



# Families as Partners

In Newark's evolving early childhood landscape

**Positive Parenting and Stable Families**

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## IV. Positive Parenting and Stable Families



Table 5 shows a well-diversified landscape of parenting and family supports in Newark. Parenting supports can range from events, including entertainment, information, and resources for families; a series of parenting classes or workshops

on age-specific information and skills related to child development, health, special needs, or early learning; or long-term coaching and homevisiting approaches that support parents as they augment their positive parenting skills, identify child development milestones, and become their children’s first teachers. Further, organizations in the city also foster parent leadership and advocacy, connect them with resources they need, and encourage a broader swathe of parents to participate in activities available within communities. Families are supported through Family Success Centers that provide classes, job training, connections to community resources, language services and immigration support, all under one roof. Ward-based organizations provide some or all of the above supports, in addition to also providing parenting classes and childcare. Public agencies like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and nonprofit food pantries also play an important role in supporting family stability. In addition, numerous nonprofits supporting needs, including housing, legal aid, and safety, also are part of this infrastructure.

**My kids are #1. I would do anything for them.**

– Stakeholder (Parent)

**TABLE 5: Landscape of Parenting and Family Programs**

LEVEL	ORGANIZATION	FOCUS ON NEWARK
State	SPAN Parent Advocacy Network	SPAN is an umbrella family-serving organization supporting parent leadership and providing support in maternal and child health, education, child welfare, early intervention, inclusion, advocacy, and community connections. SPAN emphasizes cultural humility, parent voice, and high levels of family participation in decision-making and leadership. It conducts the Sister-to-Sister Community Doula program, among other family-oriented work in Newark, and supported development of parent leadership in the formative stages of the Essex County Council for Young Children.
State	Family Success Institute	In partnership with NCDF, Family Intervention Services, SPAN, Parents Inc., and the NJ Alliance of Parent Support Organizations, FSI helped to establish Family Success Centers in Newark and around the state, providing training to FSC staff around parent leadership and family-centered services, and helping to train and support Family Advisory Councils for the FSCs. Seven such FSCs offer direct services supporting families’ economic, social, and physical stability in Newark. The FSCs are also connected with several community organizations and city agencies that offer different types of services to families.

LEVEL	ORGANIZATION	FOCUS ON NEWARK
State	Early Learning Funders Collaborative and Cooperman Foundation	In Newark’s South Ward, members of the collaborative, with the Cooperman Foundation, supported the South Ward Children’s Alliance as matching donors for the Promise Neighborhood grant. The SWCA is a community hub offering several early childhood services including child-care, parenting, and homevisiting programs, and affording community connections to social service organizations.
Region	Visiting Nurse Association	The Healthy Families homevisiting program supports families through home visits where a specially trained Family Support Worker brings information and resources to parents and caregivers and children, including resources on parenting and early learning. Home visits last up to three years.
County	Programs for Parents	PFP is an umbrella organization focused on childcare licensing and professional development. Parent-facing programs in Newark include consumer education, workshops for parents on parenting topics, connections for parents to childcare and community resources, and childcare referrals and subsidies for eligible families. PFP is the sponsoring agency that certifies Family Child Care (FCC) and Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers. PFP also partners ward-based organizations like SWCA on positive parenting programs, convenes the Essex County Council for Young Children, and supports the development of the Newark Council for Young Children.
County	Family Support Organization of Essex County	FSO of Essex County has a warmline to connect families to information and resources, parenting and stress relief webinars and classes, support groups including for fathers, and peer-to-peer support for families of children, including young children, with mental health, emotional, and behavioral challenges.
County	Youth Consultation Services	Nurse Family Partnership’s parenting component includes working with a first-time parent to foster attachment, understand the baby’s cues, and become comfortable with breastfeeding. Parents become familiar with infant and toddler milestones, immunization schedules, local medical and community resources, and public agencies for insurance, nutrition, and housing and economic support.
County	Family Connections	Parents as Teachers’ parenting component includes working with parents to set goals on what they want to accomplish, and connecting parents to social and community resources that help them reach their goals. The program additionally sets up parent advisory boards to identify shared interests and needs and find ways to address them.

