

INTRODUCED: June 12, 2017

A RESOLUTION No. 2017-R039

To express the City Council’s support for the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020* and to recognize the many early childhood programs and partnerships that contributed to the development of this new plan to advance school readiness throughout the Richmond region.

Patrons – Mr. Addison and Mr. Agelasto

Approved as to form and legality
by the City Attorney

PUBLIC HEARING: JULY 24 2017 AT 6 P.M.

WHEREAS, Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond, LLC has requested that local elected officials from each of the region’s localities adopt a resolution in support of the launch of a new plan entitled *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020*; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Richmond believes that quality early childhood services can reduce socio-economic and health disparities between children of different backgrounds and provide a stronger foundation for a healthy start; and

WHEREAS, there are more than 16,000 children in the city of Richmond five years old and younger, and 70 percent of the parents of those children are in the labor force; and

AYES: 9 NOES: 0 ABSTAIN: _____

ADOPTED: JULY 24 2017 REJECTED: _____ STRICKEN: _____

WHEREAS, the Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond, LLC's partnership of more than 110 organizations has raised awareness about the importance of the early years and leveraged resources and organizing power to create more opportunities for families to support a healthy start for their children; and

WHEREAS, numerous agencies and partners in the city of Richmond contributed to this plan, including the City of Richmond, the Richmond Behavioral Health Authority, the Richmond City Health District, the Richmond City Extension Office of Virginia Cooperative Extension, the School Board of the City of Richmond, the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and numerous other early childhood partners serving the city of Richmond; and

WHEREAS, the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020* builds on the premise that a strong start for children of families of all incomes is good for the economic vitality and well-being of the Richmond region; and

WHEREAS, the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020* is inspired by the vision that all children five years old and younger in the Richmond region will be healthy, well-cared for, and ready to succeed in school, work, and life;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND:

That the Council supports the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020*, a copy of which is attached to this resolution, and recognizes the many early childhood programs and partnerships that contributed to the development of this new plan to advance school readiness throughout the Richmond region.



Richmond City Council

The Voice of the People

Richmond, Virginia

Lou Brown Ali
Council Chief of Staff

Office of the Council Chief of Staff

Council Ordinance/Resolution Request

TO Allen L. Jackson, Richmond City Attorney

THROUGH Lou Brown-Ali, Council Chief of Staff *LB*

FROM Joyce L. Davis, Council Policy Analyst *JLD*
Office of the Council Chief of Staff

COPY Andreas Addison, 1st District Council member
Haskell Brown, Deputy City Attorney
Meghan Brown, Deputy Council Chief of Staff *MB*
Chelsi Bennett, 1st District Liaison

DATE May 25, 2017

PAGE/s 1 of 2

TITLE: Resolution to support Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond

RECEIVED

MAY 26 2017

OFFICE OF CITY ATTORNEY

This is a request for the drafting of an **Ordinance** **Resolution**

REQUESTING COUNCILMEMBER/PATRON

SUGGESTED STANDING COMMITTEE

Council member Andreas Addison

Education and Human Services

ORDINANCE/RESOLUTION SUMMARY

Resolution to support Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond

BACKGROUND

This O&R is to request a resolution to support Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond.

This Resolution is requested to express Council's support of Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond in support of the launch of the new Regional Plan for School Readiness. The *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020* is inspired by the vision that all children from birth through five in the Richmond region will be healthy, well-cared for, and ready to succeed in school, work and in life.

The Resolution is to support the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020*, and recognizes the many City of Richmond early childhood programs and partnerships

that contributed to the development of this new Regional Plan to advance school readiness throughout the region.

The requested introduction date is June 12, 2017.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Fiscal Impact	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Budget Amendment Required	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Estimated Cost or Revenue Impact	\$	

Attachment/s Yes No
Sample language

Richmond City Co
Council Ordinance/Resolution Request Form/updated 12.22.08/srs

2017-
2020



Regional Plan for School Readiness



SMART Ready for School.
Ready for Life.
BEGINNINGS[®]
Greater Richmond

All children from birth through five in the Richmond region will be healthy, well-cared for, and ready to succeed in school, work and life.

Acknowledgments



**SMART
BEGINNINGS®**

Greater Richmond

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond expresses deep gratitude for the commitment and voices of the many individuals and organizations that participated in developing this plan.

Participants in the Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond quarterly partnership meetings, locality committees, and the Ready Early Care, Ready Families, and Ready Schools action teams were essential partners. They brought immeasurable assets to the table, made tough decisions about priorities, and shared their commitment to invest in the new direction with their own time and talent.

The Board of Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond offered encouragement, guidance, and support, and members attended many of the planning sessions. Special appreciation is due to the members of the Impact Committee, who guided the process from the beginning, integrated input and research findings along the way, and kept the plan and the process relevant and focused.



CommunitasCONSULTING

HELPING BUILD SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY CHANGE INITIATIVES

Communitas Consulting, based in Charlottesville, Virginia, partnered with Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond to facilitate the regional planning process, compile data and indicators, and author written recommendations for this report. Visit their website at www.communitasconsulting.com to learn more about their work.

Dear Friends,

It is with great pride and a hopeful outlook for the children of our region that we present the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020*. This plan provides a roadmap for our work over the next three years, and was made possible with the help and input of hundreds of individuals and organizations who were actively engaged in its creation.

We know, and research shows, that the foundation for school readiness is laid long before kindergarten. Children begin learning at birth, and the quality of their care and environments early in life has a massive impact on the rest of their lives. In fact, 90% of brain development happens during the first five years of life!

Sadly, there are too many children in Greater Richmond who do not get the good start they deserve, and arrive at kindergarten without the skills they need to succeed. Children who start school behind often stay behind, and many are never able to catch up. As a result, they are more likely to be

held back before third grade, less likely to be strong readers and more likely to drop out of high school. These children grow into teens at higher risk of delinquency and pregnancy, and into adults that earn less money and are more reliant on public assistance, which strains the very fabric of our community.

The most efficient investment we can make is in early childhood. It is gratifying to see funders, elected officials and the business community come together in support of this, with a shared vision for strong families, a prosperous workforce and a thriving community – for everyone.

Together we bring sharper vision, ambition and readiness for change. Together we will fulfill the vision that all children, from birth through five, in the Richmond region will be healthy, well-cared for, and ready to succeed in school, work and life. Let's get to work!

