

Great Start Priority: Family Support



Strong families help build strong, successful children.

Many factors can have a profound effect on a child's development and their prospects for the future. Economic hardship, child abuse and neglect, lack of resources, and lack of sufficient information and parenting skills are just some of the challenges that families face when raising young children. These challenges can contribute to cognitive, behavioral, social and emotional problems in young children that decrease their chances of being successful when they enter school and throughout life.

The research is clear:

- Financial insecurity is associated with greater rates of child abuse and neglect
- Child abuse and neglect are often associated with a lack of understanding of basic child development
- Parents who have access to essential resources such as food, clothing, housing, transportation, child care, and health care are more able to ensure the health and well-being of their children
- Parents who are emotionally resilient are better able to handle stressful situations and are less likely to direct anger and frustration at their children.



Strengthening Families and Communities 2009

Framing the Issue

- 9.4% of children aged 0-5 in Jackson County receive support for their basic needs through the Family Independence Program (FIP) compared to 9.1% in MI
- 38.2% of young children receive food assistance (FAP) versus 34.1% in MI
 - 60% of children ages 1-4 participate in WIC, versus 54.4% in MI
 - 21.8% of children ages 0-5 are victims of abuse or neglect compared to 16.8% in MI (rate per 1,000 children)
 - 25.9% of children under age 5 in Jackson County live in poverty
 - 7.3% of children ages 0-5 are in foster care (rate per 1,000 children)
- In December 2010, Jackson County had an unemployment rate of 10.3% compared to the national rate of 9.4%

Source: Kids Count 2008, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008 American Community Survey, Department of Labor and Economic Growth

The Great Start Collaborative of Jackson County recognizes that parenting young children can be a challenging job at times. Parents need access to resources and supports that help them be their child's best first teacher.

Great Start is committed to ensuring parents have the tools and resources they need to provide for their child's basic needs and give them the best start in life possible.

The purpose of Great Start is to assure a coordinated system of community resources and supports to help all Jackson County families provide a Great Start for their children from birth to age five.

Highlights of progress to date include:

- ⇒ Development of a county-wide parent education network to increase access to learning opportunities and decrease duplication of services
- ⇒ Establishment of an online parent education training calendar to promote available parent education opportunities to families
- ⇒ Completion of an annual resource scan in partnership with Central Michigan 2-1-1 to identify existing resources and supports available to families of young children and to develop a plan for eliminating identified gaps to better serve families
- ⇒ Promotion of Central Michigan 2-1-1 as the main point of contact for families seeking services and supports

To learn more about the work of Jackson's Great Start Collaborative and how you can help, please contact: Sheri Butters, Director at 517-784-4800 or email: sbutters@caajlh.org



www.greatstartjackson.org

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Since its inception in 2006, the Great Start Collaborative (GSC) has worked to strengthen the early childhood system in Jackson County to ensure that every child is safe, healthy, eager and ready to succeed in school and become productive, contributing citizens of an economically stable Jackson community.

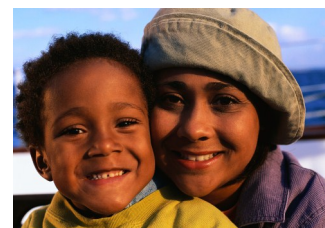
The Family Support workgroup was established in early 2009 to develop and implement a plan to ensure parents of young children have access to resources, training and information that help them provide for the needs of their children. Members of the workgroup include parents, GSC members, parent educators, direct service providers, child care professionals, business and other interested community members.

“Head Start families in Jackson County are struggling with unprecedented unemployment and foreclosure rates. Many of the families we are currently serving have never had to utilize or would not have been eligible for state or federal assistance in the past.”

-Kristin Klug, CAA Children's Programs



“Too many caregivers are feeling stressed due to a lack of knowledge in child development or they have insufficient financial resources to provide for the children of our community. At the Council, we want to see each child happy, healthy and ready to succeed in life and strive to achieve this through our mission each and everyday. Reaching that goal is possible with the support of our community; we need to see each business, elected official and community member reaching out to support our families.”



-Keri Keck, Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

To learn more about the work of the Family Support committee and how you can be involved please visit:

www.greatstartjackson.org

or contact:
Sheri Butters, Director
517-784-4800, ext. 248
sbutters@caajlh.org

Focus of the Work

Goal: The GSC will expand collaboration with organizations and agencies that provide resources and supports to families of young children, resulting in improved collaboration and a reduction of duplication of services

Strategies:

- ◆ Conduct a county-wide resource scan in partnership with Central Michigan 2-1-1 to identify existing services and supports available to families of young children
- ◆ Develop and implement a plan to address identified gaps in services
- ◆ Increase awareness of services and supports available to families of young children
- ◆ Increase GSC participation in efforts focused on basic needs and family support
- ◆ Promote Central Michigan 2-1-1 as point of contact for families seeking support

Goal: The GSC will develop and expand existing curriculum resources for formal parent education, resulting in more confident parents

Strategies:

- ◆ Identify existing parent education efforts county-wide
- ◆ Utilize school readiness data to identify areas of professional development that would assist parents in ensuring their children are ready for kindergarten
- ◆ Expand membership in and build relationships with existing parent education providers through the GSC led Parent Education Group