



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS PACESETTER PALM BEACH COUNTY

Category: School Readiness

Palm Beach County, on Florida's east coast, is the largest county in the state and home to more than 100 elementary schools. Palm Beach is a leader in the provision of services for families with children ages 5 and younger through the county's Children's Services Council. This organization provides leadership, funding and research so that children are born healthy, grow up safe and are ready to learn when they enter school.

To achieve its goals, the Council has employed a number of research-based strategies, such as the Healthy Beginnings initiative — a voluntary system of family services that offers screening and assessment, access to affordable health care, home visiting, early care and education, counseling and family support. From 2010 to 2011, a total of 11,846 families received services through Healthy Beginnings.

A second Council initiative, Quality Counts, is dedicated to providing high-quality, accessible early care and education programs so that more children enter school ready to learn. The Quality Counts system consists of five key strategies:

- Assessments that focus on evaluating, communicating and improving the level of quality child care sites
- Education and training that provide professional development and curriculum training to the early childhood workforce
- Technical assistance, in which Early Learning Coaches provide intensive on-site coaching and assistance to child care providers and teachers
- Support programs that include financial incentives, the Quality Counts database and a training registry that tracks the educational progress of participating early learning teachers
- Outreach, including activities such as marketing and networking, to increase public and consumer awareness of and access to quality care.

The current Quality Counts system involves more than 200 child care providers, including local Head Start centers, and serves more than 14,000 children. This represents about one-third of the child care providers in Palm Beach County.

Finally, the Bridges initiative of the county's Children's Services Council works to support partnerships among residents, businesses and organizations in 10 target communities so that they can align their work, learn together and implement creative solutions to ensure that Palm Beach children are reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

STRATEGIES

- Assisted 11,846 local families through the Healthy Beginnings initiative, a voluntary system of family services
- Provided high-quality, accessible early education programs to more than 14,000 area children through the Quality Counts initiative
- Supported partnerships among residents, businesses and organizations in 10 target communities