Project LAUNCH Impact:

Voices from the Community...
A Public Health Approach to Promoting Child Wellness

In September 2010, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) awarded a five-year grant to Wheeler Clinic through their Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children’s Health) program, locally known as Promising Starts. The goal of Promising Starts is to promote child wellness for young children by enhancing and expanding the services and systems serving young children and their families in New Britain, Connecticut. The project uses a public health approach to promote child wellness with efforts that focus on promotion, prevention, and early intervention. Promising Starts activities in each of these areas are outlined in the chart below:

- Early intervention for families with identified needs
  - Implementing the evidence-based Child FIRST intensive home visiting program for families with children ages birth to 6 years
- Prevention through early identification and family strengthening
  - Providing training and resources on the Ages & Stages (ASQ-3) Child Development Screening Protocol
  - Coordinating Circle of Security Parenting© community-wide programming
  - Implementing HALO (Healthy Alternatives for Little Ones) health education and substance abuse prevention programming
- Promotion through workforce and systems development
  - Coordinating the New Britain Child Wellness Council
  - Working with CT Association for Infant Mental Health (CT-AIMH) to promote Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health®
  - Strengthening New Britain’s system of care by co-sponsoring community Help Me Grow Network Meetings

Throughout the past 18 months, New Britain Project LAUNCH initiatives have impacted families, providers, and the system as a whole in various and meaningful ways. The pages that follow provide a small sample of voices from the community that speaks to impact of Project LAUNCH efforts in New Britain…
Child FIRST is an evidence-based home visiting model that works to decrease the incidence of serious emotional disturbance, developmental and learning problems, and abuse and neglect among high-risk young children and families in Connecticut. The program uses an integrated prevention and intervention approach to support families with young children. New Britain families participating in this Project LAUNCH sponsored home visiting program receive child development education and guidance, mental health intervention and care coordination services with Child FIRST.

“Child FIRST has helped me realize that I can be a good mom.”

–Child FIRST Parent

“Child FIRST is amazing. I have really appreciated how the program has worked with my family as a whole.”

-Child FIRST parent
Circle of Security® Parenting

Circle of Security® Parenting is a relationship-based parenting program for parents with young children and is designed to help parents better understand and respond to the emotional needs of their child. The material presented in the Circle of Security® workshops is based on decades of research on parent-child attachment. In New Britain, Project LAUNCH has worked with partner agencies to initiate a community-wide implementation of Circle of Security® Parenting programming that is having a meaningful impact on parent-child relationships, the foundation for healthy child development.

“This program has opened our eyes to a new way of parenting that not only benefits our kids but us as parents.”
-Circle of Security dad

“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.”
-Circle of Security mom

“It is a simple way to understand my son’s emotional growth without all the extra clutter. It is basically telling me to listen and just be there for my child.”
-Circle of Security dad
HALO (Healthy Alternatives for Little Ones) health education and substance abuse prevention programming is an evidence-based early childhood curriculum that focuses on healthy choices. Children and teachers are enjoying participating in the HALO activities where children are learning about what it means to make healthy choices. Children are learning through the HALO curriculum that healthy means… “Bigger, stronger, and better able to think!”

“Our children really enjoyed their HALO lessons and it was amazing how quickly they learned the concepts. I was surprised that my 4 year olds could learn what the brain, lungs, and heart actually do!” - New Britain YWCA preschool teacher

“The kids loved the HALO songs and by far their favorite lesson was learning the body organs, brain, lungs, and heart.”

-Project LAUNCH student intern
Promising Starts
New Britain Project LAUNCH

Strengthening the System of Care for New Britain Children and Families through Workforce Development

Project LAUNCH has been involved in a number of workforce development initiatives in New Britain and throughout Connecticut. All Project LAUNCH efforts in the area of workforce development have maintained a strong focus on infusing a trauma-informed approach to working with families with young children.

Kent Hoffman, developer of the Circle of Security® model, provided training on the Circle of Security® Parenting model for over 80 participants in September 2011.

“I have been able to use information I learned in the Circle of Security® training to support our clients who have to do supervised visits with their little ones. It has really transformed how these mothers interact with the children in a very positive way.”

-Nilda Cruz, Child Advocate-Prudence Crandall Shelter

“The Circle of Security® approach is very real and relatable. Now I have a simple, caring and effective way to bring this information to my clients who are struggling with their roles as parents. Every person who becomes a parent should learn about the Circle of Security®.”