Brad Armstrong

Brad Armstrong, Chair
Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond





“Together we bring sharper vision, ambition and readiness for change.”

Brad Armstrong, Chair
Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond

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Introduction



“We know for certain now that the way adult caregivers, parents in particular, interact with children during the first five years can actually shape their brain architecture for life—for better and for worse. Children who have nurturing connections and positive early experiences have

more secure, healthy relationships and are more likely to do well academically and socially into adulthood than children who experience insensitive or harsh caregiving, which can lead to school failure, depression, anxiety, drug abuse, teen pregnancy and more.”¹



Why Does Investing in Early Childhood Matter?

In the earliest years, from birth through age five, children rapidly absorb information, their brains developing at an exponential rate unmatched in any other period of life. They develop a sense of the world and their place in it. They create bonds with their families. Providing infants and young children with supportive, nurturing relationships and enriching environments during this critical phase of development helps put them on a path to success in later years.

Investing in children’s well-being while they are developing has been proven time and time again to be more cost effective than intervening after age five. Further, decades of education and public health research demonstrate that timely assistance to families with infants and young children has a lifelong impact on not only the child, but also on the child’s family and community (see Figure 1).

Not all children begin life on equal footing; for example, 18-month old children from lower-income families are, on average, slower to process language than their higher-income peers.² Children facing certain types of adversity are more likely to experience developmental delays in childhood, and in adulthood, depression and substance abuse.³ Quality early childhood services can reduce socio-economic and health disparities between children of different backgrounds and provide a stronger foundation for a healthy start.

Indeed, the returns to early childhood investment yield over 12% for society in general, with 80% of those returns accruing to the public (i.e., through students achieving more in school and committing fewer crimes).⁴ Children, their families, and society all benefit from investment in early childhood development and education.

FIGURE 1

Benefits of Investing in Early Childhood Development

Long-term controlled studies on early childhood development programs have shown that:

Children who participate in high-quality programs tend to have:	In the long run, these children are also more likely to:	Mothers of participants:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• higher scores on math and reading achievement tests• greater language abilities• less grade repetition• less need for special education and other remedial work• lower dropout rates• higher high school graduation rates• higher levels of schooling attainment• improved nutrition and health• experienced less child abuse and neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• have higher employment and earnings as adults• pay more taxes• depend less on welfare• experience lower rates of alcohol and other drug use• engage in fewer criminal acts both as juveniles and as adults• have lower incarceration rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• have fewer additional births• have better nutrition and smoke less during pregnancy• are less likely to abuse or neglect their children• complete more years of schooling• have higher high school graduation rates• are more likely to be employed• have higher earnings• engage in fewer criminal acts• have lower alcohol and other drug abuse• are less likely to use welfare

Source: Lynch, Robert. "Early Childhood Investment Yields Big Payoff." WestEd Policy Perspectives, p. 2-3. https://www.wested.org/online_pubs/pp-05-02.pdf.

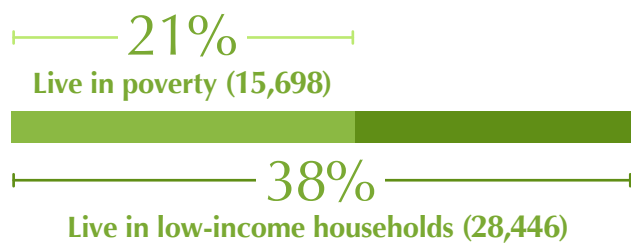
“Every child needs effective early childhood development to be successful, but disadvantaged children are least likely to get it.”⁵

Why Is the Need Urgent?

Since 2010, economic and social pressures have strained public and private resources for early childhood services at precisely the time when families most needed additional support. Living with financial instability is one of the greatest risks to young children’s healthy development, and increasing numbers of young children in the region experience poverty.

FIGURE 2

Children 0-5 in Low-Income Families



Thirty eight percent of children under age five who live in the region—more than 28,000 infants and children—live in economically challenged households.⁶ Both the percentage and the total number of young children in low-income households have risen since 2010 (in 2016, this means a family of four lives on less than \$48,600, which is 200% of the poverty level).⁷

FIGURE 3

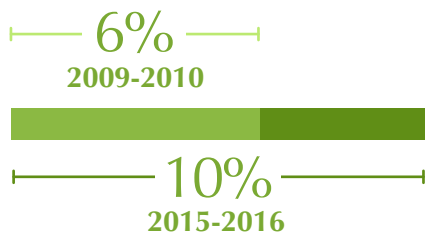
Children 0-5 with All Parents Working



More families with young children are working and needing child care; in 2010, approximately 43,000 (65.5%) of young children in the region had all parents in the labor force; by 2014 that figure rose to approximately 53,000 young children, or 71.2% of the total.⁸

FIGURE 4

Increase in Hispanic Students



Shifting demographics show an increase in the percentage of Hispanic students in the region’s schools, up from 5.7% of students in the 2009–10 school year to 10.1% in the 2015–16 school year.⁹

The region is also experiencing changes in its demographics. In-migration adds richness of cultures and greater diversity to the workforce, but also presents a need for programs to adapt in response to new languages and cultures of children and their families.

Birth-related risk factors—birth weight, mother’s education level, and births to teenage mothers—are more common in the region than across the state as a whole.

How Have Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond Partners Made an Impact?

The Regional Plan for School Readiness, published by Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond in 2010, has been the region's guide to supporting quality early childhood experiences for all families with young children. Together, the Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partnership of over 100 organizations has raised awareness about the importance of the early years and leveraged resources and organizing power to create more opportunities for families to support a healthy start for their children.

Through the work of Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond, more families have taken advantage of early childhood home visiting services, thousands of families have signed up on time for kindergarten registration, more high-quality early education is available, and a growing network of over 260 individual early childhood stakeholders continuously share effective practices that have contributed to improved services and better access for families.

Despite these successes, there are still significant gaps in programs and services for families with young children in our region.

- While investment in public preschool has increased since 2010, access is limited and varies widely across school districts in our region.
- Only eleven percent of eligible child care programs have external indicators of quality, such as national accreditation or participation in Virginia Quality.¹⁰
- Home visiting programs, according to estimates, have capacity to meet only ten percent of the region's need.¹¹

In 2016, members of the Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partnership came together to update the *Regional Plan for School Readiness*, recommitting to the 2010 vision that “all children from birth through five in the Richmond region will be healthy, well-cared for, and ready to succeed in school and in life.” Participants took stock of what had transpired since 2010 and charted a path forward to address the disparities and challenges faced by families with young children.

