



Greater Nashua Smart Start Coalition



individuals and organizations working together to ensure that every child in our community has the best possible start to life.

The Greater Nashua Smart Start Coalition is comprised of individuals and organizations working together to ensure that every child has the best possible start to life. Smart Start aims to ensure families have the skills, basic resources, and supports to promote their children's development and learning, starting before birth and continuing through the primary grades. Furthermore, Smart Start works to ensure families benefit from well-coordinated early childhood programs and services that work effectively together on their behalf. Smart Start has more than 30 active coalition members committed to young families with children, birth to age 8.

Funded Project: Capacity Building

With support from the New Hampshire Preschool Development Grant (PDG), United Way of Greater Nashua hired a staff person to coordinate and facilitate the coalition's work. Coalition Priorities Include:

- Raising awareness of and increasing access to resources for families with young children
- Strengthening social networks for isolated parents
- Increasing opportunities for parent-led decision-making
- Promoting collaboration among service providers across sectors
- Sharing community resources, educational tools, and promising practices
- Creating opportunities for community members to advocate for the communities' youngest residents.

The PDG grant provided the critical infrastructure for implementing the collective impact model — a common agenda, shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone infrastructure — in the greater Nashua region. Smart Start brought together agencies who shared similar goals, yet, they were not previously collaborating or coordinating efforts. Smart Start is anchored in the community through monthly meetings, an active leadership team, and a parent network. The coalition includes four working groups focused on health, strong families, positive learning, and regional coordination.



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Impact

The formalization of the Smart Start coalition has resulted in cross-referrals, greater coordination of services, and increased funding opportunities. By working in partnership, Coalition members are better positioned to pursue public and private funding opportunities that they would not be competitive for on their own. Stronger relationships among providers have resulted in more holistic and effective services for children and families. Smart Start's vision of early childhood success mirrors the NH Council for Thriving Children and the New Hampshire Strategic Plan for Early Childhood.

Given the identified regional needs, Smart Start has focused on ensuring Greater Nashua a trauma-informed community. This work has involved building capacity among providers, educators, and families to support children and families social and emotional needs. Smart Start is working to engage members to better address and prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) by connecting them to training, professional development, and resources.



Contact Information

Joslyn Kuchinski
Director, Greater Nashua Smart Start
Coalition for Early Childhood Success
A program of United Way of Greater Nashua
Smartstartnashua.com
(603) 514-0230
jkuchinski@unitedwaynashua.org



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