-Training participant
Project LAUNCH has worked to expand developmental screening throughout the child and family serving system by promoting the use of the Ages & Stages (ASQ-3) child development screening protocol. Since July 2011, Project LAUNCH has provided ASQ-3 training for 74 New Britain providers in a variety of settings.

“We were so excited to get a chance to have our whole staff do the Ages & Stages training. We all learned so much. This brings our programming to a higher level and especially gives our staff a more thorough understanding of developmental milestones and how to promote child development.”

-Cheryl Cyr, Director-Hospital for Special Care Child Care Center

“By adding ASQ screenings to our services that are available for families, we have been able to expand our ability to educate families about child development. Our pediatricians know they can send families here for ASQ screenings if the family is presenting with needs around child development guidance. Parents learn so much when they complete the ASQ with our help.”

-Anna Rogers, Coordinator, Family Wellness Center at New Britain Community Health Center (FQHC)

In early February 2012, Project LAUNCH partnered with the CT Department of Children and Families, CT Children’s Trust Fund, and CT Help Me Grow to design and implement a cross training opportunity for Head Start and child welfare workers. The main focus of the day-long training was developmental screening and understanding early trauma and attachment.

“I learned so much on this day. I learned to help parents replace their attitudes about behaviors from attention-seeking to connection-seeking. I also learned how to help parents think about the importance of filling their child’s emotional cup.”

-Training participant

Early Childhood Development Training Days, February 2-3, 2012
Building Partnerships to Enhance the System of Care for New Britain Children and Families

“The Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health is grateful for the opportunity to partner with New Britain’s Project LAUNCH around its professional development activities. Our Fall 2011 Conference focusing on maternal depression was a huge success because of the contributions from Project LAUNCH as one of our sponsors.”

-Margaret C. Holmberg, President, CT Association for Infant Mental Health

“It has been wonderful to be part of the Project LAUNCH initiative in New Britain. Our partnership with Project LAUNCH has allowed us to better integrate the existing services that Child Development Infoline and Help Me Grow offer with other efforts taking place in New Britain in an effort to support children’s social emotional and healthy development and to increase the opportunities available for parents and children! Everyone has worked together so collaboratively to increase awareness and training around these critical areas- it is a model project!”

-Kareena DuPlessis, Director of Child Development Infoline

“As a New Britain early childhood provider, we have recognized that the mental health needs of very young children have been going unmet for some time. Project LAUNCH has brought the community together to develop ways to address this critical need. A significant step brought Circle of Security® training to New Britain providers. As an agency with staff who accessed the training, we found that the program has added another dimension to the family services we can provide to women with young children. We think it will positively impact the way women (and men) parent their young children.”

-Tracey Madden Hennessey, Assistant Director, New Britain YWCA
“The Children’s Trust Fund is very excited to partner with Project LAUNCH to bring Help Me Grow Network Meetings to the New Britain community. We have had so much success with the Network Meetings in other communities and know that this opportunity for sharing resources and information among providers will greatly enhance the system serving young children and families in the community.”

-Luz Rivera, Prevention Coordinator, CT Children’s Trust Fund

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Working with the Child Welfare System to Better Serve New Britain’s Most Vulnerable Children and Families

“I have had the pleasure of working with and collaborating with Project LAUNCH on several initiatives. One project that has been very successful was an effort, made possible by the LAUNCH grant, to provide training for child welfare workers on three key components of early childhood development – developmental screening, trauma, and attachment. Project LAUNCH was absolutely essential to developing this framework and working as part of a planning team to design the day-long training. Nearly 50% of the New Britain DCF staff attended this training and the training will serve as a model for the remaining 12 DCF area offices throughout the state so child protection workers have a basic understanding these important concepts.

The other key project, only made possible by Project LAUNCH, has been to train providers in New Britain on Circle of Security® Parenting so that more parents have the basic relationship capabilities to build secure attachments with their child. This has truly been a visionary move by the Project LAUNCH leadership. DCF is viewing the Project LAUNCH coordination of a community-wide model of Circle of Security® Parenting as a prototype for other CT communities. The Project LAUNCH efforts are helping leaders and providers to better understand the importance of the parent-child relationship role in helping children thrive and succeed in life.”

-Charlie Slaughter, Connecticut Department of Children & Families