

Morgan County Starting Points' mission is *"To serve as a community resource center that strengthens and nurtures Morgan County children and families by providing information, programs, and access to needed resources"*.

Organizational Background

Initially established in 1999, Morgan County Starting Points is a well established Family Resource Center located in the heart of Berkeley Springs. Shenandoah Valley Medical System serves as both fiscal agent and administrative support. The Starting Points Executive Committee includes parent members and business, agency, faith and community representatives. A member of the SVMS Board of Directors who is a resident of Morgan County also serves on the Executive Committee of Starting Points to enhance mutual feedback.

Since its inception, Starting Points has expanded its influence and outreach in Morgan County and, in collaboration with other Morgan County service agencies, is seen as the "go to" site for families to address needs and receive assistance to access resources and community services. Its current and projected programming and services incorporate the DHHR defined Family Support Services - *Strengthening Families* model. The focus of that model is to provide community based preventive activities designed to promote "parental competencies and behaviors that will increase the ability of families to nurture their children; enable families to use other resources and opportunities available in the community; create supportive networks to enhance child rearing abilities of parents; help compensate for the increased social isolation and vulnerability of families; strengthen parental relationships and promote healthy marriages." Working closely with the local DHHR offices, the Morgan County Regional Resource Connection (RRC), Early Intervention agencies, and the tri-county Health and Human Services Collaborative, the agency responds to identified need in the community while striving to reduce duplication of services through that mutual coordination of effort.

Current key programs and services of Starting Points of Morgan County are funded by DHHR Bureau for Children and Families, United Way of the Panhandle, Foundations and local contributions.

Starting Points current services include the following:

Playgroup is designed for children ages birth to three and their caregivers. Playgroup offers an opportunity for peer mentoring and support, information sharing, and a setting to build social connections. Guest speakers address developmental stages and health, nutrition, and wellness issues. Families receive resource materials and information on upcoming events and activities in the community.

Family Partnership Program (FPP) is intended to empower families to break the cycle of dependence, move toward a higher degree of self sufficiency, and foster a strong family unit. By forging a stronger family unit, families are likely to see an increase in good health status and avoid risky behaviors. The Family Partnership Program

provides an integrated case management approach for families. Evidenced Based curricula are utilized for the financial education and parenting aspect of this project. ***Baby Pantry*** assists families with baby food, formula, diapers, children's clothes and bed linens.

Intake & Assessment/Resource Coordination is a process where staff conduct an intake and assessment that provides a basis to support the family in accessing services and resources appropriate to their needs and circumstances.

Information and Referral are provided as an entry point for access to services. Staff maintain a directory of community resources and offer information based on client needs and eligibility.

Meal Time Community Kitchen is facilitated by an average of 160 volunteers annually who prepare and serve hot meals for the community at no charge. The volunteers represent some 16 civic groups drawn from the faith community and local businesses and residents. A total of 16,079 meals was served in 2010, with consistent increases in the number since the inception of the program.

Bonding with Books - Starting Points is taking the lead in the READ ALOUD Morgan County collaborative. The focus of the collaborative is to inform parents of the importance of reading to their children, help children discover the joy of reading for pleasure and, ultimately improve reading capacity among Morgan County children and their parents. The new collaborative project "Bonding with Books" will distribute quality books to children in the Starting Points Playgroup and the two child care centers in the county. Monthly, children in these programs will receive a packet containing a new book for their home library, community announcements and parenting material.

Starting With Me program will create a relationship with the Community Baby Shower participants and their children that will reduce the potential of child abuse and neglect, prepare target children to enter the school system ready to learn and prepare the caregivers to be involved in their child's education. The will offer families concrete supports (services provided through agencies) as well as informal supports (peer mentoring and socialization), and group socialization.

In Home Family Education program would provide families with the tools to educate and nurture their young children. Through the use of Nurturing Parenting evidence based curriculum, home visitors will provide developmental screenings, parenting education, and referral to community resources, including health/dental care access. The program will also provide opportunities for group socialization for both parents and children.