



Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH

Cohort 3, Funding Period 2010–2015

<http://www.wheelerclinic.org/pdf/services/Promising%20Starts.pdf>

Grantee Overview

Wheeler Clinic’s Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH program strives to improve and expand services and systems for children ages 0 to 8 in New Britain, Connecticut. Although the per-capita income in Connecticut is among the highest in the nation, 28% of families in New Britain with children under the age of 5 live below the poverty line. Only one out of every four children in third grade reads at grade level, and a significant number of children are at risk for abuse and neglect. Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH focuses on promoting child physical and mental health, preventing and reducing behavioral health risk factors, and providing early intervention for vulnerable children and families.

Project Milestones

All [Project LAUNCH](#) grantees implement five core promotion and prevention strategies intended to increase access to high-quality prevention and wellness promotion services for children and their families. In Promising Starts, these five strategies are implemented through the following activities:

- **Screening and Assessment:** In partnership with [Connecticut Help Me Grow](#) and local community agencies, Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH successfully implemented the 2014 Ages & Stages Child Development Campaign to demonstrate the importance of screening young children in high-need communities. With the [Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems](#) grant, Promising Starts evaluated Connecticut’s use of the [Ages & Stages Questionnaire®, Third Edition \(ASQ-3™\)](#) and the [Ages & Stages Questionnaire®: Social-Emotional, Second Edition \(ASQ:SE-2™\)](#) in early care and education settings. Through Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH, more than 60 children ages birth to 5 years were screened with the ASQ-3™ or ASQ:SE-2™ in child welfare and prevention program service settings in 2014.
- **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:** Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH has trained early child care and education professionals on the use of the [Devereux Early Childhood Initiative’s FLIP IT](#) model to respond positively to and reduce children’s behavioral health challenges. Additionally, mental health providers and early child care and school settings received training in the [Second Step](#) violence prevention curriculum. Through this program, providers learned how to support children’s social–emotional skills development. In an effort to prevent substance abuse and promote health education for youth and their families, Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH implemented [Healthy Alternatives for Little Ones \(HALO\)](#) in four New Britain preschools where more than 340 children participated.
- **Enhanced Home Visiting:** Beginning in 2011, Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH implemented [Child First](#), a nationally recognized in-home intervention program. Child First

works to reduce social–emotional disturbances, behavioral challenges, and abuse and neglect among high-risk families in New Britain. Through this program, more than 100 families with children birth to age 6 received home visiting intervention services, which included comprehensive developmental and behavioral health screenings and assessments. Through Child First, Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH has supported the most vulnerable families, including families living in homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters. As of 2014, seven New Britain primary care providers have been trained and are prepared to use Child First in their practices, showing significant improvement in their ability to coordinate patient care for vulnerable families.

- **Integrating Behavioral Health Into Primary Care:** Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH has been able to integrate behavioral health into primary care settings through its work with Child First, which has provided consultations to pediatricians and nurses on social–emotional and behavioral concerns in children, including trauma-related challenges. As a result, these pediatricians have developed appropriate treatment plans and referrals for children and families participating in this collaborative program. They have also gained new cultural perspectives that inform and support their work with program participants. Child First developers have helped Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH enhance its model of integrating behavioral health into primary care, bringing a comprehensive focus on the health of the family into the program rather than focusing solely on the child.
- **Family Strengthening:** Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH has adopted the [Circle of Security \(COS\) Parenting model](#) to help parents and caregivers improve their parenting skills and help them understand the significance of providing security and emotional safety for their children. In 2014, more than 100 parents and caregivers received COS support in home-based settings and community-based groups over the course of 6 to 8 sessions. In addition, COS staff trained community providers in using the COS parenting model within their organizations. Providers who used COS with families during home visits and in group settings increased the families’ understanding of key early childhood competencies. Promising Starts’ community-wide implementation of COS in New Britain has been so successful that it is currently being replicated in New Haven, Connecticut.

Systems Integration

Project LAUNCH is intended to improve coordination and collaboration across systems that serve young children and their families. Promising Starts—New Britain Project LAUNCH has enhanced the local early childhood infrastructure in New Britain in two ways: (1) by developing the community’s workforce and (2) by preventing substance abuse and promoting health

education. For example, Promising Starts trains providers on intervention models and tools such as Child First, HALO, [ASQ Child Development Screening](#), and [trauma-informed child-parent psychotherapy](#). Promising Starts also implements [Second Step](#) in New Britain school districts for children from pre-k to third grade, which will continue through the [Safe Schools Healthy Students Initiative](#) when Promising Starts’ Project LAUNCH grant ends. Additionally, Promising Starts has partnered with the Central

“Circle of Security Parenting helped me learn the importance of allowing my son to feel safe exploring and coming back to me for comfort with his emotions.”

—Parent

Connecticut State University School of Education & Professional Studies to develop a professional certificate in infant and early childhood mental health for students in social work, counseling, education, and nursing programs. Through collaboration with the Coalition for New Britain Youth, Promising Starts developed a report card, which will inform the community of key child health and wellness indicators.

Grantee Events and Materials

Click on the following links to access information about grantee-developed resources:

- [“Evaluating Promising Starts Early Childhood Systems Development: Process and Outcomes”](#): Presentation at the [Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting](#).
- [2013 Community Report Card on Child Well Being](#): Provides community data on child health and wellness and resources to support New Britain’s children.
- [“Evaluating Key Components of a Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems Development Program”](#): Presentation at the 28th Annual Children’s Mental Health Research and Policy Conference.
- [“Project LAUNCH Impact: Voices from the Community”](#): Provides a sample of voices from the community that speak to the impact of Project LAUNCH efforts in New Britain.
- [The Infant Mental Health Workforce: Key to Promoting the Healthy Social and Emotional Development of Children](#): Defines infant mental health and highlights workforce competences across disciplines that are needed to support families.

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