



The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc.

North Carolina Institute of Medicine

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What is Smart Start?

Smart Start inspires and connects people to make immediate and lasting change in the health and well-being of North Carolina's young children. It is a network of nonprofit local partnerships led by a state-level organization (NCPC) working together.



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Genesis of Smart Start

The General Assembly created Smart Start and The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC) on July 9, 1993.

Policymakers established Smart Start as a public/private partnership. As such, it uses government dollars as a catalyst to leverage local ideas and resources.

Genesis of Smart Start

Smart Start was based on research that experiences early in life can have a lasting impact on later learning.

Neuroscience now shows that early experiences shape the architecture of the brain and strongly affect whether a child grows up to be a healthy, productive member of society.



Smart Start: The Early Years

What did Smart Start do in the early years?

Smart Start brought together nonprofit organizations, foundations, state agencies, and others to solve the problems of the day, including health, quality of child care and access to early education programs.



Solving Problems: Immunization

Challenge: In the 1990s, the number of children receiving immunizations was dropping.

State Level: Multiple state agencies worked with Smart Start to understand the problem. They saw a need to partner with people in local communities who interacted with young children.

Local Level: Smart Start Partnerships were able to reach at-risk families and connect them with the Division of Public Health, which provided the vaccines and administered the shots.

Result: NC has one of the highest immunization rates in the nation.

Solving Problems: School Readiness

Challenge: Many children, particularly those who had not been in formal child care, were not prepared for kindergarten.

State Level: NCPC and state leaders worked together to develop the More at Four model, which was then funded by the General Assembly.

Local Level: Smart Start Partnerships recruit eligible children and help private child care programs upgrade their classrooms so that they may participate. Some administer the program.

Result: Children participating in More at Four and Smart Start are better prepared for school.

Solving Problems: Child Care Quality

Challenge: Children were not safe in child care or benefiting from educational experiences.

State Level: The Division of Child Development created the voluntary 5-star rating system. Smart Start incorporated the measure into its statewide accountability system.

Local Level: Partnerships helped private child care providers better educate their teachers. Partnerships also made expert health and safety consultation widely available to child care providers.

Result: The public strongly supported the star rating system, and child care providers embraced the opportunity to increase quality.



Smart Start Today

Today, Smart Start continues to inspire and connect people to make immediate and lasting change in the health and well-being of North Carolina's young children.



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Smart Start Today

Independent, nonprofit organizations work in all 100 North Carolina counties through NCPC and 77 Local Partnerships.



Smart Start Today

NCPC provides leadership and support to local partnerships in the areas of program innovation, outcomes and accountability, data and evaluation, fiscal and grants management, and fundraising.

NCPC collaborates with state partners to ensure effective and efficient services for young children across the state.



What does Smart Start do?

- Educate North Carolinians that experiences early in life have a lasting impact on later learning.
- Establish innovative, high-performing programs and services that measurably increase young children's health, development, and school readiness.
- Build strong relationships and shared goals between people, programs, and communities to maximize effectiveness.
- Increase investments in early childhood education, health, and family support that produce the highest return on the dollar.
- Produce and use data to identify needs and trends, demonstrate results, and promote continuous quality improvement.



Smart Start: Today

Smart Start continues to bring together nonprofit organizations, foundations, state agencies, and others to solve the problems of the day.



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Solving Problems: Child Obesity

Challenge: NC has fifth highest rate of childhood obesity in the country.

State Level: The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation awarded \$3 million to NCPC to create *Shape NC*, a groundbreaking initiative that is tackling the childhood obesity epidemic by focusing on young children in child care and community settings.

Local Level: Partnerships are working with local child care programs to ensure that children are served nutritious foods and engage in physical activity. Partnerships are also mobilizing communities to adopt healthy lifestyles.



Accomplishments

More children attend high quality care. In FY 2010-11:

- 67% of all children in early care and education attend 4- and 5-star programs as compared to 33% in 2001.
- 78% of children whose families received subsidy attend 4- and 5-star centers (compared to 30% in 2001).



Accomplishments

More families have the tools they need to raise healthy, successful children. In FY 2010-11:

- 72% of parents read to their child/children at least four days a week after participating in the Raising a Reading program, compared to 63% before the program.

Accomplishments

More children with disabilities are identified at a younger age and are referred to early intervention services. In FY 2010-11:

- 94% of children whose medical offices participated in the Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD) program received recommended developmental screenings at their most recent well-child visit, compared to 85% before ABCD.



Accomplishments

More children are benefiting from better nutrition and physical activity. In FY 2010-11:

- 96% of child care programs participating in the evidence-based Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) program improved physical activity and nutritional practices.



Accomplishments

A 2011 Duke University study found children had higher third grade reading and math scores and fewer special education placements in counties that received more funding for Smart Start when those children were younger.

The researchers concluded that **investments in Smart Start generate broad education benefits.**



Smart Start Today

North Carolina faces an even greater challenge of child poverty.

More Children

In 1990, there were 557,511 children birth to five. Today, there are 782,053—a **40% increase**.

More Children Living in Poverty

Since 1990, there has been an **85% increase in the number of children living in poverty**.

