

Mission: Smart from the Start is a family support, community engagement and school readiness program that has as its mission to prevent the achievement gap among children living in the lowest-income mostly underserved communities. Smart from the Start empowers families and communities with the resources, tools and support to break cycles of generational poverty and chronic school underachievement.

Programs: Smart from the Start has developed an ecological approach to promoting school readiness. We realize that children cannot be served in isolation from their families, and families cannot be served in isolation from their communities. Therefore we are working to promote change simultaneously on all three levels:

1. Programming for **children** birth to five has been designed to equip low-income children entering school with the cognitive, language, physical, and social/emotional assets that facilitate school and life success.
2. Smart addresses the needs of every member of the **family**. Recognizing and building on the strengths, caregivers have access to crisis intervention and family stabilization services and are encouraged to set long and short-term goals to improve their economic status and to overcome social challenges. Opportunities to enroll in adult education and career exploration programming are open to all Smart caregivers
3. Our **community**-based work is designed to improve access and utilization of existing community services while working closely with partner agencies to ensure the highest quality services in the community. The Smart model works to engage and enlist the support of both formal and informal stakeholders, business proprietors, and other community support agencies

Program Descriptions:

- **Prenatal Outreach and Education Program:** Expectant families meet weekly to get to know other families in their neighborhood, participate in workshops and prenatal education opportunities, and to learn about services in their community. Each participating family is given a baby shower and layette items for their baby. Our prenatal education program is curriculum-based and often co-facilitated in partnership with health centers or WIC programs.
- **Smart Start Home Visiting:** Home visits offered to families with newborns at which each family receives a *Smart Start* basket. During the visit, the core principles of raising a learner are introduced. Families in need of crucial services are connected with community providers, and enrolled in Smart from the Start.
- **Breakthrough Parenting:** A comprehensive curriculum-based program to help parents understand how children think, how they function at different ages, and how to get effective discipline through teaching what to do, as opposed to what not to do. All of this with no manipulation and no violence.
- **Baby Basics:** An ongoing support and educational program for parents and caregivers with babies 0-12 months. Families learn about everything from infant brain development, breast-feeding and infant massage to time management and how to care for older siblings with a new baby.
- **Play-to-Learn Groups:** Structured playgroups for caregivers with infants and toddlers, especially children not in structured child care. During playgroups early learning and parenting skills are promoted in the context of play. Families are also connected with necessary services. Our curriculum

has been customized to speak to the multi-cultural, urban population of families we serve.

- **Socialization Groups:** Curriculum-based socialization groups take the place of traditional childcare, which we provided for adult caregivers while in classes. We want every moment we have with the children to provide fun opportunities to learn and grow, and therefore are designed to promote school readiness by providing fun, learning activities.
- **Support and Empowerment Groups:** Loosely structured group meetings engage families in early learning, provide parenting support and to prevent the social isolation that often comes with raising small children in challenging circumstances.
- **Parenting Workshops:** A series of one-time workshops with topics chosen by families to address their specific parenting challenges. For example, Read Boston has facilitated an *Early Words* workshop to provide in depth, hands-on and individualized support for parents to improve language development in their children. Workshops are also presented on issues such as immigration, CORI, housing and other subjects concerning families in our communities.
- **Adult Education and Family Literacy:** A set of adult education courses are offered by Smart from the Start including, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), GED, computer classes, Job Readiness and family literacy courses with curriculum that focuses on child development and school readiness.
- **Financial Literacy/Career Planning Program:** Cohorts of families are lead in activities that explore attitudes and values related to money, learning how to save and budget, and identify goals for self-sufficiency. The 8-week intensive course includes individual coaching and encourages sharing goals with the community. We also offer one-time workshops on specific topics of interest. Smart program staff has been trained to provide basic financial literacy to all families.
- **Crisis intervention, Information and Referral to Vital Services:** Smart from the Start provides support and advocacy through crises, and links families to existing community services and supports, such as referrals for food and clothing pantries, substance abuse treatment, counseling services, housing and counseling.
- **Little Explorers Field Trip Program:** Smart creates multiple opportunities for families to get out of their homes and communities, to visit unfamiliar sites and activities in Boston. The goal is to broaden experiences for adults and children, with a focus on language and literacy development during the trips.
- **Community School Readiness:** Community stakeholders will work together to define some key activities and approaches to reinforcing school readiness everywhere children and families go and engage the larger community in understanding their role in promoting early learning.
- **Family Leadership Program:** The cross-site program has a specially designed curriculum to support and empower caregivers from undeserved communities. Leaders attend workshops and trainings on a variety of topics to learn more about issues families and children in their community face, and to build on their skills as advocates, trainers and leaders.

- **Address the Stress:** A program led by licensed, multi-cultural clinicians, that includes summer camp, group and individual therapy to help children and families cope with, and build resiliencies to, everyday stress and to address challenges with post-traumatic and toxic stress.
- **Smart 2 School:** A program created to address families' anxiety about navigating the Boston Public School system, to guide them from the registration process through the first day of school, including school visits, workshops, special guests and more. S2S is a curriculum-based program providing families with the guidance and support they need as they make the transition from "Smart 2 School" and to better prepare, not only our children, but also our families to confidently continue in their role as first teacher and advocate.
- **Community Unity Partnership Initiative:** We are providing thousands more with access to early learning and social support resources through our "Community Unity Partnership Initiative" which places "play-to-learn" play spaces and book giveaway stations in neighborhood businesses such as Laundromats, barbershops, bodegas, auto repair shops, natural pharmacies and others frequented by young families.
- **Focusing on Fatherhood:** The cross-site program is facilitated by trained, male, family leaders from Smart communities. Programming includes open discussions, early intervention, family trips, guest speakers, parenting skills, workshops, education, employment, and support and referral services.

