childhood Assn • NC Assn for the Education of Young Children • NC Partnership for Children  
NC Head Start Assn • Child Care Services Assn • Ctr for Community Self-Help • Covenant With NC's Children • NC Justice Ctr • United Way of NC  
Easter Seals/UCP NC • NC Pediatric Society • NC-ADD • NC Institute for Child Development Professionals • NC Licensed Child Care Association  
NC Interagency Coordinating Council and many regional and local child care agencies, child care providers and individuals.

**Contact Annette Newkirk, Public Policy Consultant/Lobbyist for the Coalition: 919-692-5847; annettenewkirk@gmail.com**



*“I have been practicing dental hygiene for over 40 years. I have never personally been involved with a better program that does more for a severely underserved population. The children served receive a prophylaxis cleaning and fluoride treatment and instruction on the correct way to brush and floss their teeth. Most of these folks never get to see a dentist unless it is on an emergency visit to have a tooth extracted. Healthy Smiles has the potential to break the cycle of expensive emergency intervention and replace it with excellent low-cost, preventative dental care.”*

— Muriel Carle, RDH, Transylvania County



*“The services my daughter has received have been excellent. There is no red tape. Our coordinator does all the work for us and the therapy provided has been excellent. Most importantly, we have seen huge progress with Addison with her communication, sensory integration, and cognitive development. We are thankful these services are available to children at such a young age because early intervention is critical for children that face these challenges and adversity.”*

— Amy Elkins, Lee County



*“I am working hard to support my family and am pursuing a career in the military. Thank you for every bit of time and money that has been given. It goes to someone who needs it to help make my family whole. My child and I have benefited greatly from this program and it would greatly affect me and others like myself if it ended.”*

— Ishmael Quick, Cumberland County



Ashley and Jason Cottingham of Rowan County visited five child care programs to find a safe, quality child care for their 2-year-old son, Lawson. After their first-choice program had no vacancies they found the Rowan Medical Child Development Center, a facility operated by the hospital, but open to the public.

“They provide lunch, snacks, nap time and play,” said Ashley. “Anyone picking up a child has to show their identification first. Parents can go in anytime and observe through one-way mirrors.” The center had an opening and Lawson was enrolled.

Unfortunately, the weekly expense at Rowan Medical was \$135 - was a bit beyond the two-income family’s reach. Ashley’s salary combined with her husband’s income as a police officer was too high to receive child care subsidy from DSS. However, they did qualify for a Smart Start scholarship. As a family of three, the Cottingshams pay 10% of their gross monthly income to Rowan Medical Child Development Center. Smart Start Rowan pays the difference.