The resulting *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020* addresses the region as a whole and builds on the premise that a strong start for children of all incomes is good for the economic vitality and well-being of the region. However, the plan targets children and families most in need. Its goals focus on areas where there are disparities between children of color and non-minority children, where school districts have not made progress, and where economic insecurity has increased the emotional, social, and physical barriers to accessing care.

At the core of the plan is the belief that each organization working together through a coordinated regional partnership has more power, influence, and impact than any one organization can have alone. The *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020* takes into account the region's past successes and focuses attention where action is most urgently needed. The essence of the plan is to increase families' ability to access high-quality early childhood resources and to use the partnership's collective influence to advocate for strategic and targeted investments in preparing young children for success later in life.

“I’m a believer in regionalization and collaboration. Smart Beginnings provides a voice and a message and clarity.”

**Becky Lee, Chief Program Officer
YWCA of Richmond**

The Regional Plan for School Readiness

- Introduction
- The Plan
- Goal One
- Goal Two
- Goal Three
- Goal Four
- Role of SBGR
- Destination 2020
- Appendices
- Snapshot



Vision

All children from birth through five in the Richmond region will be healthy, well-cared for, and ready to succeed in school, work and life.

Core Values

Equity.

We believe that all children and families should have the opportunity to thrive.

Family.

We partner with families to promote a child's healthy development.

Partnership.

We accomplish more together.

Quality.

We strive to achieve transformational impact in a child's life.

Responsibility.

We are accountable for our actions and investments.



Goal One: Greater Awareness and Enrollment

Increase awareness of the importance of early childhood and accelerate enrollment in high-quality programs for families with young children.



Strategies

1.1. Communicate the importance of the early years of life and the value of quality early childhood programs to families and stakeholders.

1.2. Increase referrals and successful enrollment into quality early childhood programs.

1.3. Engage families with young children in shaping regional policy and practice.

Building Broad Awareness of Early Learning and Growth

Critical to the success of this plan is to grow, on a broad scale, the awareness of the rapid cognitive and emotional growth related to brain development that takes place the early years of a child's life.

There are an estimated 1,800 days from birth until a child enters kindergarten, and what happens in that time not only influences children's success in school, but can impact their well-being once in school and beyond. Despite an abundance of research demonstrating the importance of these early years, many families, business leaders, and policy

makers do not have information on the difference that quality early childhood experiences and services can make for long-term academic and workforce indicators.

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond will launch a multifaceted public awareness campaign—targeting families, stakeholders and regional leaders—to drive home the message that these early years are crucial and need attention and support, coupled with information about quality services available in the region.


Increasing the Volume of Referrals and Enrollment

Engaging families in the programs and resources available to them when children are young makes a measurable difference in their children's development: families become socially connected, their children exhibit greater progress and school preparedness, and the quality of the programs improves for other families, as well.¹²

Nationwide there is evidence that families, by and large, are interested in learning how to improve their parenting skills. The region is rich with resources that can reinforce parents' efforts at home—including libraries, local governments, health departments, home visiting programs, child care providers, and

public preschools. Yet local families with young children report difficulties in identifying and accessing services, in spite of the fact that many publicly-funded programs include strategies for outreach to families.

Difficulty in connecting families to resources is not unique to the Richmond region. Families across the country report being overwhelmed by the abundance of information on child development. A recent report by ZERO TO THREE© notes that parents first go to their own families for information, and second to pediatricians and doctors. Early care professionals—such as child care teachers—are tenth on the list.¹³

A young child with short dark hair is smiling broadly, wearing a striped tank top and light-colored pants. Two hands are holding red plastic bunny ears behind the child's head. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting.

“The family seems to be the most effective and economical system for fostering and sustaining the child’s development. Without family involvement, intervention is likely to be unsuccessful, and what few effects are achieved are likely to disappear once the intervention is discontinued.”¹⁴

“We want parents engaged, participating and leading, not just enrolled.”

Veronica Fleming, Executive Director
Partnership for Families

FIGURE 5

Need for Home Visiting Services

7,183 Estimated families that qualify for home visiting services.

722 Home visiting caseload capacity (2015)

Source: Home visiting caseload data provided by regional home visiting programs in summer 2016. Families with children age 0-4 and incomes less than 185% of the federal poverty guidelines taken from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year estimates for 2010–2014, Table B17022.

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partners will engage parents in understanding barriers, work more closely with professionals in the places families first turn to, and review existing information resources to plan and implement more effective ways to reach families—increasing trust, enrollment, and successful completion of quality programs.

As the Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partnership connects more families with high quality early childhood programs, partners will simultaneously work on increasing the supply of programs so families have places to go. For example, there are significant gaps in “supply” versus “demand” of evidence-based home visiting programs in every locality in the Greater Richmond region.

There are an estimated 7,200 families across the region who would qualify for home visiting services but for whom there is insufficient funding to serve. As a whole, the region has home visiting capacity to meet approximately ten percent of estimated need (see Figure 5).

While there are many types of resources and services available for young children and their families, Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond and its partners will target a specific group of programs for increased referrals and enrollment. Those programs are early intervention, home visitation, quality child care, and public preschool. These were selected because of their demonstrated quality—either through implementation of evidence-based programs or practices—adherence to nationally recognized standards, and/or participation in continuous quality improvement efforts.

Engaging Families in Shaping Regional Policy and Practice

At a system level, building a community culture that values parent voices ensures that approaches are designed with families' interests, assets, and needs at the center. The Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partnership will support partners' efforts (1) to be open to and make changes based on parent feedback, and (2) to design processes that support an ongoing feedback loop between professionals and families. For the partnership, engaging families is critical for continuous learning and implementation of services that truly meet the needs of families with young children.

There are two levels on which members of the Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partnership will seek to engage families. First, on the program level, individual organizations will integrate appropriate professional development, mentorship, and supervision to assist staff in strengthening relationships with the families they serve, and to be truly family-centered. Second, on the system level, the Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partnership will seek to grow a culture across the community that values and integrates parental feedback into community-wide public policies. For example, Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond will include families in planning meetings that steer implementation of the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020*.

