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Smart Start awards pilot project grants

The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC) has awarded The Partnership for Children and Families of Moore County, in partnership with the Richmond County Partnership for Children, Lee County Partnership for Children, the Montgomery County Partnership for Children Inc., a two-year Smart Start pilot project grant in the amount of \$95,198 to participate in a statewide project to increase access to developmental screenings for young children.

This grant project is one of 26 Smart Start pilot grants across the state representing 45 North Carolina counties.

"This statewide pilot project is important work in addressing the critical needs of young children," said NCPC President Stephanie Fanjul. "We are very proud of the Smart Start partnerships who participated in the grant process. They have tremendous dedication to addressing issues important to North Carolina families."

NCPC is funding the pilot project grant program to focus intense energy and action around four critical issues facing North Carolina children - childhood obesity/overweight, access to developmental screenings, family literacy, and parent education. Throughout the two-year program, Smart Start will closely track the impact of these grant dollars in communities across the state.

The Richmond County Partnership for Children program will focus on increasing the number of primary care physician practices who use validated developmental screening tools, increasing the number of children who receive developmental screening in primary health care settings, and increasing the primary health care provider referrals for children with identified developmental concerns.

The project will help eliminate missed opportunities for primary care physicians to identify children who could benefit from early developmental or behavioral services, and offer developmental guidance to parents.

"We are very pleased to have been selected to participate in this pilot project. The project will increase developmental screenings during well-child visits and increase referrals for early intervention services. The success of this project in North Carolina has led to a change in the state Medicaid policy.

"Physician practices now performing health check/Medicaid well-child visits are now required to screen children for developmental disorders at specific time periods with a standardized screening tool," said Martha Vance Brown, executive director of the Richmond County Partnership for Children.