LEVEL	ORGANIZATION	FOCUS ON NEWARK
County	Essex County Council for Young Children	This parent-centric organization provides workshops for parents on topics of their choice, supports the development of parent leadership in communities, engages them in advocacy for improved services, and organizes events for families with multiple early childhood services providers available in a convenient location. ECCYC also conducts workshops with service providers on cultural competence.
County	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	A state-run program with county-level offices, TANF provides temporary cash subsidies to families to help them stabilize in times of social and/or economic difficulty. The program offers supportive services through case management and connections to health, employment, language and other programs to help families become secure.
City	South Ward Children's Alliance	This multi-service community organization serves families in the South Ward of Newark. Positive Parenting programs include: homevisiting through Parents as Teachers; and the Family College, where parents participate in parenting groups, fatherhood initiatives, and parenting workshops and series. Family Hub is a program that provides direct services and does case management, as well as fosters community connections that can help families build economic and social stability.
City	Ironbound Community Corporation	This multi-service community agency serves families in the East Ward of Newark. Positive parenting programs include parenting workshops and classes as part of Early Head Start as well as ICC's own childcare program. ICC also offers community services including ESL classes, enrichment activities, business and legal services, and employment support, and advocates for community spaces and community rights.
City	La Casa de Don Pedro	This multiservice community agency serves families in multiple locations in Newark. Positive parenting programs include parenting workshops and classes, mostly aimed at parents of children in Pre-K. In addition to social and economic services and supports, La Casa also helps families find housing, essentials, legal services, language services, youth programs, and enrichment, and organizes community events.
City	The Leaguers	This multi-service community agency serves families in multiple locations in Newark. Positive parenting programs include home visits, parenting workshops, and classes based on the Early Head Start model. It hosts a fatherhood initiative for fathers-to-be on child development and parenting. Broader social and economic programs for families include case management, referrals to vetted providers, and cultural and community programs.

LEVEL	ORGANIZATION	FOCUS ON NEWARK
City	United Way of Greater Newark	The United Way of Greater Newark is a multi-service community agency that partners with public and nonprofits across Newark to establish food and health security. In education, the organization is focused on Pre-K-12 access and out-of-school time initiatives, and does not have a specific birth to three focus.
City	Newark Trust for Education	Trust-ParentChild+ Collaboration is focused on positive parenting and early learning. Early Learning Specialists conduct home visits with almost 100 families in all wards of Newark for a year. They supply educational books and toys and strengthen parents' roles and effectiveness as their child's first teacher.

**TABLE 6: Preliminary Assessment of Parenting and Family Stability**

GUIDELINES	MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH
Accepted standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardized programs of homevisiting approaches.</li> <li>Homegrown programs of large community-based organizations</li> <li>Frameworks offered by the Family Success Institute</li> <li>Referral process facilitated by Central Intake and Programs for Parents</li> </ul>
Multi-generation approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ward-based organizations and Family Success Centers support parents as well as children through a variety of economic and social programming</li> <li>Homevisiting programs and the Family Support Organization of Essex County support parents through a variety of positive parenting approaches and provide connections to community supports</li> </ul>
Strengths-based and culturally sustaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasizing that all parents want the best for their child</li> <li>Including trusted messengers from the local community in outreach efforts</li> <li>Connecting families through “warm” connections to community resources for housing, jobs, and other critical elements of stability</li> </ul>
Equitable access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large ward-based organizations and family support centers have numerous programs and services in this area, but only a fraction of families with children aged 0-3 use them. Several of the publicly-funded programs have sustained over multiple decades, while smaller programs that are philanthropically-funded may alter their scope and scale year-on-year.</li> </ul>
Systemic supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ward-based organizations and community agencies routinely connect families with social service agencies</li> </ul>



