

IX. Summary

Continuum of Development Goal

“Create a continuum of development outlining the stages of development from conception to adulthood, identifying existing services and supports and addressing gaps and barriers.”

To this end, the strategies to achieve this goal are:

- **Convene a body of public and private sector stakeholders to develop the continuum.**

This strategy has been met. The workgroups assembled for the work of preparing this report were from a wide range of community backgrounds representing the majority of services and supports available to children in Chatham County.

- **Serve as a bridge to national research and best practice information for community agencies and stakeholders to access and strengthen quality and effectiveness of existing local programs.**

This strategy has been met. The report assembled by the Continuum of Development team brings together a vast array of national and local best practices models and incorporates national, state, and local research to give the most comprehensive picture possible for today's youth.

- **Establish a Community Health Care Collaborative to bring together the diverse public and private providers of care in Savannah and Chatham County and establish a cooperative partnership to improve health status of families and communities.**

This strategy has been implemented. A community healthcare collaborative has been formed known as the Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council. The council adopted by-laws in May 2004, and has conducted a needs assessment, identified areas for systems improvements, and applied for and received grant funding to pilot a care navigator system to improve access to healthcare for the uninsured and underinsured of Chatham County. The Council continues to meet and represent the HealthCare Action Team for the community's Poverty Reduction Initiative.

- **Serve as a catalyst to support community and stakeholder efforts to bridge gaps and eliminate barriers in the continuum of development.**

*This strategy has **not** yet been met. The course of work to date represents a right and true method of assessing the community as a whole. As the picture became clearer, the message now turns to the work of bridging the gaps in services, prioritizing areas to be addressed and eliminating the barriers.*

While the work was long and hard, the first three of these strategies was met with, the assemblage of the Continuum of Development workgroups, the assemblage of the Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council, and the creation of this document and the accompanying resource guide. While some

areas still warrant further study, several areas of concern were identified as key components to paving the road for successful child development in the county.

Components of this success are centered around the process.

- Key players were identified and encouraged to participate
- Areas of concern were identified and explored
- Small groups tackled areas of complex problems to clarify and clearly identify goals
- Larger group reconvened for final agreement on the recommendations

While this took longer than expected, the ultimate outcome was a thorough comprehensive look at national, state and local resources with the child at the center of the view.

The compilation of the Chatham County Resource Guide was and still is quite an undertaking. The data were compiled and then reassessed a year later, to bring the most comprehensive picture of available resources. The recommendation of this workgroup was that the best use of this information was to maintain the program digitally and provide access to all citizens of Chatham County. Echoing that sentiment, the resource guide is complete to the date it is delivered and then becomes a stagnant document if it isn't maintained and updated constantly. Further work should be done to investigate the eventual possibility of a web-based interface with the data, and several technology based grants are available from various sources to facilitate that process.

The creation of logic models was a featured part of the process, and the portion that demanded the most time. However, these models serve only as a visual reminder of the recommendations of the groups. The activities included in them represent the available resources and activities as well as the recommended additional assets for the community. These recommendations are both specific action steps and suggestions of areas for specific study. While this is a comprehensive first look at the continuum, the data clearly show that many areas require further study to determine the correct course of action.

Some possible future strategies include:

Goal 1: Improve Awareness, Communication and Accessibility with Parents

- Continue the development an inventory of resources for parents by
 - providing an accessible list in many formats
 - ensuring existing resources are literacy accessible
- Provide a support person to coordinate and maintain parent support groups
- Recognize the needs of specific groups of parents by

- providing resources to those planning to become parents
- providing resources for Hispanic community
- reaching out to parents in greater need through home visits, etc.

Goal 2: Improve Coordination

- Develop a communications/consultation protocol between professionals and early childhood educators
- Make linkages to other professionals
- Make linkages with existing strategies and post on website
- Develop a database of speakers
- Build relationships across sectors and along the continuum from crisis to prevention

Goal 3: Expand Promising Practices

- Expand the TAPP program to accommodate the need
- Encourage the expansion of the Smart Start program to facilitate the licensure and accreditation of child care facilities
- Continue the support of the Safe Kids of Savannah Coalition
- Continue to support the work of the Drug Free Communities Support Program

Goal 4(a): Develop a Prevention Council

- recognize the continuum beginning with pre-conception
- recognize the continuum of risk, e.g. family violence and child abuse
- ensure pre-natal psychosocial assessment for all pregnant women
- examine the roles of risk and protective factors as children move through the continuum

Goal 4(b): Develop a Seamless Continuum of Services for Children and their Families

- Increase collaboration of early childhood, kindergarten, public school and parents working together for transitions by
 - emphasizing a role for parents and
 - increasing their understanding of how the system works
- Develop child care centers as central supports for children and families by
 - extending the hours of services (after school, support community and working parents)
 - encouraging the licensure and accreditation of child care facilities
 - educating the public on the need for licensure and accreditation
 - Encourage business leaders to investigate the feasibility of instituting childcare in or around the workplace.
- Open-up the public school system for discussion on how best to serve the children of Chatham County by encouraging participation on planning councils and workgroups

Goal 5: Promote Supporting Legislation

- Smoke-free public places
- Limiting violence in media
- Bicycle helmet use
- TADRA

- Underage substance use legislation

Goal 6: Encourage Further Exploration into Areas of Concern

- Examine the link between pre-conceptual nutrition and the rate of infant mortality
- Encourage alternative educational methods of providing nutritional information
- Research the current status of disconnected youth in Chatham County
- Create a task force on teenage violence to include issues of school safety and bullying

Goal 7: Support the Implementation of Existing Strategies that Support Healthy Child Development

- Identify existing relevant strategies
- Ensure links are made with system-wide providers

Goal 8: Strengthen Strategy Leadership

- Formalize network membership and make sure all members receive communication
- Extend network to include cultural and religious organizations, and regional networks
- Recognize networks for action
- Have resources to help new community networks

While these strategies are just the tip of the iceberg, the plan is simple and clear. Keeping the health and well-being of our children as the focus of the work produces a viable, winnable and meaningful goal for all of Chatham County. That is half the battle.