

The mission of Smart Beginnings Martinsville-Henry County (SBMHC) is to ensure that ALL children, birth to age 5, in Martinsville and Henry County will have caring, responsible adults who have access to resources to provide for their children's social, emotional, physical and academic development.

SBMHC has worked to accomplish this mission by focusing on three high-priority needs identified:

- Lack of parental involvement and awareness of their role as child's first teacher.
- Growing number of children entering kindergarten with undiagnosed developmental delays.
- Lack of community infrastructure for information, referral and collaboration around early childhood.

To address these needs, 4 strategies were implemented with positive results and measurable outcomes.

Strategy 1: Open an information and referral center to provide a single point of entry for parents and the community to better connect families to appropriate services (aka: *The Starting Place*).

Impact: *The Starting Place* is serving 425 children and families, with parents and caregivers reporting a 65% increase in knowledge about where to go in the community to find information and help about raising their children.

Strategy 2: Develop a comprehensive early childhood infrastructure in MHC to promote systemic change and increase collaboration between agencies serving young children and families.

Impact:

- Established formal organizational structure with leadership body to guide and govern work of the coalition.
- Developed central data management system for use by partners to track and share information on children served for comprehensive case management and support. System also allows for real-time tracking of coalition goals and objectives and provides enhanced ability around evaluation and community assessment to identify local needs.
- Implemented an evidence-based parent education curriculum for use by community partners. Accredited 13 facilitators from seven organizations who coordinate parent education using a common curriculum that increased outreach to families, allowed for better evaluation, and positioned the community for more cost-effective collaboration through braided service delivery. Collaborative effort increases parent outreach by 650%.
- Adopted universal referral forms to eliminate duplicate paperwork and streamline process, simplifying procedure for families and allowing for better communication between partners.

Strategy 3: Promote developmental screenings for early identification of delays and connection to intervention services.

Impact:

- 175 developmental screenings conducted through *The Starting Place*.
 - 57% referred to partners for further assessment of potential delays
 - 31% found to have delays and connected to intervention services (31 children)
 - Economic impact: Two long-term studies found that developmental screenings coupled with support services led to significant savings for society – as much as \$18,000 for each child who had intervention. (Estimated \$558,000 long-term savings locally)
- Piloting *Healthy Beginnings* model to provide developmental screenings and early childhood support services as part of pediatric visits for early identification of delays and connection to intervention and health services.

Results That Matter



Strategy 4: Coordinated parent education classes and parent and child programming.

Impact:

- 334 children attended *My Child and Me* structured playgroups with their parents and caregivers; *Super Kid Saturday* learning adventures attended by 314 children with their parents; both programs provided organized learning activities to promote cognitive, physical and social/emotional learning for children while modeling age-appropriate learning opportunities for parents and caregivers and reinforce positive parenting techniques.
- 424 parents and caregivers attended *Triple P* parent education classes and seminars with:
 - 51% increase in their knowledge concerning developmental milestones for their children
 - 49% increase in knowledge in regards to what their child needs to be ready for school
 - 23% decrease in dysfunctional parenting indicators
 - 8% decrease in maternal depression and anxiety
 - 12% increase in parent confidence and positive parenting skills

Successful Collaboration!

A middle-aged woman brought her 2-year old nephew to *The Starting Place* in need of help but unsure where to go. She had been awarded custody after the child’s mother was incarcerated for alcohol and drug abuse. The child was suffering from a variety of issues due to neglect (left alone for long periods of time in crib.) The child had severe speech and social/emotional delays and aggressive anger issues.



A developmental screening was conducted at *The Starting Place* showing potentially severe delays. Staff assisted the guardian in connecting to services for the child: referred the child to a local family physician to establish a medical home; connected the child to Infant and Toddler program at Piedmont Community Services and Care Connection for Children for a full assessment and connection to speech and support services. The guardian and child also began attending *My Child and Me* classes at *The Starting Place*, providing the child an opportunity to interact with other children to help with social delays.

Results That Matter

The child has improved tremendously and is on a path to living a healthy, normal childhood. He is receiving monitored care by his doctor, is now forming three-word sentences (don’t want to, can I have) and is progressing well with his social skills, actively playing with other children and sharing.

Ready for School. Ready for Life.