

Director's Report August 24, 2017

New Spark NH Data Exploration Tool

A healthy and prosperous future for New Hampshire is important to all of us. And what we know now is that providing our next generation with positive early learning experiences, good health, and strong family support is vital to our future social and economic well-being – as today's children are tomorrow's parents, workers, and citizens.

Since our start 6 years ago, Spark NH has been working to tell the story of how young children in their families are faring in NH but this has been somewhat challenging. Programs and services for young children and families in the state all collect data, but these data are not coordinated.

This makes it difficult for families, services providers, and policy makers to access information they need to make decisions and ensure coordinated services. That's why our Spark NH Framework for Action includes a policy priority to "Establish an integrated, cross-agency statewide early childhood data system to improve program effectiveness and child and family outcomes."

If we want to assess how well children are doing, and identify solutions to challenges in child well-being, we need a better understanding of the physical, social, economic and cultural environments in which children live and grow. Our new online data exploration tool will allow us to do just that.

With the guidance of the Spark NH Data Committee, our wonderful communications consultant, Lynn Davey and her web designer Holly Valero created the tool to look at early childhood data using the science of child development. What we know from science is that how children develop is based on the environments in which they live and the experiences they have.

The tool is not an online data warehouse, but an interactive platform built with a cutting edge data visualization product called Tableau. Tableau not only allows us to tell the story of child well-being in New Hampshire in a visually interesting way, but also provides users with interactive tools that allow them to explore the data more fully. The charts and graphs can be sorted, downloaded as images or PDF files, and shared via e-mail or on the web with a single click. The raw data can also be downloaded directly either as a text file or as a Tableau workbook for others who also use Tableau.

We see the tool as providing a one-stop shop to practitioners, policymakers and all those interested in a better understanding of the contexts that promote the healthy development of New Hampshire's next generation. Please explore and share widely! <http://sparknh.daveystrategies.com/>

Grants

Some of you will remember that Spark NH had been invited to apply for an operating grant from the HNH Foundation this Spring. In the end the HNH Foundation did not think we were a good fit for this funding cycle but encouraged us to consider applying in the future.

In June we did receive a grant from the Endowment for Health to support the community of practice we coordinate for the early childhood regional initiatives. The grant supports facilitation for the group as well as technical assistance and some funds for five of the initiatives to work on readiness to implement the Pyramid Model at the community level.

In July we were invited to apply to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for an operating grant to support the work of Spark NH. We just submitted the application and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation board is expected to make a decision in September.

Public Awareness

In June and July Spark NH delivered Bedrock Presentations to: the Raymond Coalition for Youth, Steering Committee of the Capital Area Public Health Network, the New Hampshire Association of School Principals, staff at Lamprey Health in Raymond, and the Manchester Police Department Advisory Council. Please think about whether you have connections with leadership groups in your area (Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, school boards, etc.) who need to hear the Bedrock message.

Making the Case for Prevention in the Early Years

If you didn't see them, Chief Willard (Manchester Police) and I recently wrote an Op-Ed in the Concord Monitor about the importance of early childhood in the prevention of the opioid crisis. http://www.concordmonitor.com/Letter-Milliken-NH-Grandparents-Opioids_-11104212

WMUR recently interviewed us about this on the news. <http://www.wmur.com/article/organization-pushes-early-childhood-intervention-to-fight-opioid-crisis/11649419>

Respectfully Submitted,

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Director