

Catawba County Children's Agenda Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Catawba County Children's Agenda* represents the culmination of two years of work by the Catawba County Children's Agenda Committee. This committee was appointed by the Board of Commissioners in February, 2009 to engage in a strategic planning process to establish a cohesive agenda of over-arching issues impacting children in Catawba County and their families. These prioritized are over-arching and will be used by community organizations, foundations, government and community leaders to inform planning efforts, address service gaps and identify legislative priorities. The planning process brought together community leaders and representatives from child-serving agencies and county-wide initiatives. Committee members included:

Beth Brandes, Catawba County Social Services/Family & Children Services
Marie Connelly, Centro Latino
Jennie Connor, Catawba County United Way
Tara Conrad, Mental Health Partners
Paul Holden, Juvenile Crime Prevention Council
Houa Lee, United Hmong Association
Lamar Mitchell, Champions of Education
Jerry McCombs, Catawba County NAACP
Jennifer McCracken, Catawba County Public Health/School Health Advisory Committee
John Orgain, Alex Lee, Inc.
Kim Salyards, Catawba Partnership for Children
Jo Sloan, Catawba County Social Services/ Family Support Services
Ann Stalnaker, Hickory Public Schools
David Stegall, Newton Conover City Schools
Timothy Markley, Catawba County Schools
Dawn Wilson, Catawba County Social Services (Facilitator)
Lee Worsley, Catawba County Manager's Office

Planning

The strategic planning process was originally intended as a one year process, but stretched out an additional year to allow for adequate community surveying and information gathering. The planning process included:

1. Developing a vision, mission and principles of work
2. Gathering primary and secondary data on the status of children in Catawba County
3. Reviewing the strategic planning documents from 9 child-serving organizations
4. Surveying of child-serving professionals and community residents to determine the priority needs of children and families in Catawba County
5. Analysis of the information gathered
6. Development of the Children's Agenda, outlining the priority issues or goals for children and families and suggested strategies for accomplishing those goals.

The committee began by developing a vision, mission and statement of principles. During the course of this discussion committee members were asked to provide input on what the desired outcomes would be for children and families in our county.

- Vision statement: Ensuring a safe community where all children are engaged, enriched, and equipped to reach their full potential

- **Mission statement:** To identify the current state of children and children’s services in Catawba County, identify overarching goals or priority children’s issues needing more attention, and the areas of improved effectiveness and efficiency in provision of children’s services and where the community can get the most for its investment in the long term.
- **Principles of Work:**
 - Inclusive process for getting input throughout the county – geographically and demographically
 - Recommendations represent community interests – not the interests of committee members
 - Agenda is a product for the our community/county to address – not just County Commissioners
 - Avoid duplication of efforts and maximize resources, where possible

Information Gathering

Child Data Snapshot

The committee took a multi-prong approach to gathering information about the needs of children and families in Catawba County. The first was a review of primary and secondary data to determine the “state of children” in Catawba County. This resulted in the development of the *Child Data Snapshot* (Appendix A) in September, 2009 and updated in January 2011 (See Appendix A). This document provides a comprehensive snapshot of how children and families are faring in a number of areas – demographic, economic, health, early childhood, education, risk behavior, and crime. All information is sourced and cited and is intended to be updated yearly. It is available via the county website and a printable copy can be downloaded.

Children’s Summits

The second approach involved surveying the community and child-serving professionals to determine the priority areas of need and gaps in services to children and families. Two “Children’s Summits” were publicized via email, newspaper and television to provide opportunities for interested community members and professionals to come together and discuss the needs of children and families in Catawba County. These were held in October and November, 2009, at Northview Middle School and Maiden High School with a total of 47 participants. At these events, the Child Data Snapshot was presented and participants were asked to join one of 6 discussion groups to focus on an area of need identified in the high school and parent surveys mentioned earlier: safety/security, education, health care, basic needs, quality of life. These groups prioritized needs within their topic area, discussed the impact that need had on children, families and community and suggested actions or strategies to address the need.

