



Smart Start Update --- November 2014

www.SmartStartAlabama.org

Children's Trust Fund & APC Recognized at National Conference

The [Center for the Study of Social Policy \(CSSP\)](#) held the 2014 Strengthening Families Summit in Chicago during October. In Alabama, the [Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention](#) requires all grantees receiving funds from the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) to complete an online training, "Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life in Your Work - A Resource for Action". Alabama is the only state in the nation that requires this training of CTF grantees and because of that, Alabama has the most Home Visiting staff completing that course across the nation. Sallye Longshore, Executive Director at Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention and Tish MacInnis, Coordinator of Family and Community Partnerships at the Alabama Partnership for Children, were invited to participate on a panel discussion at the Summit. The title of the panel discussion was, "Learn about how states are integrating Strengthening Families into Home Visiting programs, including using it as a common framework across evidence-based models."



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Zero to Five Matters

~A newsletter focused on our most valuable investment~

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November FOCUS

Check out this month's Smart Start FOCUS [packet](#) on Parent & Family Involvement!

Mark Your Calendars:

[2014 Early Intervention and Preschool Conference](#)
November 17-19, 2014
Mobile, AL

Partner Focus:

Family Resource Centers: Helping Alabama Families Thrive

**Margaret Morton, Executive Director
Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement, Inc.**

"Raising Alabama's high school graduation rate to 90 percent would produce an economic impact to the state's economy similar to landing an industrial mega-project, and that impact would be repeated each year the 90 percent rate is maintained", according to [Obstacles into Opportunities: A 90% High School Graduation Rate in Alabama by 2020](#) presented August 2014 in a report commissioned by the Business Education Alliance of Alabama. This report provides a framework undergirded by the state's education improvement plan, Plan 2020. This plan calls for education to start early, set high expectations, break down barriers to learning, seek continuous improvement in teaching and leading, and equip every student with a plan for success and a pathway to prosperity. In support of this vision and armed with the research that supports this plan, we know that the work of the Alabama Partnership for Children and the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers is at the heart of the matter. "Ready Families in Ready Communities + Ready Services (Health) + Ready Services (Education) + Ready Schools = Ready Children with Bright Futures", so says the Alabama Partnership for Children and the [Blueprint for Zero to Five](#). We know that our children are learning anywhere, anytime (Family Engagement in Anywhere, Anytime Learning, Lopez & Caspe, Harvard Family Research Project 2014). These learning experiences - whether online, offline or in early childhood centers, family resource centers, afterschool, summer school and/or camps, libraries or museums and most especially in the home, give children the skills and experiences they need to be successful in school and in life. Families and family engagement are clearly the foundation of this model for success. Communities coming together to strengthen and support families is at the heart of this model and family resource centers provide a foundation for that success.

Research confirms that the greatest indicator of a child's success in school and community is where that child is born and who they are born to. Just take a look at the areas of the state with the lowest levels of adult literacy and how that correlates to family wealth - the correlations are startling. The [Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers](#), through its member family resource centers, is successfully addressing community level health and human service issues, education, economic development, child and family well-being, and job creation and training in an entrepreneurial manner that requires different players coming together to solve complex challenges. These family resource centers, who demonstrate the highest level of accountability, rigor, and integrity, are uniquely positioned to address issues where effective solutions are being created collectively, with shared vision and responsibility, and with a focus clearly directed towards support for the family. These family resource centers are providing coordination and access to pro-family services in cities and counties across this state in Chambers, Talladega, Jefferson, Montgomery, Lowndes and Tuscaloosa counties, and in Jasper, Phenix City, Brewton, Decatur and Dothan. Families are engaged in their child's learning and through this successful model for community organization and coordination of resources, these private, nonprofit systems are bringing together existing social service, education, and workforce-related efforts under a single umbrella. The family resource centers have a tested model that supports early education opportunities through home visitation ([Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters](#)

[Zero to Three's
National Training Institute](#)
December 10-12, 2014
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

[The Southern Early
Childhood Association
\(SECA\) Annual Conference](#)
January 15-17, 2015
New Orleans, LA

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[HIPPY] and [Parents as Teachers](#) [PAT]), parenting education, case management, information and referral, employability skills training, adult education, life skills training, literacy skills development, afterschool, as well as a comprehensive network of community support and education, advocacy, and empowerment.

The family resource centers believe that children belong with their own families when they can live safely at home in a nurturing, healthy and stable environment. Children and youth develop through opportunities to explore, learn, and cultivate their interests. "Families are important in helping children uncover and expand their interests and in encouraging them to try out new paths to learning. Singing songs, reading books and telling stories are important parent-child activities that support learning when children are young. These parent-child activities need to take place not only in the home or school but can occur in the grocery store, the laundromat or anywhere and anytime children and families are together" (*Family Engagement in Anywhere, Anytime Learning*, Lopez & Caspe, Harvard Family Research Project 2014). Are we ready? Family resource centers are playing a critical role in assuring that we meet the challenge. "Ready Families in Ready Communities + Ready Services (Health) + Ready Services (Education) + Ready Schools = Ready Children with Bright Futures".

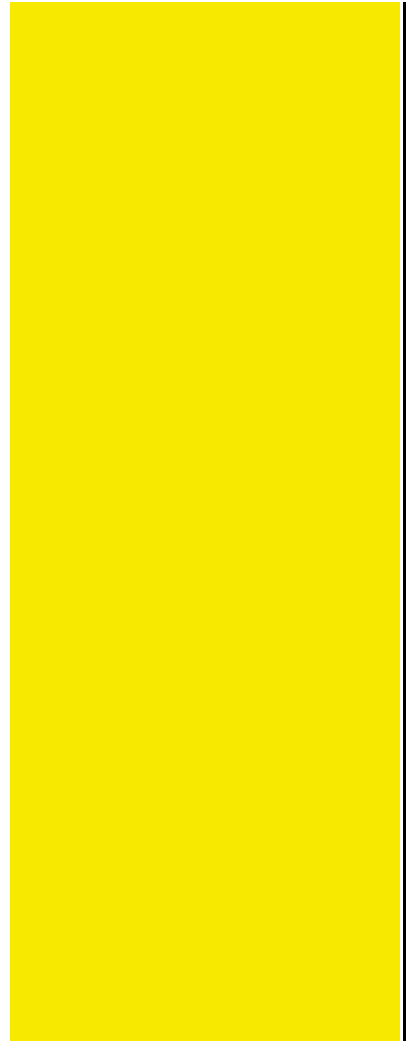
Initiative Focus:

First Smart and Secure Children Parent Cohort Nears Completion

The Smart and Secure Children (SSC) Parent Leadership Project is a parental capacity-building pilot project of the APC funded through the Transdisciplinary Collaborative Center on Health Equity Policy Research (TCC) and Practice's Pilot Project Program at Morehouse School of Medicine. The project involves small groups of parents of children ages 0-5 participating in discussions around their child's healthy brain development and social and emotional health. The parents are led by trained Parent Leaders through 12-week sessions.

The current cohort of parents began their journey in September with a Books, Balls, and Blocks event designed to give the parents an opportunity to compete assessments about where their family was on that day. Parents have been sharing and learning, discovering their strengths and areas that can be improved. This week there will be closing ceremonies in which all parents will receive certificates of participation and invitations to join a network of Alabama parents and continue their skill building and professional development journey.





Our Mission: To work in partnership with other public and private entities to maintain an effective state and local system of resources and support that enables parents, families, and others who care for young children to ensure that they are healthy, protected, nurtured, and offered every opportunity to succeed in life.

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