



COVID-response: September 2020 Program Updates

Reach Out and Read

Buncombe Partnership for Children

Anya Robyak, Program Coordinator

Both practices we support in Reach Out and Read are continuing to serve patients for well child visits during the pandemic. French Broad Pediatrics has reported another steady increase in the number of well-child visits, especially for babies and toddlers, as the practice continues to expand and as families continue to return to more normal schedules of medical care. This past month we have started to incorporate some information from the Brush Book Bed initiative by including flyers with book deliveries, and opportunities for involvement in our conversations with practitioners and staff.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Literacy Council of Buncombe County

Laura Bernhein, Outreach and Communications Director

- We have 3543 active children (10/5/20).
- We're contacting midwives, doulas, and doctors' offices.
- We've been doing outreach on Facebook (mostly FB groups) and asking churches if they are willing to include our program in their newsletters. Hands on Asheville will include our flyers in their next Book Drive and their School Supply Drive (the first one already took place, but they'll be doing a second one soon). A local group of caring parents is also organizing a book drive to give new, donated books to children and they'll include our flyers.

Kaleidoscope Play & Learn Groups

Asheville City Schools

Marna Holland, Program Coordinator

Kaleidoscope Play and Learn groups in Buncombe County were cancelled starting Monday, March 16 as a result of the statewide ban on meetings of more than 10 people and the closure of public schools. On Tuesday, March 17, the coordinators sent initial emails with links to home-based activities for children and parents/caregivers that are developmentally and age appropriate, hands-on and emphasize learning through play. Response from parents and caregivers was immediate and enthusiastic. Both coordinators continued to send families 2-3 emails each week with activities that support the domains of child development. Indoor and outdoor and pre-literacy activities are included in every correspondence, and the coordinators sift through many activities online to find those that are safe, age-appropriate and simple.

121 children and 118 parents/caregivers are enrolled and participating this September in our online program, including 39 new children and 39 new adults. The activity bags contain learning materials that correspond to the online activity ideas and we have produced several slideshows with photos of the

children engaging in the activities, which gives families a chance to get ideas from others. We provide ideas, but often families share additional activities.

Learning themes for September included apples, leaves, fall, forest animals, farm, and sunflowers. Preschoolers had a sunflower garden project kit in their activity bag that included dirt, seeds and a container and many families sent photos of their sunflowers being planted. A favorite activity are the treasure hunts, which work on listening, following directions, and position words (under, beside, near, etc.) Outdoor ideas this month included several picture scavenger hunts (backyard, apple orchard, fall, and pumpkin patch). Lessons always include pre-literacy components, including rhyming words, finding objects around the house that start with the letter of the day, read-alouds, singalongs, and printables that emphasize pre-literacy skills. We also are providing links to local outdoor activities, like the corn maze and orchards.

Parent comment for September: "I love the virtual option, and will continue to choose it as long as it is offered. My son Hart wakes up in the morning asking me, "Mama, what did Ms. Marna send today?" He loves the activities and links, etc. I'm so thankful to you and Grace for putting so much time into compiling this info for our kids. It is hard to fill my little boys' days with activities when they are home all day and we aren't going anywhere. I appreciate virtual Play and Learn so much right now. " Genny

Circle of Security

Buncombe Partnership for Children

Activity will begin in October

Asheville Adventure Play

Buncombe Partnership for Children

Activity on hold due to Covid

NC Pre-Kindergarten

Buncombe Partnership for Children

Stacey Bailey, Program Director

The beginning of September was busy as we continued to process child applications, build classrooms for attendance submission, and track lead teacher approval through the teacher licensing unit at DCDEE.

This year NC Pre-K providers will be reimbursed based on their subcontracted amounts and not on actual child attendance. DCDEE required various reports in September to prepare for this change in how providers will be paid. Additionally, a bi-weekly report is now required to track enrollment, classroom closures due to Covid, and teacher/child diagnosis of Covid.

Another financial change made by the state this year was to provide each provider with 10% of their total subcontracted amount in September. These funds were provided to help stabilize the program and to assist providers in purchasing PPE or other needed supplies.

Locally, enrollment for the NC Pre-K program is down by approximately 50%, which is consistent with NC Pre-K enrollment across the state.