Community Surveys

Early in the process, we surveyed more than 400 high school and middle school students and parents of preschoolers to find out “what makes our community a good place for children/youth” and “what would make our community a better place for children/youth.” Based on this information and results from the Children’s Summits, we developed a second community survey to further drill down the priority areas of need and potential strategies for addressing the needs. This survey was made available and publicized on line via the county website. Paper copies of the survey were translated and distributed by Centro Latino and completed by participants served by Christmas Bureau in 2009 with a total of 367 paper and online surveys completed.

Information Analysis

The priority needs and suggested strategies from both surveys and the Children’s Summit were analyzed by the committee and formed the basis for the *Children’s Agenda*. Once needs were identified, stakeholders and community professionals representing a few core areas were also interviewed to determine if needs represented real or perceived gaps in service and information and to get broader input on suggested strategies for addressing needs. In order to provide a framework for the information, the committee chose to group the goals using domains identified in research as essential to child wellbeing.

For the purposes of our project, the original seven domains were collapsed into five, including family functioning and self-sufficiency, education, health, social/emotional health, safe environment, and social capital/support (*America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2009, Forum on Child and Family Statistics, July 2009*).

The Children's Agenda goals are on the following page. These reflect the highest priority needs for children in Catawba written as goal statements – to reflect the intended outcomes and the overall vision for children and families in Catawba County. This is intended to serve as a catalyst for discussion, action and change. Because of this and because so many of the issues included in the agenda do not have accompanying federal or state benchmarks, specific measurable objectives are not provided. The committee felt that subsequent community and agency discussions around action and change would lead to measurable objectives that more specifically address the needs of our local community.

Following the agenda are two Appendices:

- Appendix A: The 2011 Child Data Snapshot
- Appendix B: A list of potential strategies for each goal. These are provided by the Committee to show the range of strategies and activities that could be implemented to achieve the goals by various private or public entities and through partnerships in the community.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Children's Agenda is directed at the community at large to serve as a catalyst for discussion, action and change. It can and should be used by the business community, parents, elected bodies, civic organizations, funder agencies, public and private organizations or agencies as a guide in strategic planning and determining programmatic, legislative or funding priorities or direction. It can also be used as supporting documentation for grant-writing and requests to potential funders, as it reflects community priorities and needs for children and families.

The planning group will continue to meet through June 30, 2011 with the goal of assessing entities in Catawba County that are willing, able, and have the capacity to convene key community partners in order to begin moving the work of the planning group into the community to ensure that strategies are developed and deliverables achieved. Once completed, an entity will be identified who can rally and involve the community and serve as the lead convener of the initiative.

The Children's Agenda planning group recommends the following next steps:

1. Develop a plan to present the agenda to elected officials and community leaders in order to gain support for a unified vision for children in Catawba County.
2. Annual updating of the *Child Data Snapshot*.
3. Development of a *Children's Budget* to highlight public spending on services impacting children, hopefully complemented by a report on private spending on children.

Catawba County Children's Agenda

Summary of Goals

Vision: Ensuring a safe community where all children are engaged, enriched, and equipped to reach their full potential

Mission: To identify the current state of children and children's services in Catawba County, identify overarching goals or priority children's issues needing more attention, and identify the areas of improved effectiveness and efficiency in provision of children's services and where the community can get the most for its investment in the long term.

Family Functioning and Self Sufficiency

1. Reduce the negative impact of poverty on all children
2. Every parent will have the parenting skills necessary to promote healthy parenting and prevent abuse and neglect at all stages of development
3. Every child/youth under the age of 18 will be supervised adequately by parents and have access to age appropriate activities with adult supervision

Education

1. Every child will have access to high quality, pre-kindergarten experience
2. Every child will be on grade level in reading by 3rd grade
3. Every child will graduate from high school
4. Every parent will be engaged in his/her child's education
5. Schools and community agencies will partner to provide community service hubs for families

Health

1. Every preschool and public school child will have a primary medical and dental home
2. Every family will have resources and access to assure preventive screenings and treatment
3. The number of overweight or obese children in Catawba County, ages 2-18, will be decreased

Social/Emotional/Mental Health

1. Every family will have access to a continuum of mental health services including services for children with unique needs (trauma, sexual offenders), developmental disabilities and children/families who have English as a second language
2. Every family will have access to supportive services and treatment for substance abuse
3. Every teenager will have access to information and resources to prevent teen pregnancy

