



CATAWBA COUNTY

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CATAWBA COUNTY CHILDREN'S AGENDA RELEASED

HICKORY, N.C. — The Catawba County Children's Agenda Planning Committee has released its report following two years of gathering information and listening to community members.

The committee compiled existing information about the status of children in the county. It also held public meetings and surveyed members of the public about their priorities and ideas.

Groups represented on the Catawba County Children's Agenda Planning Committee included the Partnership for Children (Smart Start), Centro Latino, Mental Health Partners, NAACP, Catawba County Public Health, Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, Catawba County Social Services, Champions of Education, Hickory Public Schools, Newton-Conover City Schools, Catawba County Schools, United Hmong Association, County Managers Office, and the business community.

The committee found that most children in the county are well-cared for, but that a substantial number are falling through the cracks. A major cause of concern is the large number of children living in poverty. The committee also expressed concern about the lack of family and community support that can put some children at risk for poor choices that can have lifelong consequences.

The Catawba County Children's Agenda Planning Committee grouped the needs of children into six areas. These are:

- Family Functioning and Self-Sufficiency
- Education
- Physical Health
- Social/Emotional Health
- Safe Environment
- Social Support

Some of the highlights of the committee's findings (the Catawba County Child Data Snapshot) are as follows:

- 13 percent of children younger than age 18 live with a grandparent or relative other than their parent.
- 14 percent of families were living below the poverty level in 2009.
- 47 percent of Catawba County Schools students and 60 percent of students in Hickory Public Schools and Newton-Conover City Schools receive free or reduced-price lunches.
- 13.7 percent of children did not have health insurance in 2008.
- In 2009, 32.6 percent of pregnancies to 15-19 year olds were repeat pregnancies, and 32 percent of all reported sexually transmitted disease cases were to teenagers ages 13-19.

- 1,804 reports of abuse or neglect were accepted in 2009-2010, compared with 1,700 reports in the first three quarters of 2010-2011.

The committee developed goals that will have a positive effect on children living in the county. Some of these goals are:

- Every parent will have parenting skills necessary to promote healthy parenting and prevent abuse and neglect at all stages of development.
- Every preschool and public school child will have a primary medical and dental home.
- Every family will have resources and access to assure preventive screenings and treatment.
- The number of overweight and obese children will be decreased.
- Every family will have access to supportive services and treatment for substance abuse.
- Every teenager will have access to information and resources to prevent teen pregnancy.
- Every resident will be aware of his/her responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect and appropriately report abuse and neglect of children.
- All children and youth will have respect for diversity and appreciation of civil behavior.

The committee members hope to encourage other organizations and individuals in the county to work together to respond to these needs. To view the most recent Child Data Snapshot, go to www.catawbacountync.gov. For additional details, or to learn how your organization or business can help, contact Dawn Wilson at 828-695-5702 or dawnewilson@catawbacountync.gov.