FIGURE 6 Parent Involvement Is Critical

Recent research by Virginia Commonwealth University's Center on Society and Health among families in Richmond's East End demonstrates that involvement with their children both generally and in schools is a high priority, but families' lack of parental education, job requirements, limited self-confidence, and inconsistent connection to schools all present barriers to optimal parental involvement with their children's schools.

- "Parents want to learn how to encourage their children to do well in school so that they can have a successful future.
- "Parents want to be involved in their children's lives in ways that help their children and themselves.
- "Some parents in the community feel alienated for reasons that include substance abuse, mental health issues, or transitioning from environments such as prison.
- "There is limited access to information about how parenting affects child development.
- "Some parents lack the resources and support that would enable them to become involved, especially fathers and young mothers.
- "Parents have skills and talents they could use to mentor children in the community, but they do not know about opportunities for mentorship."

Source: Zimmerman, Emily, Amber Haley, Albert Walker, Steven Woolf, Kim Nguyen, Wendy Shue, Lauren Kelley, Jill Hellman, and Derek Chapman. "Health Equity in Richmond, Virginia," Center on Society and Health, Virginia Commonwealth University, Spring 2016. Page 40-1. Accessed September 26, 2016. <http://societyhealth.vcu.edu/media/society-health/pdf/RVAHealthEquityFINAL.pdf>.



Goal One

Greater Awareness and Enrollment

Increase awareness of the importance of early childhood and accelerate enrollment in high-quality programs for families with young children.

Strategies

1.1. Communicate the importance of the early years of life and the value of quality early childhood programs to families and stakeholders.

1.2. Increase referrals and successful enrollment into quality early childhood programs.

1.3. Engage families with young children in shaping regional policy and practice.

Success Measures

Increase in number of families participating in designing regional communications and outreach strategies by 2017.

Establish a baseline and method for measuring awareness and understanding of quality early childhood programs by 2017.

Establish a baseline and set targets for enrollment in quality early care and education programs and public preschool by 2018.

10% increase in families and young children served by early intervention programs by 2019.

Double the number of families and young children served by home visiting programs by 2020.

Goal Two: Collaborative and Intentional Pathways



Enhance collaborative and intentional pathways between schools and public and private programs serving families with young children to improve access and customer service.



Strategies

2.1. Develop and implement quality standards for pathways between programs and excellent customer service for families with young children.

2.2. Pilot effective pathways between public schools and early childhood programs to increase family satisfaction and use of resources.

2.3. Promote developmentally appropriate practices that reinforce connections between early childhood services, health, social services, and public schools.

“Smart Beginnings is working to be more intentional about building a bridge between public schools and their understanding of early care.”

Lisa Thompson, Child Development Services Program Manager
ChildSavers

Aligning and Coordinating Systems

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partners have had great success coordinating a single kindergarten registration date among all local school divisions and helping thousands of families prepare for the first days of school. The partnership will build on the trust and networks that have evolved as part of that effort between community providers and schools to create a more seamless process for families transitioning their children from an early childhood program—home visiting, early intervention, or preschool—into the public school system.

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partners—including both schools and nonprofit organizations—identified the lack of coordination between schools and service providers as one of the greatest barriers to families seeking to help their children prepare for a strong social and academic

start in public preschool and kindergarten classes. Partners’ experience is reinforced by research on transitions between community programs and schools. A review of research in this field notes that “the majority of family members who participated in their children’s transition rated it as successful, but many also reported stress and specific concerns along the way.”¹⁵

A primary goal of the partners is to empower parents to know how to make a successful transition and to use the community and school resources available to them to support their child. Yet even for those families who are active participants in a program to school transition, there can be a disconnect.

“When you work in the schools, so many things become inherent—like where the office is. But it is hard for new families to know this...the staff are unfamiliar, and these families have a lot of questions.”

Sherri Roccaforte, CIS Workplace Coordinator
Carver College and Career Academy

Partnership members put a high priority on creating welcoming environments where families with young children understand the resources available to them. Schools often provide families with good information on the logistics and expectations of public preschool programs or kindergarten readiness. However, school personnel are not as often versed in the resources available to families for their enrolled children or younger siblings—such as parent education, home visiting, and child care. Often, school administrators and service providers in the social sector operate independently of each other, with families providing the only connection. (see figure 7)

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond seeks to improve information sharing between school personnel and service providers, with the goals of helping families navigate services and get needed support and to create a new model of care coordination for families.



FIGURE 7

Complex Early Childhood Systems

The connections between the various programs and organizations that serve families with young children are unclear and partnerships are fragmented.

Building stronger relationships between these stakeholders is critical to improving access so that more families benefit.



Source: Source: Bockstelle, Valerie, Gopal, Srik and Wilka, Matt. "Improving the Odds: Seven Principles for Investing in Early Care and Education." FSG Reimagining Social Change, p. 6."

Care Coordination Pilot

Introduction

The Plan

Goal One

Goal Two

Goal Three

Goal Four

SBGR's Role

Next Steps

Appendices

Snapshot

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond will pilot care coordination—a practice that has been successful in the health care field in improving health outcomes, increasing efficiencies, and subsequently reducing expenses. Care coordination for the health field is defined as “the deliberate organization of patient care activities between two or more participants involved in a patient’s care to facilitate the appropriate delivery of health care services.”¹⁶

At a general level, the goal is high-quality case management, with a successful referral and transition for the family. Participating organizations track progress and share accountability for positive outcomes, build strong relationships, and communicate regularly with families.

In a school-community pilot, implementing care coordination will place the family at the center for all services. It might involve community programs and public schools sharing information on the child’s development, family assets, and experience, as well as working with the family to identify and coordinate services they may desire to supplement their child’s (or younger siblings’) preschool or kindergarten experience. It could also involve negotiating eligibility barriers so that families do not have to sign up for multiple services in distinct locations.

By demonstrating effective coordination in one elementary school attendance zone, the intention of the partners is to share the results and scale the model across localities in Greater Richmond.

Promise Neighborhood at Peter Paul Development Center and Partnership for Families are interested in implementing the care coordination pilot, in Richmond’s East End and Northside, respectively.



**Partnership
for Families**
GROW HERE.

“We need to find practical ways for sharing and collaborating to work around barriers at the federal, state, and local level.”