Safe Environment

1. Every Catawba County resident will be aware of his/her responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect and appropriately report abuse and neglect of children
2. Every driver will engage in safe driving practices
3. Every child's safety will be assured through use of sidewalks, appropriate signage, speed limits and deterrents (speed humps) in residential neighborhoods with large numbers of children

Social Capital/Support

1. Children will feel connected to and actively involved in community life
2. All children and youth will have respect for diversity and appreciation of civil behavior
3. Every family will feel connected to and supported within the community

Appendix A

2011 Child Data Snapshot

2011 CATAWBA COUNTY CHILD DATA SNAPSHOT DEMOGRAPHICS

Population

- **159,125** total population
- **24% under the age of 20**

Age Range	Children	Percent
Under 5 years	10,758	6.7%
5 to 9 years	10,918	6.9%
10 to 14 years	10,302	6.5%
15 to 19 years	10,203	6.4%

Race/Ethnicity	Percent
Caucasian	82%
African-American	8%
Other/Mixed Race	7%
Asian	3%
Hispanic*	14%

Source: Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey
*Included individuals who identify as Hispanic may be of any race, therefore, percentages do not total 100%.

Poverty

- In 2008, **13.8%** of Catawba County families were **living below poverty** * compared to 11.1% in 2007¹
- **5%** of all households in Catawba County (2,902 households) have no vehicle available for personal use²

*A family with 2 minor children is considered below poverty if their earnings were **less than \$21,200** per year

¹Source: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37035.html>
²Source: 2009 American Community Survey

Food Assistance

- Between 2000 and June 2010, Catawba County saw a **389%** increase (4,956 to 24,252) in Food Assistance recipients
- In 2010, **44.6%** (10,045) of Food Assistance recipients were 20 years of age or younger

Source: North Carolina Food Stamp database

Child Support

- In 2009-10, Catawba County Social Services collected **\$13.4 million** in child support for **over 7,800 children**
- The average child support payment in 2010 was **\$187.39** per month
- Child Support Enforcement collects **71.6%** of the amount owed compared to 65.6% statewide; this is impacted by unemployment of absent parents

Source: North Carolina Child Support database

Living Arrangements

Child under 18 years living with:	Catawba County	Percent	North Carolina	Percent
Parents	31,891	85.9%	1,951,475	89.1%
Grandparents	3,538	9.5%	147,888	6.8%
Other Relative	1,116	3.0%	55,195	2.5%
Non Related Adult/Foster	593	1.6%	35,603	1.6%
TOTAL	37,138	100%	2,190,165	100%

Source: <http://factfinder.census.gov> 2006-2008 estimates survey data

POVERTY & ECONOMIC WELLBEING

Housing

- **36%** of Catawba County renters are unable to afford a 2 bedroom apartment (compared with 44% of N.C. renters)¹
- The average hourly wage needed to afford a 2 bedroom apartment and utilities is **\$11.50**. In Catawba County, a minimum hour wage earner (\$7.25/hour) must work **75 hours /week** to afford the fair market rent for a 2 bedroom apartment¹
- **38%** of renters and **21%** of home owners in Catawba County have housing costs that exceed 35% of their income²
- Between 2000 and 2009, Catawba County foreclosures increased **311%** (from 284 to 886)³
- In a 2009 point in time count, **30 children** were identified as homeless of **320** homeless individuals surveyed in our county⁴

¹Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition

²Source: 2009 American Community Survey

³Source: Western Piedmont Council of Governments

⁴Housing Visions Point in Time Count 1/2009—Point in Time Count is a one day count of homeless in the Hickory area

Employment

- As of Dec. 2010, the unemployment rate in Catawba County was **12.3%** compared to NC rate of 9.8%¹
- Of the workforce 25 years old and older in 2009, **21%** had not completed high school, **31%** had a high school diploma or equivalent, **22%** attended some college, **8%** had an Associate Degree, **13%** had a Bachelor Degree and **5%** had a Graduate Degree²

