



**GREENE COUNTY FAMILY & CHILDREN FIRST COUNCIL
HB289 COUNTY PLAN
(2007)**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HB289, which amended the legislation associated with Family and Children First Councils, requires each Council to develop a plan which identifies local priorities for child well-being. The Council's plan also needs to identify indicators that measure, and strategies that address, those priorities. In Greene County, a Community Leadership Team was formed to steer the planning process. Team members included members of the Council's Steering Committee, as well as representatives from Greene County communities. These representatives had been working with local youth and were familiar with their community's needs, resources, and values.

The planning process was "data-informed" not "data-driven", meaning community values, as well as quantitative information, was used in decision making. The data collection process included reviewing existing statistical and demographic information, compiling and analyzing information from local surveys, and gathering local perceptions through group and individual interviews.

The Council selected two long-term commitments for this plan: **SCHOOL READINESS** and **YOUTH CHOOSE HEALTHY BEHAVIORS**.

For **SCHOOL READINESS**, the indicator chosen to measure progress was Kindergarten Readiness Assessment-Literacy (KRA-L) scores. Administered to all children starting kindergarten, the KRA-L measures skills associated with reading readiness. By school year 2008-2009, the Council hopes to increase the average district score in the County and to have all districts at, or above, the state performance level. Based on local risk factors and local resources, several short-term outcomes were chosen: (1) to increase home literacy activities, (2) to decrease emotional and behavioral problems in children before they start school, and (3) to increase the skills and competencies that help parents prepare children for school success.

The Council recognizes the important role early child care providers play in helping to prepare children for school. More work is needed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of local child care providers. In the coming year, we will be surveying local providers to better understand the challenges they face and how we can strengthening this system of care. In addition, four **SCHOOL READINESS** implementation strategies have been developed. The

first strategy is to initiate a Parents as Teachers Program (PAT) for families with children under the age of five. PAT, which is rated as a promising practice, is designed to assist parents via home visiting and parent support activities. The second strategy is to increase awareness among parents (and providers working with parents) about school readiness and what parents can do to increase school success. Activities within this strategy include sponsoring a “Pre-School Jamboree” and creating an electronic newsletter for parents of young children. The third strategy is to initiate the Ready to Read Program. Ready to Read focuses on pre-reading skills every child needs before kindergarten and involves a range of activities to assist parents become effective “first teachers” for their children. The fourth strategy is to increase behavioral health services for families with children under five who are experiencing behavioral health problems. Services to be provided include consultation, assessment, family counseling and group counseling.

For YOUTH CHOSE HEALTHY BEHAVIORS, the Council has chosen to focus on Middle School Substance Abuse. Desired outcomes in this area are to reduce the percent of Greene County ninth graders reporting recent use of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana. The short-term outcomes associated with these goals in SFY2008 are (1) to decrease the availability of tobacco and (2) to strengthen parenting skills among parents with children grades five through middle school.

The first strategy selected to achieve these outcomes is to increase current parent education and support services by expanding the Strengthening Families Program. This evidence-based program focuses on several assets, identified in our planning, as important in reducing youth substance abuse (e.g. setting boundaries and improving communication). The second strategy is to increase awareness, among parents with children entering or enrolled in middle school, of the problem behaviors associated with the middle school years and what they can do to help their children remain drug-free. Activities in this area include sponsoring parent workshops and developing an electronic newsletter. The third strategy is to strengthen existing activities in the area of tobacco compliance checks. We plan to increase the number of youth engaged in conducting compliance checks and to increase the number of Greene County communities in which compliance checks occur.

The Council recognizes that school districts within the County differ in the challenges they face and that we need to expand and deepen the dialogue with individual districts if we are to make an impact on youth substance abuse. Through this process, we hope to gain a better understanding of district-specific needs and resources, and to identify ways we can assist specific districts and communities in their efforts to reduce youth substance abuse. Throughout SFY2008, the Council’s Steering Committee will be inviting district representatives to discuss issues within their schools and identify ways the Council can support their efforts.

The Council would like to thank the many organizations, community representatives, parents, and youth who contributed to this planning effort and to ask their continued support as we implement the strategies developed.

For additional information about this plan, please contact:

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