

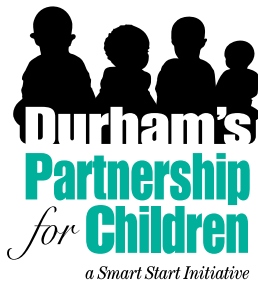


A Community Plan: Durham County's Strategic Plan for Infants and Toddlers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Durham's Partnership for Children, a Smart Start Initiative

2009



Executive Summary

Vision:

We envision a community where all infants and toddlers are nurtured in healthy, safe and age appropriate environments for optimal growth and development.



Recent research in neuroscience, child development, and infant psychiatry have found that rapid brain development during the period from birth to age three establishes a critical foundation for healthy subsequent development. These findings demonstrate that early experiences determine whether a child's developing brain architecture provides a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health and that healthy early development depends on nurturing and dependable relationships. Since Durham is a community that is concerned about its children and their ultimate success as well as the long-term outlook of our community as a whole, the community developed this plan as a reflection of its commitment to further our investments in early childhood development as to secure a promising economic, social, and political future for our county.

Through the leadership of Durham's Partnership for Children, multiple community partners came together to develop a community developed and implemented plan that would accomplish two goals:

- To assess the current status of infants and toddlers and their families in Durham; and
- To develop a plan and framework for collaborating, seeking funding and aligning the community in their efforts to ensure the healthy development of infants and toddlers and their ultimate success in school.

This community planning process involved multiple meetings over a period of six months that includ-

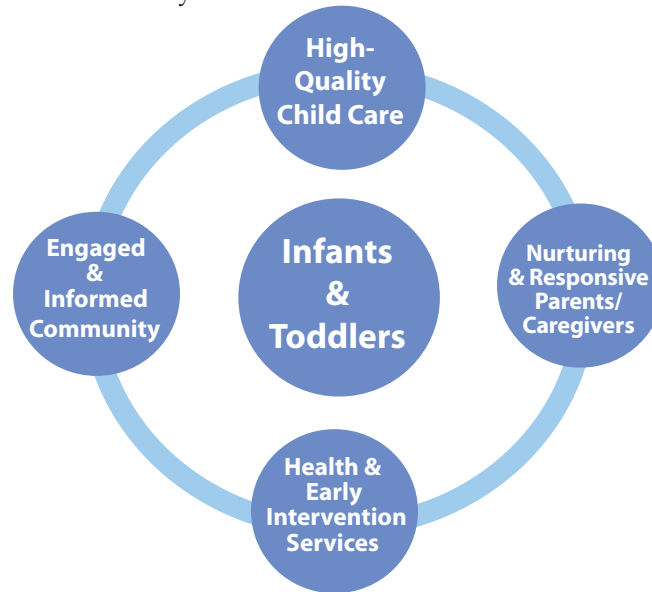
ed the analysis of various demographics, outcome measures, the strengths and resources available and other pertinent statistics to construct a complete picture of our youngest community members and their families and the services and supports available to meet their needs. To ensure that this planning body heard directly from families and family input was part of the process, a survey was conducted reaching 278 families with young children.

In building a system to meet the needs of children ages birth to 3, we took a comprehensive view of our community including: poverty rates; the issues of availability of, access to, and affordability of high quality child care; the stressors families are facing as they raise their children; insurance coverage for children; access and availability of health care services; and the overall health status of children including their social emotional and development.

The planning group used a framework to organize the needs and strategies around a set of comprehensive and critical components for infants and toddlers. The group looked at four key areas: early care and education, family support, health/early intervention, and community awareness. Based upon the needs and the resources within Durham, a multi-year, communitywide plan for infants and toddlers and their families was developed and to be implemented by various public and private entities within the community. The process and the strategies identified were grounded in research and program evaluation. Durham's Community Strategic Plan for Infants and Toddlers is the result of the work of this community planning group.

Durham's Community Strategic Plan for Infants and Toddlers

Based upon the vision of this initiative and the community planning process described previously, the following strategies and goals were developed to guide the community efforts around the needs of infants and toddlers for the next three years.



Early Care & Education

Goal: Increase quality of existing child care programs and build the supply of high quality infant and toddler child care.

Strategies:

- Increase the quality of child care through comprehensive professional development and fostering healthy and safe early child care environments.
- Build the supply through the development of a comprehensive financial model to support and expand high quality infant and toddler care.

Family Support

Goal: Increase the availability of beneficial and accessible supports and services for effective parenting in the community.

Strategies:

- Develop a continuum of services and supports for primary care givers (parents, grandparents, foster care parents and others) that is easily accessible and culturally competent.
- Assist families to move out of poverty.
- Increase the use of family-friendly policies and practices in the workplace.

Health/Early Intervention

Goal: Improve the physical and social emotional well-being of infants and toddlers.

Strategies:

- Establish training programs for professionals on early childhood development, services, screening, etc.
- Develop a continuum of services and supports to meet the health, mental health and early intervention needs of infants and toddlers.





Community Awareness

Goal: Mobilize all components of the community to recognize the importance of promoting healthy infant growth and development and allocate resources (time, money, in-kind contributions, space) to meet the needs of these children and families.

Strategy:

- Develop a communication plan that has measurable objectives and that will benchmark and measure progress.

Conclusion

As proven by this process and document, we have taken our responsibility “to secure a promising economic, social, and political future for our county” by investing in early childhood development seriously and with passion and have articulated the investments and strategies necessary to achieve these goals. The plan outlined above is the first step. Through smaller work groups and existing committees, we now intend to develop and implement specific actions that will lead to the realization of these goals. This will include the identification of other partners whose agendas are consistent with a specific strategy and would then take primary responsibility for this activity. It is our intention to reconvene the larger community group on an annual basis to review our progress and make adaptations as appropriate.

Acknowledgements

Durham’s Partnership for Children would like to thank Adele Spitz Roth of Spitz Roth & Associates for writing, researching and facilitating the planning group for this strategic plan. Durham’s Partnership for Children would also like to thank the agencies, programs and individuals that participated in the planning process and completed the family survey. Durham County’s Strategic Plan for Infants and Toddlers represents the thinking and planning of a wide cross section of experts and stakeholders in our community. We appreciate the time that was dedicated to contribute to this strategic plan. Partnership staff including Marsha Basloe, Kate Irish, Angelica Oberleithner, Karine Stallings, Trish Vandersea, Jeanette Maatouk, and Diana Graham provided key leadership and support in this strategic planning process including editing, survey design and analysis and graphic design.

The full document, Durham County’s Strategic Plan for Infants and Toddlers, includes:

- A review of available data to provide a current picture of young children and their families.
- Description of planning process, planning group and framework used.
- Specific strategies are outlined for each of the four goals.
- Family survey results.

To access the full report online, visit <http://www.dpfc.net/NewsAndEvents/Reports.aspx>