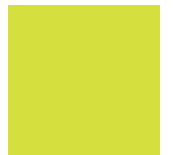
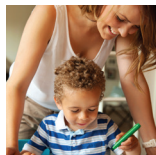




Building Tomorrow's **Future** Investing in Children **Now**





Wake County SmartStart (WCSS) works to ensure that children ages birth to five are prepared for success in school and in life. The mission of the agency envisions a better future for young children and their families through thoughtful assessment of community needs, a coordinated response to those identified needs, monitoring of expected outcomes and development of additional community resources – all as a part of building efficient systems. Although WCSS has historically focused on building the systems that impact early childhood, in Fiscal Year 2013-2014 the Board of Directors formally adopted a systems goal: Children and families are supported by a strong, diverse, integrated early childhood system. Through transparent stewardship of public and private dollars, WCSS funding supports those most in need. As a result, critical and limited resources are leveraged to provide quality programs to as many children and families as possible.

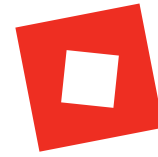
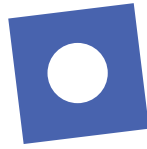
Wake County

Wake County is the second most populous county in North Carolina, with an estimated 964,616 residents, continuing a slight upward growth trend (2013 Certified County Population Estimates – NC State Demographer).

- There were an estimated 76,340 children birth to five living in Wake County in 2013, reflecting a slight downward trend (NC State Demographer). This is consistent with a similar trend statewide.
- There were 568 child care facilities in Wake County, about a 4% reduction over the same period last fiscal year. This is a continuation of a downward trend apparent in the prior fiscal year. However, the loss in numbers is largely made up of lower quality 1 and 2 star facilities (NC DCDEE).
- Despite the decrease in total numbers of facilities, the number of 4 and 5 star facilities has increased by 3% from 281 to 289. Thus, the percent of facilities with 4 or 5 stars has risen from 47% to 51%.
- There were 20,534 children birth to five in regulated child care, an almost 6% increase over the prior fiscal year. Although the population of young children appears to be declining slightly, the number in child care is rising, resulting in a higher percentage of children in child care (27%) from last year (25%).

Wake County is generally considered a resource rich county. There are, however, significant numbers of young children with limited resources as evidenced by the following county wide statistics:

- In 2013 there were 13,744 young children living in poverty, or 17.8%. Despite general improvement in the economy, this percentage reflects a slight increase over 2012 (US Census).
- There were an estimated 32,160 children birth to five in Wake County eligible for Medicaid in 2013, roughly 42% of the population, similar to the percent last fiscal year (NC Division of Medical Assistance).
- Approximately 1 of every 4 children birth to five received child care subsidy, totaling 5,491 children as of June, 2014. Over 2,100 children remained on the waiting list and were not served (NC DCDEE). As with last year, there was significant fluctuation in both the number of children served and the number of children on the waiting list, reflecting the challenge of addressing a significant need with limited funding.



Wake County SmartStart Programs and Funding

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2013-2014 WCSS allocated \$12,161,445 to sixteen (16) programs that served children, families, and child care facilities. This is a reduction of \$4,007,316 (24.8%) of funding from FY 2008-2009. An additional \$5,732,851 was received from the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education (NC DCDEE).

As resources have decreased, WCSS has funded fewer programs, prioritizing funding for services that have demonstrated the greatest impact on those with the most need.

- All WCSS funded programs meet North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) definitions of evidence based or evidence informed practices. Of these, five programs meet the higher level of evidence based practice.
- Outcomes: 88% (50 of 57) of outcome targets were achieved within at least 90% of their projection/goal. In an effort to strengthen program outcomes, 44% (7 of 16) programs used standardized tools to measure outcome results.
- Smart Start funding requires a 14% match by each funded partner indicating a commitment to support the success of their program. Of the 16 funded programs, 63% (10 out of 16) met the match requirement. The total required match amount across all partners was exceeded, totaling \$1,976,800, more than 115% of the requirement.

Additional funds of over \$1.5 million were leveraged through three collaborative grant applications that were funded to address high priority community needs. Two grants were in the second year of a three-year funding cycle and one grant was in the first year of a three-year cycle.

Approximately \$405,527 was awarded directly to WCSS to either manage or support the following grants awarded to other community organizations:

- Home Based Services Integration Implementation Grant, *implementing an integrated system to coordinate preventive services provided in the home.*
- Preventing Obesity by Design, *creating active, best practice outdoor learning environment demonstration sites.*
- Social and Emotional Early Development for Child Care Quality, *mentoring child care centers on policies and practices that support healthy social and emotional development of children.*

For more information about funded programs and grant funded initiatives, see the Individual Activity Report Section.

Wake County SmartStart Recipients and Services

WCSS's work impacts families and children from all walks of life. However, WCSS prioritizes services to children in families with limited resources and a developmental concern that can be addressed by one of WCSS programs. The WCSS Board developed this definition of children with the "greatest need" in order to target WCSS resources. A total of 2,374 children were directly served by WCSS funded programs, including NC Pre-K and family support programs; 94% (2,243) met the greatest need criteria.