¹Source: NC Employment Security Commission

²Source: 2009 American Community Survey

Work First

- As of June 2010, **231** families received a cash payment of **\$214.36** per month through the Federal Work First Program (*a federal program providing Cash and Employment Services for families meeting established criteria*)
- **179** of these were “child only cases” (guardian, usually a grandparent, receives a check for a dependent child)
- In 2010, **52%** of the children in Work First caseloads had a valid child support order

Source: North Carolina Department of Social Services Eligibility Information System

EARLY CHILDHOOD & PRESCHOOL

Childcare in Catawba County

- In 2010, **39%** (4,175) of Catawba County children 0-5 years old attended a childcare facility¹ compared to **53%** (5,353) in 2009
- In 2010, **72%** of children in childcare were in 3 or higher star care (out of 5 stars) and approximately **60%** of those children were in 4 or 5 star care². This is compared to 96% of children in 3 or higher star care in 2009
- In 2010, the average cost of childcare for a child 0-36 months old is **\$123.08/week**¹
- In 2009, **83%** of children under 6 years of age who lived in single parent households had a working parent³
- In May 2010, **1,279 eligible families** received assistance to pay for child care³

¹Source: National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies
²Source: Catawba County Early Childhood Support Team
³Source: Catawba County DSS Day Care Unit

Licensed Childcare (2010)

- **53** childcare centers
- **16** public pre-kindergartens
- **29** family childcare homes (home-based care)
- **23** school-age programs (before and after school care)

Source: North Carolina Division of Child Development

EDUCATION K-12

Student Population and Graduation Rates

District	Total Student Population ¹	Percent to Graduate (08-09) ²
Catawba County Schools (CCS)	17,296	83.2%
Newton-Conover City Schools (NCCS)	2,954	88.6%
Hickory Public Schools (HPS)	4,411	68.6%
North Carolina (NC) ²	1.46 million	74.2%

Population count is based on average daily attendance

¹Source: <http://schools.nationalrelocation.com/http://newton.schoolfusion.us>
²Source: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org>

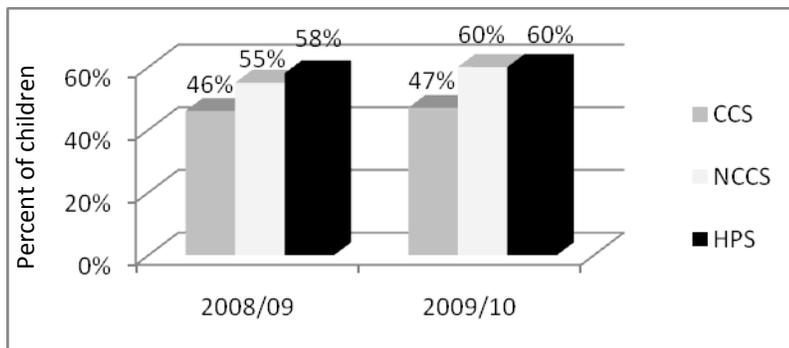
Performance on End of Grade Tests, Grades 3-8

(Percentage of Students' Scores at or Above Proficiency)

	2009-2010	
	Reading	Math
CCS	74.7%	87.9%
NCCS	70.3%	85.9%
HPS	67.7%	80.9%
NC	70.1%	81.8%

Source: www.ncschoolreportcard.org

Free or Reduced Lunch by District



Source: Catawba County Schools, Newton Conover City Schools and Hickory Public Schools

Performance on End of Course Tests, Grades 9-12

(Percentage of Students' Scores at or Above Proficiency)

	2009-2010
	Percent
CCS	88.1%
NCCS	85.9%
HPS	79.3%
NC	80.7%

Source: www.ncschoolreportcard.org

Achievement Gap

Percent of Students Who Passed Both Reading & Math End of Grade Tests (2009-2010)

System	Economically Disadvantaged	White	Black	Hispanic
CCS	59.8	77.6	51.0	52.7
NCCS	58.6	78.6	50.0	54.8
HPS	49.7	81.1	40.2	49.7
NC	52.1	78.7	47.0	51.5

Source: www.ncschoolreportcard.org

English as a Second Language (2010)

School System	Total Student Population*	Home language other than English	Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	Percent Student with LEP
CCS	17,199	2,968	1,377	8.0%
NCCS	2,910	670	428	14.7%
HPS	4,285	941	642	14.9%