**Anthony Washington, School Improvement and Innovation Specialist
Richmond Public Schools**



Goal Two

Collaborative and Intentional Pathways

Enhance collaborative and intentional pathways between schools and public and private programs serving families with young children to improve access and customer service.

Strategies

2.1. Develop and implement quality standards for pathways between programs and excellent customer service for families with young children.

2.2. Pilot effective pathways between public schools and early childhood programs to increase family satisfaction and use of resources.

2.3. Promote developmentally appropriate practices that reinforce connections between early childhood services, health, social services, and public schools.

Success Measures

Increased understanding of available regional resources for families with young children by participating public and private agencies by 2018.

Parents reporting smooth transition between early childhood services and public school and increased satisfaction in pilot care coordination model by 2019.

Adoption of family-centered approach to care coordination and case management by partners by 2020.

Goal Three: Policy Alignment and Public Will



Leverage national, regional, state, and local resources and build public will to expand and sustain the region's quality early childhood programs.



Strategies

3.1. Increase the use and sharing of data to better understand conditions, target resources, and promote accountability.

3.2. Advocate to increase investment of financial resources and support for quality early childhood programs.

3.3. Research and promote strategies to maximize the use of public and private resources for innovative financing of early childhood programs.

3.4. Advocate for policies that support evidence-based, high-quality early childhood programs.

“Together we can shift the conversation from data to *prove* to data to *improve*. Continuous improvement will require us to share and use data differently to understand local conditions, identify practices that work, and promote accountability for changing our behavior — as well as great results for all the children in our region.”

Jason Smith, Executive Director
Bridging Richmond

Data Sharing and Usage

One of the strengths of the Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partnership is its power as an organizing force. Its members share and advance a common purpose. Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond’s affiliation with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation benefits the partnership through the opportunity to access statewide data, receive technical assistance and support, and be part of a statewide network of organizations focused on the same goal.

As a follow-up to the 2010 *Regional Plan*, Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond has annually reported on the region’s community indicators, including:

- kindergartners meeting the PALS-K benchmark,
- regional investment in home visiting,
- regional participation in Virginia Quality,
- regional implementation of developmental screenings,
- regional public awareness results, and
- locality-based support for school readiness.

“Early childhood conversation is traditionally outside the comfort zone of local governments and schools. Smart Beginnings is helping to shift their way of thinking.”

Jackie Stewart, Special Projects Manager
Richmond Regional Planning District Commission

As a trusted and neutral convener, Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond is uniquely positioned to access data at the regional and program level. However, Smart Beginnings has not had the capacity to consistently collect and track regional progress on its plan at the ground level—understanding access, utilization, quality, and performance at the locality and program levels—nor has the partnership gathered and aggregated data on family experiences with enrollment in early childhood services. Enhancing Smart Beginnings’ capacity to collect, analyze, and publish more in-depth data will improve the partnership’s implementation of the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020*.

To serve as an information source to the region’s providers and offer strategic guidance to stakeholders, Smart Beginnings will build on the foundation of shared measures identified in the *2010 Regional Plan* by developing a common language for communication and advocacy.

Nationally, a shared measurement system is identified as an essential component of effective collective impact models. Building Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond’s capacity to collect and analyze data—and working with the partnership and Virginia Early Childhood Foundation to identify shared measures—will accelerate partners’ ability to achieve results.¹⁷

Increased Investment in Quality Services

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partners, with the Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond staff as the driver, will seek to collect financial, programmatic, and community data, not only to understand and continuously improve, but also to make a strong case for investment in quality services.

taking full advantage of public reimbursements and subsidies available for early childhood programs and services. Smart Beginnings partners are also exploring innovative financing measures—such as social impact bonds, mixed-delivery pilots, and Pay for Success financing—to generate increased capacity for the field.

Generating new financial resources is a top priority for partners in order to meet the demand in the region. At the same time, partners want to ensure that their organizations are drawing down available funds and

“There’s been an increase in rigor and what’s expected of quality programs but there has not been an increase in resources to help programs meet new expectations.”

**Shelia Crossen-Powell, Director
Hanover County Department of Social Services**

FIGURE 8 Public Preschool Capacity

Public preschool programs like Virginia Preschool Initiative and Head Start have expanded since 2010. Our region currently has

the capacity to serve 4,023 low-income or at-risk 4 year-olds through these programs, but access varies widely across school districts.

12,102 Average Number of Kindergarteners



4,023 Number of 4 Year-Old Public Preschoolers



Source: The data represent a count of funded slots for 4 year-old preschool through Head Start, Virginia Preschool Initiative, Title I, and Early Childhood Special Education. The count of preschool slots includes students in more than one “grade,” though three year olds were excluded from the count where possible. Data provided by school districts; average kindergarten enrollment calculated by Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond.

The Smart Beginnings leadership, board of directors, committees, and chairs of action teams will increase their advocacy efforts with the goal of greater investment in quality resources to allow more families to be served. They will champion the plan with public and private leaders at the regional, state,

and national levels, and build public will for increased investments. They will do this by strengthening relationships, collecting and analyzing authentic data, and telling the story of the transformation that funding can provide for young children and their families.

“Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond is the power broker for all of us. They can connect the dots for us and have the power to advocate for policy change at high levels so providers can be more effective and more families benefit.”

Krista Dawson, Literacy Outreach Coordinator
 Richmond Public Library

3

Goal Three

Policy Alignment and Public Will

Leverage national, regional, state, and local resources and build public will to expand and sustain the region's quality early childhood programs.

Strategies

3.1. Increase the use and sharing of data to better understand conditions, target resources and promote accountability.

3.2. Advocate to increase investment of financial resources and support for quality early childhood programs.

3.3. Research and promote strategies to maximize the use of public and private resources for innovative financing of early childhood programs.

3.4. Advocate for policies that support evidence-based, high-quality early childhood programs.

Success Measures

Expansion of Smart Beginnings's capacity to collect, analyze and publish access, utilization and performance data across the school readiness system by 2017.

Achieving state and local policy changes that support funding and increase access to evidence based, high-quality early childhood programs.

Richmond region school divisions will pilot a mixed delivery model by 2018.

All local departments of social services will draw down Quality Improvement dollars to support Virginia Quality by 2018.

Increase utilization of allocated Virginia Preschool Initiative funding across Richmond region school divisions from 48% to 70% by 2020.