Children and Families

Funding: \$1,274,348

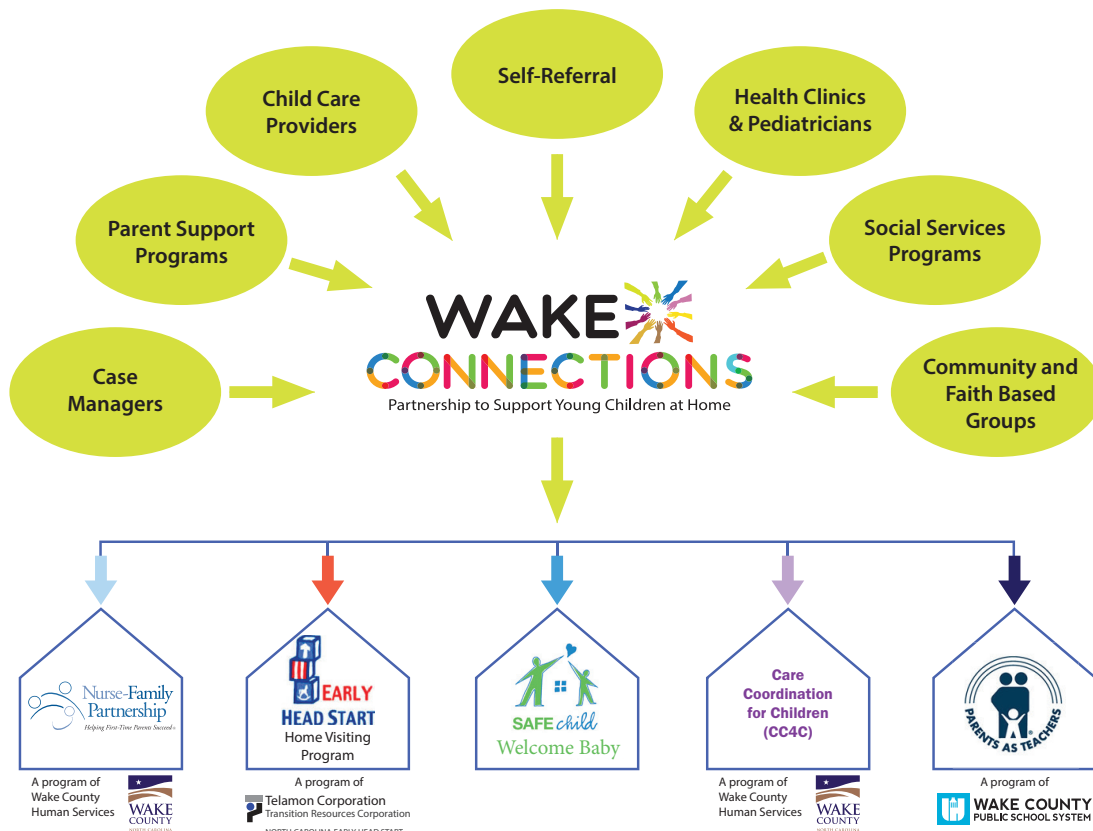
- Over 1,580 children and their families received services from nine funded activities to support kindergarten readiness, parenting knowledge and skills, family literacy and child social and emotional development.
- 6,488 home visits were provided.
- 2,090 developmental screenings were provided.
- 314 parent group sessions were provided.
- The numbers reflect a slight decrease in the number of children served; however, the children served received a greater number of home visits. This is consistent with the WCSS focus on serving children with the greatest need.

In addition to supporting those with the greatest challenges, WCSS seeks to make accessing services seamless for families and efficient for programs that serve them. To this end, WCSS supports refinement of system approaches to address the needs of children and families.

Wake Connections

In Wake County, home based programs, both public and private, provide services to address the needs of pregnant women and families parenting young children. The size and complexity of Wake County creates the challenge of assuring that resources are understood, easily accessible and utilized efficiently and effectively by both families and community agencies. The lack of consistent connections and intentional collaboration among providers as well as the absence of an integrated referral system contribute to a fragmented system that limits the overall capacity to impact the well-being of children.

Accessing Wake Connections





Wake Connections, implemented by WCSS and funded by the John Rex Endowment, provides a centralized, coordinated intake and referral system to address the issues outlined above. Through a web-based database, Wake Connections streamlines recruitment and outreach efforts in order to evenly distribute children and families in need to available providers who have current openings, reducing program waitlists.

The overarching goal of Wake Connections is to bring together multiple stakeholders, both service providers and those who make referrals, into a unified, integrated system, creating a central portal where there is no wrong door for families and children seeking services. Services provided to children and families are based on intentional and coordinated efforts between multiple agencies. Wake Connections addresses community need for services and integration. The system avoids duplication of services, maximizes existing resources of the community and identifies gaps to inform planning for the future. Wake Connections links individual children and families to services that match family needs. As importantly, in a community as diverse as Wake, the system monitors the efficiency of resources and collects information to guide community capacity building to meet the needs of young children.