Newark's landscape is rich in organizations serving families at the state, county, and city level. SPAN, Programs for Parents, and the Essex County Council for Young Children, along with Newark community-based organizations like the Leaguers and the Ironbound Community Corporation, seek to develop parent leadership and advocacy and build trusted parent messengers who can conduct outreach and provide parenting support and community connections for other parents and caregivers in their local communities. A stakeholder says:

*Your voice is vital is our message to parents: Be the change in your community. Be the change for your children. To service providers, our message is that you must allow parents to be leaders, to articulate what they want and need for their children.*

Multi-generation programs and services may include a series of parenting classes or workshops, fatherhood initiatives, ongoing parenting support groups, and/or events. The goal of these programs for parents of infants and toddlers is to foster parental confidence and skill. A stakeholder says:

*There are lots of messages that we communicate through our parenting sessions: healthy food choices, social- emotional development, self-care for parents, child development milestones, and discipline.*

Homevisiting programs also seek to help parents and caregivers develop confidence and competence as their child's first teacher through ongoing modeling and support. Newark Trust-ParentChild+ Collaboration emphasizes a regular series of 92 visits over a year, where parents interact with an early learning specialist and develop a sense of their capacity to teach, and their child's capacity to learn, social-emotional skills, verbal and cognitive skills, and fine and gross motor skills. A stakeholder says:

*Our parents learn to trust their child to complete an activity, eat and dress, and participate in small chores. In doing that, they allow the child the space to express and grow, instead of always wanting to maintain control of situations.*

Cultural competence is key in this area of work: Most homevisiting programs and ward-based organizations draw their staff from local communities. They discuss preparing them in strengths-based approaches in order to ensure that interactions with families are respectful and productive. Prior negative experiences with services providers can prime parents to be hesitant about participating in programs, especially homevisiting programs. Trusted messengers and parent advocates are critical liaisons in ensuring that service providers offer programs that parents have asked for, and that parents can access these valuable programs and resources in their communities and beyond.

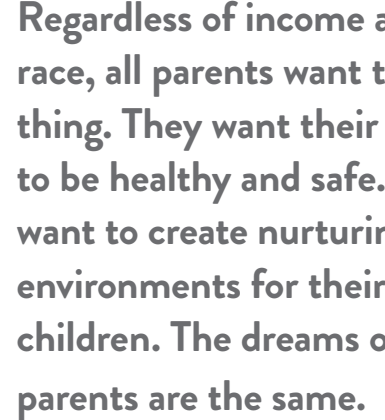
While a few parents had participated in parenting groups and programs, and several were enrolled in the Trust-ParentChild+ Collaboration's early learning program, most parents stated that they relied on family and friends for resources and guidance on parenting. Most of the mothers in our sample worked

**Parenting can be pretty lonely. There is a lot of social isolation among parents with such young children. We find that families enjoy being together and build community through parenting classes. Fathers have aha moments. Even seasoned mothers, after multiple kids, come to our classes and leave with aha moments.**

— Stakeholder (Positive Parenting)

and had other children, and mentioned that most of their information came either from doctor's clinics or the school system, and that they found it difficult to learn about and connect with programs and services. The scale at which programs operate, and the ease of parents' access to them, is of concern. As in the case of health programs, given the large group of parents with children who are between the ages of 0-3 in Newark, it does not appear programs and services operate at the commensurate scale. Stakeholders from the major ward-based organizations cite a reach of less than 1,000 families. Most programs report a modest reach of just a few hundred families each per year.