Transition to Kindergarten (TTK) kits were purchased for the local NC Pre-K providers, prioritizing distribution to their remote learners. An MOU was issued for each subcontractor and once executed the TTK kits were delivered by staff to each subcontractor.

The NC Pre-K Program Consultant hosted two professional learning communities with lead teachers regarding the remote learning requirements. All lead and assistant teachers, along with the NC Pre-K Program Consultant, took part in one of three required trainings by DCDEE on use of the Teaching Strategies Remote Learning Solutions.

Child Care Subsidies

Buncombe County Health & Human Services/Southwestern Child Development Commission
State-level contract, no monthly report requested

Child Care Resources

Buncombe Partnership for Children
Jenny Vial, CCR Director

September was busy in Child Care Resources! The CCR team worked to get more training posted online via Zoom, including ongoing Communities of Practice for both program directors and Family Child Care Home providers, worked with the CCHC program to provide several sessions of ITS-SIDS, offered training for several individual center staff teams, located a perfect outdoor location that allowed us to begin providing multiple sessions of CPR/First Aid, and began planning for fall/winter training. CCR staff also continued to be available for virtual TA, providing phone and video support for multiple programs. We dropped off cleaning supplies and masks to programs all around the county – providing great opportunities for outdoor face to face check-ins with directors. In September, CCR staff continued collaborative work with Sunshine, NC PreK, and Workforce Development programs – working to align our communication with teachers and directors, working to plan future trainings, and beginning to develop content for the online pre-service training modules scheduled to be posted to our Moodle platform later this year.

Workforce Development Program

Buncombe Partnership for Children
Tasha Lewis, WDP Director

The workforce development program is setting appointments with our local fingerprinting office. There is a longer wait for this. The participants are still out in the field substituting at four different sites with full-time hours. We have finished planning for another cohort in November, both Spanish and English. We have specific sites that are making sure that these participants are prepared for the classroom by giving them additional contact hours. We have a location for CPR and SIDs training that adheres to CDC guidelines. We submitted a grant proposal and are awaiting additional grant funding to create a learning pod for the children of WDP substitutes to help reduce the barriers of not having childcare.

WAGES

Child Care Services Association

State-level contract, no monthly report requested

Sustaining Facility Quality

Buncombe Partnership for Children

Caroline Rodier, Assistant Director

In September, completed applications were received from child care facilities requesting inclusion in the SFQ grant program. The Finance Director processed all applications and created contracts for eligible grantees. A request for proposal process was advertised for a facilitator to create a Leadership Development cohort for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color early educators and administrators. This is one of several professional development opportunities that will be offered through the SFQ program this year.

Child Care Health Consultation

Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC)

Chrissy Wolfe, Program Coordinator/CCHC

For the month of September, the Child Care Health Consultation program has continued to promote healthy and safe environments for children and staff in our child care settings. As child care staff have questions about health, COVID screening, exclusion, and safety they are directed to contact their county's CCHC. The contact information is available on the NC DHHS website for the two CCHCs serving Buncombe County. The CCHC program has consistently been available to all child care facilities and family child care homes in Buncombe County, providing coaching and guidance following the Child Care Strong NC Public Health ToolKit: Interim Guidance.

The CCHC program has continued to adapt and develop effective remote learning strategies through the use of technology. As the CCHC program continues to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic, based on guidance provided by the UNC Child Care Health & Safety Resource Center, NC DHHS, DCDEE, and CDC, the program will continue to provide information and resources to assist child care facilities in keeping children and staff safe during this time.

In order to mitigate the spread of the virus, CCHC services are being delivered through remote instruction, outdoor physical distancing consultations and limited participation for required trainings. The CCHC focus has not changed despite operational changes resulting from COVID-19. Consultation, group trainings and general resource sharing with an emphasis placed on COVID-19 has continued through:

Emails, Texts, Phone Calls

- Zoom, Webex, Google Meets
- Virtual Real-Time Trainings
- Outdoor physical distancing
- Limited participation, face coverings and social distancing

The CCHC program has provided on-site consultations to meet the needs of children with medical action plans providing required in-person trainings with hands-on skill checks at child care facilities. This has

been accomplished through remaining outdoors, maintaining a physical distance, and the use of face coverings.