Children in High Quality Child Care

WCSS funding: \$9,322,887

NC DCDEE funding: \$5,732,851

- WCSS provided child care subsidy assistance to 1,247 children birth to five attending 4 or 5 star child care facilities.
- A total of 4,171 children attending 4 or 5 star facilities benefitted from subsidy quality supplement payments made to their child care facilities.
- A total of 1,182 four-year-olds were served in high quality preschool classrooms through the NC Pre-Kindergarten program. Children with the most significant needs were prioritized for services.

The system approach to support WCSS's goal for Children in High Quality Child Care includes the Wake County Pre-Kindergarten Application Center. Working at the system level, WCSS is able to prioritize children with the highest need for services across the county and streamline an efficient process for both families and collaborating agencies.

Wake County Pre-Kindergarten Application Center

The Pre-K application was developed through a collaboration among several programs which provide Pre-Kindergarten instruction for four-year-olds: Telamon Head Start, Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) Title I and Title III programs, WCPSS Exceptional Children's program, and NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K). Initially, the collaborating programs worked to develop a common application. Building on that success, the collaborating agencies refine the application process each year to better meet the needs of each agency and to streamline the process for families of young children.



When applications are completed throughout the county, each application is forwarded to WCSS's NC Pre-K office which serves as the hub for the Wake County Pre-Kindergarten Application Center. Once received, applications are entered into a shared database. The database is programmed to consider the various eligibility requirements of each of the collaborating agencies in order to serve the greatest number of children with resources from various funding streams. Once information about an eligible child is entered into the database, it is securely transferred to the state system (Pre-K KIDS); this eliminates the need for double data entry. Through GPS mapping, the system is also programmed to locate available pre-K sites closest to the child's home. Assignments close to families' homes reduce the barriers that a lack of transportation may pose.

Child Care Facilities

Funding: \$1,079,255

- A total of 253 licensed child care facilities (45% of all licensed facilities in the county) received consultation or training from WCSS funded programs. This is a small decrease from last year as a result of a 6% funding reduction in this area.
- Over 13,500 children birth to five attended facilities served, representing approximately 66% of all children birth to five in child care. Almost 2 of every 3 children in child care were touched by a program serving their child care facility.
- Funded activities provided 2,941 consultation visits or trainings to facilities in order to improve health and safety practices, or child literacy and social development, or child care quality.

The systems approach for Child Care Facilities includes coordination of all community Technical Assistance programs that support the high quality of child care in Wake County. This Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC) consists of programs funded by WCSS as well as other community programs. The leadership of each program meets quarterly to discuss challenges faced within child care facilities, to improve the coordination of programs providing technical assistance and to avoid duplication of efforts. WCSS hosts the TAC meetings.

Going forward, TAC will focus on implementing recommendations made based on a community review of the WCSS 2013 Child Care Quality Study. The community review process resulted in the development of outcomes and strategies designed to promote sustainable high quality child care that contributes to positive child outcomes. These include a focus on the climate of quality in facilities, such as the quality of teacher/child interactions, as well as improvement in financial and management practices. Many of these outcomes and strategies were included in the WCSS Fiscal Year 2014–17 Strategic Plan that was completed in January, 2014.



Funded Programs

The programs funded by Wake County SmartStart in Fiscal Year 2013–2014 included:

- Child Care Health Consultant Program (Wake County Human Services – WCHS)
- Child Care Financial Assistance for Families [Subsidy] (WCHS)
- Community Outreach and Education (WCSS)
- Literacy Invites and Nurtures Kids Success (Motherhead)
- NC Pre-Kindergarten Program (WCSS)
- Nurse Family Partnership (WCHS)
- The Nurturing Parenting Program for Spanish Speaking Families (SAFEchild)
- Parents as Teachers Home Visiting Program (Project Enlightenment)
- Program Coordination and Evaluation (WCSS)
- Project CATCH (The Salvation Army)
- Reach Out and Read (NC Reach Out and Read) – Partial Year
- Quality Enhancement and Maintenance Initiative in Child Care Facilities (WCSS)
- School Readiness Services for Hispanic Children (Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Raleigh, Inc.)
- Social/Emotional Interventions for Young Children: SecurePath (Lucy Daniels Center)
- Supporting School Readiness (Project Enlightenment)
- Family Literacy Program (Telamon Corporation)





2013–2014 Program Evaluation Report

Wake County SmartStart

4901 Waters Edge Drive, Suite 101

Raleigh, NC 27606

Ph.: 919-851-9550

wakesmartstart.org



facebook.com/WakeCountySmartStart



twitter.com/wakesmartstart



youtube.com/wakesmartstart



pinterest.com/wakesmartstart