Home visiting programs and funding will be available in every locality by 2020.

Goal Four: Organizational and Professional Capacity



Strengthen the professional and organizational capacity of quality early childhood programs to provide culturally- and trauma-informed care to families with young children.



Strategies

- 4.1. Achieve greater levels of participation and progress in Virginia Quality by providers in public and private early care and education settings.
- 4.2. Mitigate the impact of trauma for professionals, families, caregivers, and children in quality early childhood programs.
- 4.3. Support early childhood professionals to understand and reduce racial, ethnic, income, and health disparities among those they serve.
- 4.4. Facilitate the development of sustainable business models for child care providers, particularly those in distressed neighborhoods.

System of Quality Providers

More than 52,000 infants, toddlers and preschoolers live in homes where all parents are working, making access to high-quality and affordable early childhood options an essential support for the current workforce.

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond will accelerate its efforts to engage private center-based and family child care providers and public preschool programs in Virginia Quality. Only 65 of 586 private child care programs have external indicators of quality care, such as national accreditation or participation in Virginia Quality.¹⁸

Virginia Quality is the state’s voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System. Quality Rating and Improvement Systems exist in most states across the country and are a proven strategy to systematically improve the quality of child care and early learning programs. Virginia Quality focuses on continuous quality improvement, recognizes early learning programs’ commitment to excellence, and supports programs with tools and services to achieve top quality.



ChildSavers will serve as lead partner in the expansion of Virginia Quality.

To achieve this goal, Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partners will work with ChildSavers, a local nonprofit that serves as the fiscal administrator and coordinator for Virginia Quality in the Central Region.

FIGURE 9

High-Quality Child Care Programs

11% (65 programs)



Programs accredited by the National Accreditation Commission (NAC) or National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), or participating in Virginia Quality, are considered high-quality.

Source: Data from Smart Beginnings. Virginia’s Quality Rating and Improvement System. http://vecf.org/Portals/5/PDFs/VSQI/All%20Quality%20Rated%20Programs_7.6.16.pdf.

“We are working to move families out of poverty, and Smart Beginnings is working to shine a spotlight on this issue.”

Margaret Pienkowski, W. K. Kellogg Fellow & Project Management Analyst
Office of Community Wealth Building, City of Richmond

Creating Inclusive and Supportive Services

Since 2010, the number of children living in poverty has grown in the region, putting additional pressure on families, children, and the professionals who serve them. These financial stressors have created additional emotional, physical, and social challenges for families to navigate in their children’s early years of life.

To effectively serve families and children with programs designed for their needs, Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partners will invest in strengthening their workforce. The network will collectively invest in training and preparing staff working in early childhood programs to understand social and economic conditions, be able to talk openly about racial and social inequities and biases, and gain tools for creating welcoming and supportive environments for families served by their organizations.

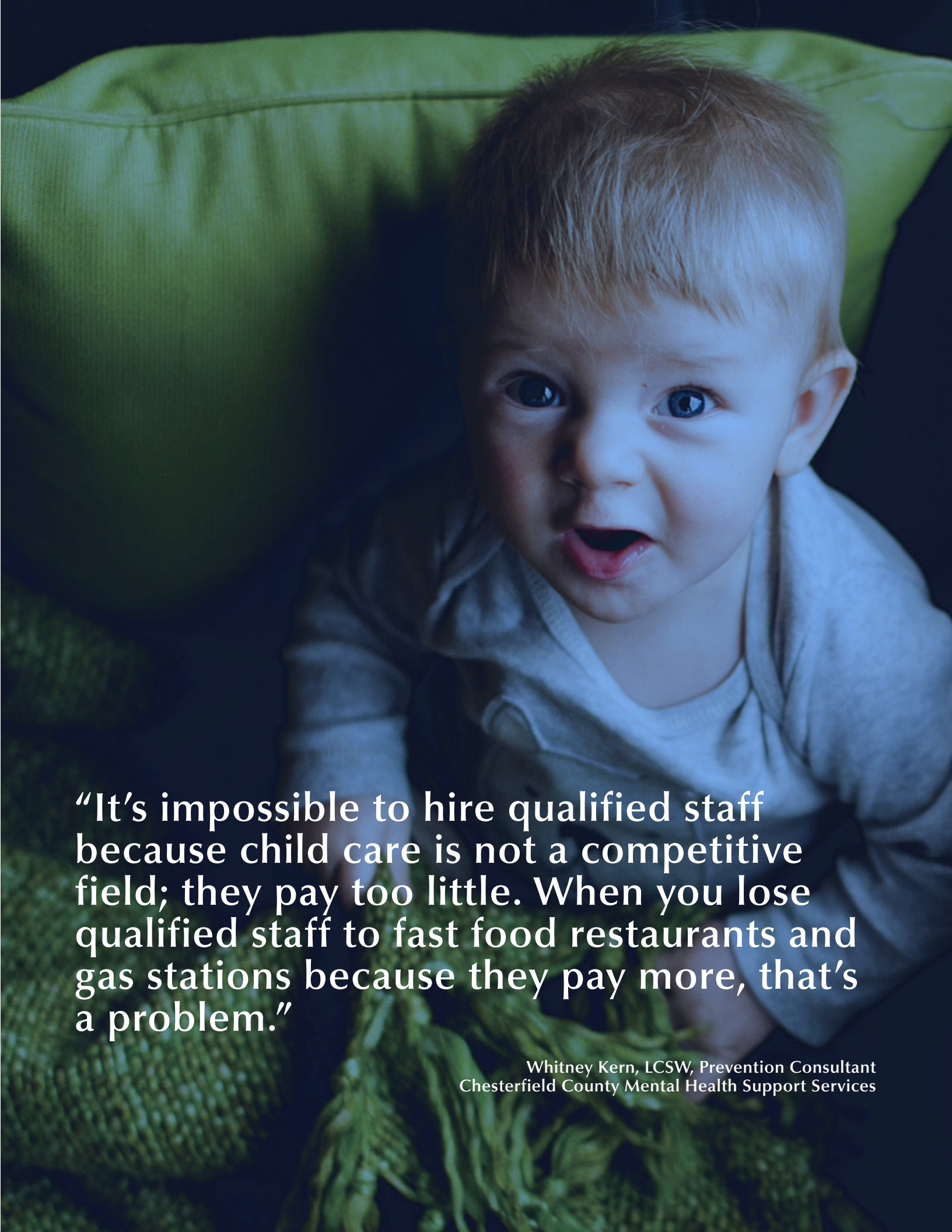
One of the partners engaged in this work is Greater Richmond SCAN, which convenes the Greater Richmond Trauma-Informed Community Network. This network includes 61 agencies working to implement trauma-informed practices for all children and families in the region.¹⁹ Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partners will collaborate with the network to integrate trauma informed care into the practices of home visiting, early intervention, and private and public early care and education programs.