Limited English Proficiency is determined by scoring a lower than the set standard score on an English fluency test

* Population count is point in time count

Source: Catawba County Schools, Newton Conover City Schools and Hickory Public Schools

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Child Abuse & Neglect

- The Catawba County Department of Social Services accepted **1,804** Child Protective Services reports in 2009/10
- Of those reports **23% (412)** were substantiated (found in need of services)
- In 2008, **177** children entered foster care, and the average length of time in foster care for all children served in 2008 was **18 months**
- Currently about **50%** of children in foster care are **5 years old or younger**

Source: Catawba County Social Services

Teen Pregnancy

- In 2009, there was **1** pregnancy to girls **14 years old and younger**
- In 2009, there were **245** pregnancies to **15-19 year olds** in Catawba County
- **32.6% (80)** of the pregnancies to 15-19 year olds were **repeat pregnancies**, which was an increase from the previous year when 25% were repeat pregnancies
- In 2009, Catawba County had a teen pregnancy rate of **55.8 per 1,000 15-19 year olds** compared to the state rate of **56** and the 2008 rate of **60.3**

Source: NC DHHS, State Center for Health Statistics

Infant Mortality

- The infant mortality rate for Catawba County in 2009 was **7.1** compared to the NC rate of **8.4**

Source: NC State Center for Health Statistics

Uninsured, Medicaid & North Carolina Health Choice*

- In 2008, **13.7%** of children (0-18) and **20%** of adults (19-64) in Catawba County did not have health insurance¹
- In 2008, **34.5%** of North Carolina's non-elderly residents were uninsured for one month or more²
- As of June 2009, **6%** of Catawba County residents qualified for North Carolina Health Choice compared to **5%** in the state.³
- In 2009, **9%** of children and youth 0-20 years old received Medicaid in Catawba County and **20%** of all Catawba County residents received Medicaid benefits³
- As of June 2010, **2,441** children (6-18 years old) in Catawba County were enrolled in North Carolina Health Choice⁴; **61%** (1,489) are 6-12 years old⁴ and **39%** (952) are 13-18 years old⁴

*North Carolina Health Choice is a free or reduced cost comprehensive health care program for children. If a family makes too much money to qualify for [Medicaid](#) but too little to afford rising health insurance premiums, children may qualify for NCHC.⁵

¹Source: State of the County Health Report Catawba County 2008

²Source: Families USA <http://www.familiesusa.org>

³Source: NC Medicaid Paid Claims Data unless indicated otherwise and includes recipients

⁴Source: NC Medicaid Database

⁵Source: <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dma/healthchoice/>

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

- In 2009, **32%** (290) of all reported STD cases (902) in Catawba County were to teenagers ages 13-19. This is an increase from 29% in the previous year
- Of these, **82%** (237) were females and **18%** (53) were males

Source: North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NC EDSS)

Childhood Obesity

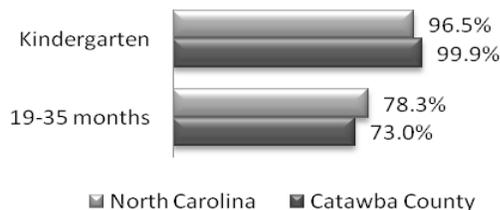
- In 2009, **1 in 3** children in Catawba County were **overweight**¹
- From 2004-2008 the number of overweight children ages 5-11 **increased 0.8%**, while the number of overweight children ages 12-18 **increased 2%**²
- As of 2008, **44.2% of children ages 2-20** were at risk for being **overweight** or were overweight in Catawba County³

¹Source: State of the County Health Report Catawba County 2008

²Source: Catawba County Community Health Assessment 2007 Summary Report

³Source: Catawba County Health Partners

Immunizations: Catawba County & North Carolina 2009



Source: NCIR: NC DHHS: NC Child Health Report Card 2010

Oral Health

- In 2008-09, **79%** of 5th graders in Catawba County had permanent teeth free of decay
- In 2009, **45.8%** of children ages 1-20, who were Medicaid eligible, were receiving dental services

Source: NC Division of Medical Assistance 2010

CRIME & RISK TAKING BEHAVIOR

Juvenile Crime Rates (2008-09)