Buncombe County early childhood educators continue to prove to be resilient and flexible in adapting to these changing circumstances. They continue to provide excellent care of children in our community, and the CCHC program is proud to continue providing technical assistance, coaching, training and support to these early educators and child care facilities.

The SUNSHINE Project

FIRST Parent Center

Davina Weirich, Program Manager

- phone calls, emails, and zoom observations with current referrals
- conducting and scoring developmental screenings on new referrals
- virtual training on trauma informed practices for several teachers
- delivery of visuals, CSEFEL materials, and sensory items to Child care centers serving referred children
- working on refining resource library and scanning documents to be digital and easily accessible to teachers and caregivers
- participated in several discussions and meetings around our language justice initiative and narrowing down committee, scope, and specific goals
- increase in case management phone calls and emails to educate caregivers on different agencies, services, and resources as well as discussing childcare options for families whose children are not in childcare.
- (Particularly children on the autism spectrum who are not currently being served right now but are in need of support)
- participated in Buncombe County virtual school meeting to share service delivery methods as well as consistent ways of collecting information to help children better qualify for services/educate teachers and caregivers on the process
- Participated in bi- monthly CCR meetings, working on creating a flyer of services and revisited the idea of developing an “orientation” or “childcare 101” resource for teachers and programs- what is best practice and ways to implement, classroom management, behavior strategies, classroom arrangement, tone, etc.
- CDSA and FPS Service coordinator virtual info session on our programs at FIRST
- Discussions with NC Pre-K and how we can support them
- “coaching” new behavior specialists at Christine Avery and Eliada
- Attended webinars on trauma, anxiety, inclusion, mindfulness, and state regulations due to COVID-19
- Created a monthly newsletter for all programs

We have been working diligently on connecting with community resource agencies and how we can be supporting each other. Continuing to support the schools, families, and students is our top priority.

Shaping Buncombe

Buncombe Partnership for Children
Natasha Bowden, Shape Specialist

For the month of September, the Shaping Buncombe project has continued to offer consultation both in person, via zoom, phone, and text. The following TA work happened at Shape sites:

- I am working with Verner Central team on their new building and play space with a monthly meeting in person at Emma Elementary. I continue to consult with their team on specifics such as fencing, settings, and structures and coordinating work with NLI, the contractor, the project manager, licensing, environmental health, and the Fire Marshall.
- I dropped off more PPE and loose parts to Rainbow and met with the director about next steps with Shape. The Rainbow team will attend the Roots Lounge and begin on their gardens.
- I began emailing with the Black Mountain Head Start team on their play space, offering resources and ideas. We met as a team at the play space and I will be creating a design for their site and we will meet back in October to plan next steps.
- Christine Avery has received a \$75k grant for the OLE and I met with the director via Zoom to plan next steps. We will meet in October with Chrissy Wolfe and the potential contractor to plan the space. I spent considerable time meeting with the contractor about the space, options, and getting a meeting date for the team to meet.

I began working with our new AmeriCorps member to create a comprehensive resources data file for donations, grants, volunteers. She will help flesh it out and do some calling to businesses asking about their volunteer programs.

Trainings offered: Chrissy Wolfe, CCHC, and I planned, created, and tried to offer our 2nd OLE series online training with Melissa Bennet from Environmental Health. This training did not make but we have another in October. We have also been planning for our 3rd session. Anya Robyak and I are planning & creating a training for the Early Head Start Home Visiting program on Big Body play for October or November and collaborating with Verner to create the training.

Farm to Preschool: I participated in the Teacher's Lounge with Roots Foundation for the 3rd time. At the Teacher's Lounge we discussed more about offering classes and online tutorials and how to get these projects started. I shared my resources data sheet with them to start collecting resources for their app including free resources, grants, volunteers, etc. I invited many new teachers and centers to the lounge and the Verner team will attend in October. I will continue to participate monthly and connect a new center every month to the Lounge. I have attempted to nominate 5 sites in Buncombe for the REACH state designation of excellence which is a pilot designation for sites doing great F2ECE work. I nominated Verner and YWCA and have worked to gather data and doing applications for them. Each month I work with our Farm to Preschool Network workgroup to put out a Farm to Preschool Newsletter to showcase work across the state, books, grants, and trainings for over 1,200 subscribers. I either write an article or collect information for the newsletter and we have a connected team that talks throughout each week. I also run the Farm to Preschool Facebook Page where I post daily to 280 subscribers. Every other month our committee of stakeholders across the state including NC Department of Health and Human Services, NC Cooperative Extension Service, North Carolina Partnership for Children, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), Duke World Food Policy, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Go Nap SACC (Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care), Environmental Health, Shape, Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS), and more collaborate on our bimonthly work.