Greater Richmond SCAN will serve as lead partner in trauma-informed care training efforts.

Definition of trauma-informed care:

“An organization, system, or community [implements trauma-informed care when it] incorporates understanding of the pervasiveness of trauma and its impact into every aspect of its practice or programs. It emphasizes physical and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild/maintain a sense of control and empowerment.”²⁰



“It’s impossible to hire qualified staff because child care is not a competitive field; they pay too little. When you lose qualified staff to fast food restaurants and gas stations because they pay more, that’s a problem.”

Whitney Kern, LCSW, Prevention Consultant
Chesterfield County Mental Health Support Services

Sustainable Business Models

The regional child care industry is one that is very fragile for both nonprofit and for-profit small businesses. Since 2010, two of the region’s major nonprofit early childhood education centers serving families in distressed neighborhoods have gone out of business, and another stopped providing services. Of the 586 private early care and education programs in the region, 451 are incorporated as businesses and 135 as nonprofits.

Smart Beginnings partners seek to explore a potential Shared Services Alliance model to help child care programs realize operational and financial efficiencies. Shared Services

Alliances benefit small businesses by enabling them to join forces administratively to lower costs in business functions, such as payroll, benefits management, banking, janitorial, food services, insurance, and purchasing. These cost savings can be reinvested in program quality and improved wages and benefits, thereby strengthening the child care workforce and enhancing the quality of services provided.

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond will conduct research into a shared services model, and, with other partners, find support to pilot a model within the region.

FIGURE 10
Child Care Industry Landscape

Of the 586 private early care and education programs in the region, 451 are small businesses and 135 are incorporated as nonprofits. Solutions to stabilize and sustain the industry need to be applicable in both for-profit and nonprofit settings.

	Small Business	Nonprofit	Total
Child Care Centers	204	77	281
Family Child Care	193	0	193
Exempt Programs	54	58	112
Total	451	135	586



Goal Four

Organizational and Professional Capacity

Strengthen the professional and organizational capacity of quality early childhood programs to provide culturally- and trauma-informed care to families with young children.

Strategies

4.1. Achieve greater levels of participation and progress in Virginia Quality by providers in public and private early care and education settings.

4.2. Mitigate the impact of trauma for professionals, families, caregivers, and children in quality early childhood programs.

4.3. Support early childhood professionals to understand and reduce racial, ethnic, income, and health disparities among those they serve.

4.4. Facilitate the development of sustainable business models for child care providers, particularly those in distressed neighborhoods.

Success Measures

Double participation in Virginia Quality by 2017.

Increase in providers trained in trauma-informed care and integrating practices within their organizations by 2017.

Increase participation in Virginia Quality to serve 25% of all early care and education programs by 2018.

Establishment of a shared services alliance to support early care and education programs by 2018.



Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond's Role in the Regional Plan

The mission of Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond is to lead the transformation of the early childhood system by building regional partnerships and capacity for change.



From Coalition to Collective Impact

Recognizing the importance of early childhood development, businesses, nonprofits, governments, schools, and philanthropic leaders in Greater Richmond have been working together to provide support to families with young children and to bring attention to the value of investing early to help young children thrive. Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond can trace its roots back more than 15 years, to Youth Matters, a project of ChamberRVA, and Success By 6® at United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg. In 2006 these two efforts merged to form Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond, which has served as the region's convener and coordinator for strategic early childhood initiatives ever since.

ChamberRVA has helped to establish early childhood as a crucial component of the workforce pipeline and raise awareness of the issue among business leaders. United Way's reputation as a longstanding nonprofit and funder lends credibility to the work and provides access to a vibrant network of nonprofit partners and volunteers.

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond is one of seventeen regional Smart Beginnings initiatives that form a statewide network supported by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. The foundation works with Smart Beginnings partners across the state to understand barriers and promote opportunities for increasing access to high-quality early learning.



Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond leverages the strengths of ChamberRVA and United Way as its anchor organizations.

Selected Accomplishments:

Public Awareness

- Received the Commonwealth Award from the Richmond Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America in 2012.
- Recognized by the Harvard Family Research Project entitled [Ready for Success: Creating Collaborative and Thoughtful Transitions into Kindergarten](#) in 2012.

Collaboration and Partnerships

- Employer and business understanding of the importance of early childhood

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond represents a powerful network and organizing force, and the staff of the partnership serves as the backbone for coordinating and accelerating the shared vision. Since the first *Regional Plan* was launched in 2010, Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond has increased public awareness and coordination, leveraged new resources for quality services, and built strong cross sector representation and relationships. Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond partners have developed a shared agenda focusing on both service delivery and system change, cultivated trust and better communication within the provider network, and served as a bridge between schools, localities, and programs.

- Strong relationships with school districts
- Recognized as a Richmond History Maker for "Encouraging Regional Collaboration" in 2013.

Targeted Public Sector Investment

- VPI+ Preschool Expansion Grant
- MIECHV Home Visiting Expansion Grant
- Hanover County home visiting expansion
- City of Richmond Kellogg Grant for Early Childhood Alignment

In 2016, partners' priorities for Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond are to advance the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020* by raising awareness of early childhood, helping programs connect families to quality resources, advocating for policy alignment and targeted funding, and building provider capacity.

To do so calls for a reinvigorated structure that emphasizes greater accountability, integration across sectors, and inclusion of families and new voices. With the adoption of the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020*, Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond will align with documented best practices of collective impact. The partners will strengthen the role of the backbone organization to provide needed support and leadership to the partners.

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Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond will reorganize its committees to generate greater accountability, increase diversity of membership, and engage more families, while retaining its role as a network and convener. The partnership will include an expanded group of stakeholders aligned to achieve the plan's goals, continuously communicate with one another, measure progress, and share in accountability for the results. Specifically, the structure will address the need for:

- better integration of action teams across areas,
- more members owning and driving activities,
- greater use of shared data and measurement,
- greater accountability and communication of results among partners, and
- new voices of families at planning and program tables.

