

Child and Program Characteristics of the North Carolina More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program: Year 1 (January - June 2002)

executive summary ■ June 2003

The *North Carolina More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program* is a state-funded initiative for at-risk 4-year-olds, designed to help them be more successful when they enter elementary school. The focus of this program is on children who have never been served in a pre-kindergarten program and/or children who have been “underserved” (those who are eligible for, but not receiving financial assistance or who are in below-standard care). *More at Four* was initiated in late 2001, and sites began serving children as early as January 2002.

More at Four is intended to provide a high quality, classroom-based educational program for children. Local programs must meet a variety of guidelines and standards around curriculum, training and education, class size and ratios, licensing ratings, and other services provided. *More at Four* classrooms may exist in a variety of sites designated by the local county or region. Children are selected for participation in *More at Four* based on risk status.

The FPG Child Development Institute is conducting the statewide evaluation of the *More at Four* program. One component of this evaluation, and the focus of this report, was to gather information about who was served by the *More at Four* program and the characteristics of the services that were provided in Year 1. Information was gathered directly from the 26 contract grantees in operation.

Key questions and a summary of findings follow (more detail is provided in the full version of this report).



For the full version of this report or for more information about the Evaluation of the North Carolina More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program, visit the web site at www.fpg.unc.edu/~mafeval or email mafeval@unc.edu.

How many children were served in the *More at Four Program*?

■ The total number of children served in the first year was 1244. Overall, more slots were allocated for the *More at Four Program* than were filled.

Were the children served by the *More at Four Program* meeting the program guidelines in terms of risk factor status and service priority status?

■ In general, programs were serving the intended population based on certain risk factors, especially family income and parental employment, as well as parent education, family composition, housing stability, and minority status.

■ Programs were also serving the intended population based on service priority status, with about three-quarters of the children not previously served and another 17% underserved.

What were the characteristics of the children served in the *More at Four Program*?

■ A diverse group of children was served. About half of the children were boys and half were girls, representing a variety of ethnic/racial groups.

■ Children typically exhibited multiple risk factors in various combinations, with an average total risk factor score of 5.6 (range=0-15).

■ The *More at Four Program* also served a significant proportion of children with disabilities (13%), about twice the US population average.

Were the individual sites meeting the program guidelines for operation?

■ For the most part, the various sites were meeting program guidelines for operation, including hours of operation, class size, teacher education and certification, and director education and certification.

■ Given the short program year, children attended for an average of 48 days (about 2 full months of service).

What were the characteristics of the programs that served *More at Four* children?

■ Children were served in a variety of settings, including public schools, for-profit and nonprofit private child care, Head Start, and various combinations of settings. About two-thirds of the children were served in public school sites. Children were typically served in blended classrooms, with an average of 10 (62%) *More at Four* children per class.

■ Local programs varied on a number of characteristics, including program size (7-118 children), length of operation (26-90 days), start-up dates (January-April), average risk factor score (3.8-6.8), and setting types (e.g., 0-100% public school sites, 0-52% Head Start sites).