- The rate of **undisciplined* juveniles** in Catawba County per 1000 youth ages 6 to 17 is **5.11** per compared to the state average of 3.11
- The rate of **delinquent* juveniles** in Catawba County per 1000 youth ages 6 to 15 is **35.13** which represents a **28% increase** from the previous year
- **88** juveniles in Catawba County were **admitted to detention** compared to 82 in the previous year
- The rate of commitment to Youth Development Centers in Catawba County (**.30 or 5 youth**) is **below the state average of .37**
- **There was a 63% increase in youth served** by the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council in Catawba County from 270 in 2007-08 to 439 in 2008-09

*Undisciplined generally refers to youth between ages 6 and 16 who are regularly truant from school, disobedient to parents/guardians, runaway or generally found in places where it is unlawful to be; delinquent refers to children between ages of 6 and 16 who commit crimes or infractions, including violation of motor vehicle laws

Source: NCDJDP 2008 and 2009 Databook

Total Number of Reportable Acts by School District (2008-2009 for all grades)

Charged Offense	CCS	HPS	NCS
Possession of Alcohol	10	4	7
Possession of Controlled Substance	68	26	6
Possession of a Weapon	44	5	3
Possession of a Firearm	0	0	1
Assault involving Weapon	1	0	0
Assault on School Personnel	6	0	0
Bomb Threat	0	1	0
Robbery without weapon	0	0	3
Sexual Offense	0	0	1
Totals	129	36	21
Total # of Acts per 1000 students	7.4	8.1	7.4

Source: NC Department of Public Instruction Consolidated Data Reports 2008-2009

2008 Health & Wellbeing Youth Survey

Alcohol, Drug & Tobacco Use

- **34%** of middle and high school students **used alcohol** once or more in the past 30 days and **nearly one-quarter** acknowledged that they had been **drunk at least once** in the 2 week period preceding the survey
- **20%** of middle & high school students and **33%** of high school students **used marijuana** once or more in the past 12 months
- **33%** of teens **rode in a car** once or more in the last year **with someone who had been drinking**
- In the past 12 months, **13% of teens drove after drinking**
- **26%** of students in 8th-10th and 12th grades indicated they **smoked cigarettes** or have used smokeless tobacco

Mental Health

- **3,727** children and adolescents were in **need of mental health services** and approximately **45%** were served by the public system as compared to the state average of **36%**
- **25%** of youth sampled considered themselves to be depressed and 14% have attempted suicide one or more times

Sexual Activity

- **41%** of middle and high school students had sexual intercourse, up from **26%** in 2000¹
- **30%** of middle and high school students had sexual intercourse more than **3 times**¹

Source: Catawba County Community Health Assessment 2007 Summary Report
Survey results reflect self-reported data from respondents to the Search Institute Youth

The **Child Data Snapshot** was developed and compiled by the Children's Agenda Planning Committee, appointed by the Catawba County Commissioners in February, 2009. The committee's mission is to develop a **Children's Agenda**, outlining the current state of children in Catawba County and identifying overarching priority children's issues needing more attention and the areas of improved effectiveness and efficiency in the provision of children's services. The Children's Agenda will be presented to the County Commissioners and the community in early 2011. The Child Data Snapshot was first developed in October 2009 and will be updated annually.

Ensuring a safe community where all children are engaged, enriched, and equipped to reach their full potential.



Appendix B

Goals and Potential Strategies

Catawba County Children's Agenda – Goals and Potential Strategies

* In some strategies, specific programs or curricula are given as examples. This is intended as a reference point for the reader and should be read as “including, but not limited to...” In these cases, there may be other similar programs not mentioned.