No one sector or organization can complete the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020* on its own. Success requires a multi-sector alliance and investment from public, nonprofit, private, and charitable sectors with families at the center. A renewed collective impact model will build on and coordinate existing efforts and deliver with greater efficiency and impact.

In a 2011 study of “needle moving collaboratives,” the authors note that collaborative models that have resulted in progress on key community-wide indicators of ten percent or more confirm the following characteristics as fundamental: “commitment to long-term involvement of key stakeholders across sectors; use of shared data to set the agenda and improve over time, and engagement of community members as substantive partners.”²¹ The Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond structure will be strengthened to encompass all these elements.

Implementation of Structure

As the plan implementation gets underway, Smart Beginnings will restructure its committees to include the following:

- an influential board of directors who lead and invest in the plan,
- an Impact Committee of organizational leaders who are accountable for the plan's success,
- action teams of managers from key organizations who advance each goal,
- project work group teams who collaborate across organizations to implement selected strategies within each goal,
- staffing support that provides the facilitation and communication needed to achieve plan results with partners.

“With Smart Beginnings we have a more deliberate and coordinated approach.”

**Robert Bolling, Chief Executive Officer
ChildSavers**

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“Smart Beginnings has cultivated buy-in from program staff to board members among its organizational partners. How can we leverage that trust, leadership and decision-making power to further the work even more?”

Amy Strite, President and CEO
Family Lifeline

The *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020* sets in motion four transformational strategies. By 2020, with the leadership, coordination, and advocacy of Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond and its partners, the Richmond region will be a better place for families with young children. There will be more families enrolled in quality programs that contribute to healthy development, more schools and providers working together to make it easier for families to get the support they deserve, more citizen investment of time and resources to the support of young children, and a workforce better prepared to meet the needs of a diverse population of families.

Hundreds of individuals were involved in crafting the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020*

recommendations, and it will take those same hundreds and more to achieve its promise. As a partnership of multiple agencies, stakeholders, and families, the future of the *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020* and Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond’s success will depend on collaboration across sectors, focused and measurable strategies, and authentic engagement with families in the region. It will require a strong backbone organization—Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond—facilitating and guiding the work.

A child’s early years are too important not to invest in them. The Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond *Regional Plan for School Readiness 2017-2020* provides a guide to where these investments are needed most.

“We are building on the success of the previous plan with more of a focus on the importance of engaging the whole family in early learning.”

Shannon Venable, President and CEO
Children’s Museum of Richmond



Method

The Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond Impact Committee coordinated the 2016 planning process and served as the hub for gathering, reviewing, and refining input from over 260 participants in the network at 22 meetings between March and August of 2016.

To understand current conditions, a pre-planning team assessed progress and challenges since 2010. Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond collected data on access and utilization of services, and gathered best practice research on new trends in family engagement, collective impact, public awareness, and Shared Services Alliances.

The Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond team synthesized these findings, with the help of the Impact Committee, and identified emerging focus areas for the community plan. These areas were shared broadly with partners for input. Partners prioritized, removed, and added specific strategies and action needed to bring about results. The final plan with four goals was created at a full day retreat and refined and finalized by the Impact Committee, Ready Action teams, and locality groups. An accompanying work plan indicates the outcomes, lead agencies, and timeframe for accomplishing each goal and strategy.

Footnotes

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**SMART
BEGINNINGS®**
Greater Richmond

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond School Readiness Snapshot

Includes data and indicators for the Counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan, and the Cities of Colonial Heights and Richmond.

Demographics	
Children age 0–5 (2010–2014) ⁱ	76,325
Race: children age 0–4 (2014) ⁱⁱ	62,517
Non-Hispanic Black	29.6% (18,518)
Non-Hispanic White	49.5% (30,934)
Hispanic	10.6% (6,647)
Asian	5.1% (3,206)
Children age 0-5 with all available parents in the labor force (2010–2014) ⁱⁱⁱ	71.2% (52,843)
Risk	
Children age 0-5 living in poverty (2010–2014) ^{iv}	20.9% (15,684)
Children age 0-5 living within 200% of the federal poverty level	37.8% (28,446)
Births to mothers with less than 12 years of education (2014) ^v	9.7% (1,226)
Births to teenage mothers age 15-17, per 1,000 (2013) ^{vi}	8.6 (175)
Low weight births <2,500g (2014) ^{vii}	8.6% (1,083)
Reach	
Home visiting caseload capacity (2015) ^{viii}	722
Estimated families that qualify for home visiting services	7,183
Percentage of the eligible population programs have capacity to serve	10.1%
Number of private child care programs (2016) ^{ix}	586
Child care centers	281
Family child care	100
Exempt programs	112
Voluntarily registered*	93
Number of private programs demonstrating quality (i.e., NAC or NAEYC accredited or participating in Virginia Quality) (2016) ^x	11.1% (65)
Public preschool (i.e., Head Start, VPI, Title I, ECSE) capacity (2015-16) ^{xi}	4,023
Average kindergarten enrollment ^{xii}	12,102
Results	
Percentage of students with passing PALS-K scores (2014-15) ^{xiii}	86.8%
Percentage of kindergarten class that was not promoted on time to third grade (2010-11 cohort) ^{xiv}	7.3%

ⁱUS Census 2010-2014 AC 5 -Year Estimates. Table B09001.

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^xNAC is the National Accreditation Commission. NAEYC is the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Data from Smart Beginnings. Virginia's Quality Rating and Improvement System. http://vecf.org/Portals/5/PDFs/VSQI/All%20Quality%20Rated%20Programs_7.6.16.pdf.

^{xi}Data provided by school districts after request from Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond

^{xii}Data provided by Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond for kindergarten registration and fall membership, November 11, 2016.

^{xiii}Data from Bridging Richmond's Kindergarten Readiness Dashboard. <http://bridgingrichmond.com/data/kindergarten-readiness-dashboard-2/>. Accessed July 14, 2016.

*May include unregulated providers.



Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond is a partnership of public and private organizations, businesses, and individuals serving the cities of Richmond and Colonial Heights, as well as Chesterfield, Charles City, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan counties.

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