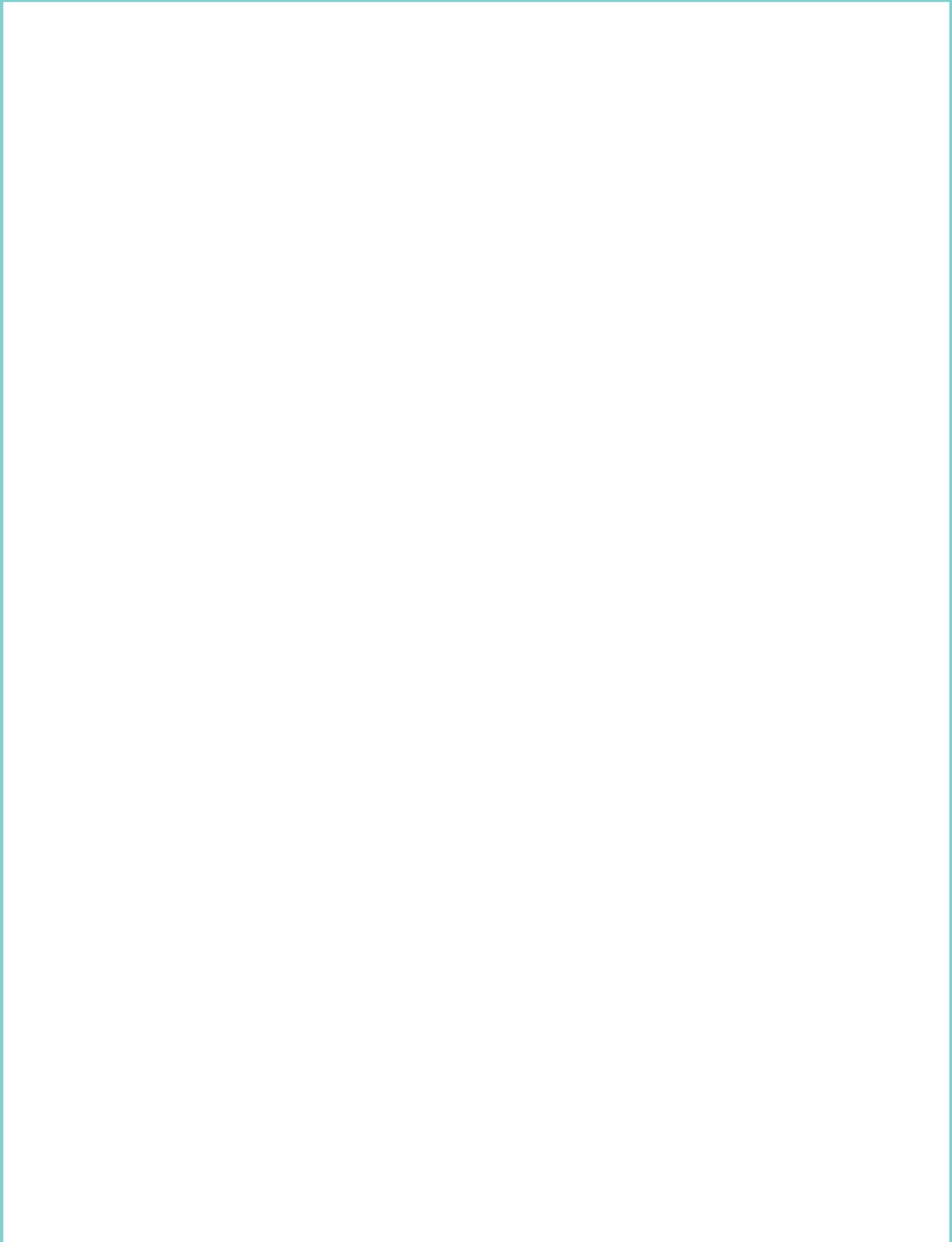
Homevisiting programs, Family Success Centers and established ward-based organizations like SWCA, ICC, La Casa, and Leaguers also provide a holistic set of services that support family stability in their neighborhoods and wards. Programs include support for victims of domestic abuse, immigration assistance, and development of safe neighborhoods and open spaces. Stakeholders cite examples like immigration services, solutions to domestic violence, and the creation of a community park.



**Regardless of income and race, all parents want the same thing. They want their children to be healthy and safe. They want to create nurturing environments for their children. The dreams of all parents are the same.**

— Stakeholder (Positive Parenting)





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