Family Functioning and Self Sufficiency

1. Reduce the negative impact of poverty on all children
 - a) Advocate for more families to have access to child care subsidies for preschool children through age 13 years to assure safety and productivity of the workforce
 - b) Provide and sustain weekend backpack and food programs to assure food adequacy/security is met for all children – including weekends, holidays and school breaks
 - c) Advocate for family friendly and frequent Greenway access to larger child care centers, business and residential areas, including use of benches and shelters at Greenway stops
 - d) Support a communications campaign to emphasize the impact poverty has on child wellbeing (annual updating of the Child Data Snapshot, hosting State of the Child events, etc...)
2. Every parent will have the parenting skills necessary to promote healthy parenting and prevent abuse and neglect at all stages of development
 - a) Coordinate and expand home-based and parent outreach services (i.e., Parents as Teachers, Child Service Coordination, At Risk Case Management, Early Head Start)
 - b) Partner with medical community, schools and child-serving agencies to implement a communications campaign and to distribute and reinforce child safety, positive parenting techniques, child abuse prevention, and availability of parenting resources (i.e., shaken baby syndrome for parents of newborns, community minimum standards for parents of children at specific well child check-ups, etc...)
 - c) Partner with community agencies to advocate for domestic violence prevention, intervention and education about the impact of domestic violence on children
3. Every child/youth under the age of 18 will be supervised adequately by parents and have access to age appropriate activities with adult supervision
 - a) Support a communications campaign to promote the importance of supervising children at all ages
 - b) Advocate for community-based teen centers and events
 - c) Assist parents with special needs or who engage in destructive behaviors to strengthen their capacity as caregivers by connecting them to resources, services and natural supports
 - d) Advocate for after school and summer camp activities, including options for middle school age youth

Catawba County Children's Agenda – Goals and Potential Strategies

Education

1. Every child will have access to high quality, pre-kindergarten experience
 - a) Advocate for additional preschool programs for at-risk children, (i.e., More at Four, Head Start programs)
 - b) Advocate for more families to have access to child care subsidy
 - c) Support a communications campaign with business and community around the importance of quality pre-kindergarten experience
 - d) Advocate for transportation funding/access to preschool child care programs for at risk children (i.e., More at Four classes)
 - e) Support private child care industry achieving high quality early learning standards (i.e., teacher education, lower teacher/student ratios)

2. Every child will be on grade level in reading by 3rd grade
 - a) Advocate for implementation of research based early literacy programs in pre-kindergarten through third grade
 - b) Support a communications campaign about the value of early literacy and promote reading in the home by making books available to families (promote library membership, Imagination Library, etc...)
 - c) Partner with providers to support early literacy in after school and summer programs

3. Every child will graduate from high school
 - a) Advocate for change in mandatory education age to 18 by supporting/promoting Champions of Education resolution
 - b) Support a communications campaign around importance of staying in school and impact of dropping out
 - c) Promote Education Matters, mentoring, higher education resources, and career exploration initiatives

4. Every parent will be engaged in his/her child's education
 - a) Raise awareness with business community and parents about existing legislation supporting parental involvement in a child's education (i.e., "Leave for Parental Involvement in Schools")
 - b) Promote a unified school parent engagement plan across all three public school systems
 - c) Coordinate and expand home-based and parent outreach services (i.e., Parents as Teachers, Child Service Coordination, At Risk Case Management, Early Head Start)

5. Schools and community agencies will partner to meet the needs of the whole child
 - a) Advocate for schools to serve as community service hubs/provide school-linked services (i.e., providing mental health and human services, eligibility screening, employment training, community learning, social support, etc...in school facilities)
 - b) Pilot school-linked family services in each public school system

Catawba County Children's Agenda – Goals and Potential Strategies

Health

1. Every preschool and school age child will have a primary medical and dental home
 - a) Advocate to assure a Medicaid provider network for continuum of medical and dental services
 - b) Advocate for a school nurse: student ratio of 1:750 per the CDC recommendation (this is currently at about 1 nurse: to 2 ½ schools)
 - c) Promote documentation of medical and dental homes for children via school and childcare registration forms and following up with families who do not provide this information
 - d) Promote a communications campaign about the importance of early dental hygiene and promote/strengthen the consistent dissemination of information to parents about importance of dental care through pediatricians and family practitioners

2. Every family will have resources and access to assure preventive screenings and treatment
 - a) Promote existing resources that assist families to access medical care (i.e., Kids in Need Fund, NC Health Choice, Medicaid, Catawba County Public Health/Catawba Pediatrics partnership, etc.)
 - b) Advocate for availability of case management services across the continuum (i.e., prenatal, post partum, early childhood, etc...)
 - c) Coordinate health-related education and outreach activities occurring across Catawba County
 - d) Advocate for family friendly and adequate transportation access to the majority of health care facilities and large practices in Catawba County