Through the Partnership, we are also working on Equity work through book studies and a consulting team each week. Reading articles, the book, and listening to podcasts and being on webinars each week also.

Healthy Communities - Breastfeeding Friendly, Buncombe County Health & Human Services grant

Buncombe Partnership for Children

Natasha Bowden, Shape Specialist

In the month of September, we held a coalition meeting via zoom to plan the next two months of work. I asked each member to help with posting, business outreach, and to help me create a blurb of Buncombe County for the Breastfeeding Friendly Family Friendly Designation website. I also asked each member to send me resources for printing for the SC4S (Sistas Caring for Sistas) team. Many resources were sent and I am working with Nikita Smart to plan printing for specific outreach. I am creating outreach materials for all prenatal clinics on becoming Mother/Baby friendly and Nikita will deliver and discuss with staff. I will create and deliver to pediatric offices. Nikita will get me a list of all POC owned businesses and she will interview her moms on work challenges to create a business outreach plan. Throughout the month I am in contact with our coalition on their work and ways we can collaborate, cross promote, and spread our work via email. I post on the Facebook page weekly. I am in conversation with the Birthing Center and Mission Speciality on becoming Breastfeeding Friendly Designated. I attended the Chamber's 2nd Woman Up! Series and made a plan to connect with each speaker and business owner. I am working on a training for child care teachers, home visitors, and directors on becoming a breastfeeding friendly child care center with our state breastfeeding team. We will meet this month. DHHS hosted a Let's Talk Maternal and Infant Care session, in which I met with the team for planning. Caroline and I met with Just Economics to plan next steps with the County and City on Paid Family Leave. This is on the agenda for the October meeting for the County.

Healthy Starts, North Carolina Partnership for Children Infant-Toddler Consulting grant

Buncombe Partnership for Children

Natasha Bowden, Shape Specialist

During September, I worked with Guilford County on their next steps to becoming a breastfeeding friendly community via Zoom and email. I met with both the TA and the director of the project in two different meetings. The TA will work with me on continuing to embed this work into the centers and the Director will convene their Breastfeeding Coalition to assess interest in getting designated or creating a network only. Plans were made for us to meet again next month and create next steps. I have met with Orange County and Wake County briefly to decide next steps on printing materials and designation mapping. We will meet again in October.

Training: CBGI (Carolina Global Breastfeeding Initiative) trained the Shape TA's and centers in the LIFE emergency planning training. I met with CBGI to bring them up to speed on the Building Blocks for Breastfeeding training bursts. They will join our team. The team is working to create the trainings via Google Docs and will meet again in October to finish. I will meet with our training coordinator to get this training prepared and a distance learning packet completed.

Early Childhood Systems Coordination

Buncombe Partnership for Children

Deanna LaMotte, Early Childhood Systems Coordinator

Much of September's activities focused on final project design and active recruitment for two initiatives: 1) the local Business Leadership and Automation cohort, and 2) the state's Wonderschool and Resilience initiatives. In addition, I worked on collecting and compiling race and ethnicity data from local ECE programs and organizing panel speakers for the County's October 6th ECE Committee. Completed and transcribed 8 parent interviews (for a total of 13) related to families' changing needs and perceptions due to COVID-19. Continued to move Coordinated Enrollment Workgroup toward a single application (with coordinated outreach and placement) for the 21-22 school year, facilitating workgroup meetings and initiating learning sessions with several other communities within and outside of NC to learn from their experience.

Systems initiatives continue to move more slowly than anticipated because of the limited bandwidth of center directors to engage in long-term planning when Child Care remains in "crisis mode" because of COVID-19.