



Milford Thrives



“We envision Milford to be a place where families thrive and all young children are provided with strong early childhood foundations so they can reach their fullest potential.”

Milford Thrives collaborates with community partners to build a healthy, resilient, connected Milford community. Milford Thrives initiatives focus on supporting our children, youth, and families; strengthening our community; and protecting our environment. An initiative of Milford Thrives, the Milford Kids Thrive Collaborative (the Collaborative) is a cross-sector coalition committed to working together to support the healthy development of Milford’s youngest children.

Funded Project: Early Childhood Needs Assessment

With support from the New Hampshire Preschool Development Grant, Milford Thrives launched an early childhood Collaborative in September 2020. The Collaborative embarked on a comprehensive assessment process to understand the priority needs of families with young children, identify available family support and early childhood resources, and determine existing service and access gaps. Milford Thrives engaged Pear Associates to facilitate the assessment process, which included document review, data research, and stakeholder engagement.

The Collaborative convened a Needs Assessment Subcommittee to review progress and provide ongoing guidance throughout the assessment process. Surveys completed by local providers offered critical insights into current offerings and opportunities for service expansion. Family voice was represented on the Needs Assessment Subcommittee and through surveys and focus groups, ensuring resulting program strategies were informed by those with lived experience. Throughout the needs assessment process, the Collaborative witnessed strengthened partnerships and a deepening trust among members as they worked together to understand and address community needs.

Impact of Preschool Development Grant Funding

An immediate outcome of the needs assessment process was the creation of four priority actions for the Collaborative to tackle over the next one to two years:

- 1.** Address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and develop Milford-based ACE-response;
- 2.** Improve family/caregiver awareness of available early childhood and family support resources;
- 3.** Build bridges and remove barriers to services and programs, and strengthen referrals and Milford-based offerings;
- 4.** Improve family/caregiver engagement and input into community programming.



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The Collaborative has made significant progress in these priority areas. For example, Waypoint Family Resource Center has established a part-time satellite presence in Milford, sharing office space with Milford Thrives. This Milford location will improve Milford family access to resources and decrease social isolation through parenting support and drop in playgroups. Also, the Collaborative created a Milford Parenting Advisory to ensure family voice is considered in community programming.

MilfordKidsThrive.org was launched as a one-stop source for Milford's parents and caregivers to build awareness of the various early childhood and family support services and resources available. The interactive website includes parenting, wellness, and child development information with links to community providers and resources, as well as family fun activities and a community calendar. The website is accompanied by a monthly parenting **Milford Kids Thrive** e-newsletter.

Finally, the collaborative is working to establish a coordinated Adverse Childhood Experience Response Team (ACERT) and referral network. Representatives from the local police, regional mental health center, school district, Boys & Girls Club, and family support partners are working together to ensure families with young children who have experienced trauma are connected to the appropriate trauma-informed supports and services.



Contact Information

Joelle Martin, Executive Director
Milford Thrives
52 Nashua St., Suite 3
Milford, NH 03055
603/836-4356
joelle@milfordthrives.org
www.milfordthrives.org
www.MilfordKidsThrive.org



New Hampshire's Preschool Development Grant

This document was supported by the Preschool Development Grant, which is sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (Award# 90TP0060-01-00). Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of any organization or agency that provided support for the project.