3. Every child will have access and encouragement to use healthy foods and physical activity to reduce obesity
 - a) Promote recognition for childcare facilities who incorporate healthy eating and physical activity in their programming
 - b) Advocate for schools in Catawba County to support the Eat Smart Move More goals and participate in the Healthy Schools Recognition Program
 - c) Advocate for corporate support and promotion of family wellness initiatives to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyle

Catawba County Children's Agenda – Goals and Potential Strategies

Social/Emotional/Mental Health

1. Every family will have access to a continuum of mental health services including services for children with unique needs (trauma, sexual offenders), developmental disabilities and children/families who have English as a second language
 - a) Work with local and regional providers of higher education to identify and recruit bilingual, bicultural mental health clinicians
 - b) Advocate for availability of respite services by trained providers to support families of children with unique needs

2. Every family will have access to supportive services and treatment for substance abuse
 - a) Advocate for implementation of Family Drug Treatment Court
 - b) Advocate for availability of adolescent drug treatment services
 - c) Promote Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention of Catawba County (ASAP) goals and strategies

3. Every teenager will have access to information and resources to prevent teen pregnancy
 - a) Support consistent implementation of new Healthy Youth Act in all three public school systems
 - b) Support/provide programming for parents on their role in educating their children about pregnancy prevention
 - c) Partner schools, churches and community centers to provide life skills classes and activities to children/youth

Catawba County Children's Agenda – Goals and Potential Strategies

Safe Environment

1. Every Catawba County resident will be aware of his/her responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect and appropriately report abuse and neglect of children
 - a) Partner with community and child-serving agencies to promote a communications campaign focusing on the prevention of child abuse/neglect and reporting requirements
 - b) Promote parental and adult responsibility to keep children safe through widespread training in child abuse prevention curricula (i.e., Darkness to Light, Period of Purple Crying, etc.)
 - c) Promote use of community watch programs to provide opportunities for families to know their neighbors and be accountable to each other

2. Every driver will engage in safe driving practices
 - a) Promote communications campaign to reduce distracted driving (texting and cell phone)
 - b) Advocate for legislation to reduce distracted driving or increase penalties for distracted driving
 - c) Promote safe car seat installation and use
 - d) Advocate for stricter penalties for under age and adult persons convicted of driving while impaired
 - e) Promote defensive driving classes for teenage drivers

3. Every child's safety will be assured through use of sidewalks, appropriate signage, speed limits and deterrents (speed humps) in residential neighborhoods with large numbers of children
 - a) Promote interconnectedness of neighborhoods through walk/bike paths and greenways
 - b) Advocate for new neighborhood developments to include sidewalks

Catawba County Children's Agenda – Goals and Potential Strategies

Social Capital/Support

1. Children will feel connected to and actively involved in community life
 - a) Promote and expand the availability of youth volunteer opportunities (i.e., through community calendars, United Way Volunteer Center, 211, etc.)
 - b) Promote sponsorship or participation by youth groups and families in designated community service activities (i.e., Days of Caring, Make a Difference Day, etc...)
 - c) Promote youth participation in civic and school service clubs

2. All children and youth will have respect for diversity and appreciation of civil behavior
 - a) Promote respectful behavior among youth in all settings
 - b) Promote appreciation for diversity, including ethnicity, culture, race, gender, language, economic status, religion, and disability
 - c) Recognize faith organizations and businesses that promote appreciation of diversity and civil/respectful behavior

3. Every family will feel connected to and supported within the community
 - a) Develop and promote a family friendly community calendar of events and community resource database in high traffic areas (i.e., shopping centers, schools, and linked to websites of existing family and child-serving agencies)
 - b) Advocate for employer work time release policies for volunteer efforts of workers
 - c) Advocate for the development of family resource hubs, community learning centers and school linked services to reduce physical and social isolation
 - d) Promote use of community watch programs to provide opportunities for families to know their neighbors and be accountable to each other
 - e) Promote availability of active and passive recreation activities/facilities to all segments of the county and publicize existing recreation activities/facilities with families