



# ALEXANDRIA

## children & youth master plan

### 2014 overview

Approved by the Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission on March 14, 2014.

Approved by the Alexandria School Board and the Alexandria City Council on June 19 and June 24, 2014, respectively.

**Vision: ALL OF ALEXANDRIA'S CHILDREN AND YOUTH SUCCEED TODAY AND TOMORROW**

**Goal 1: EVERY CHILD WILL BE PHYSICALLY SAFE AND HEALTHY**

**Strategy 1.1:**

Support the related efforts of public and private entities to improve the health, wellness and safety of children, youth and families.

**Strategy 1.2:**

Increase access to services that support the health, wellness and safety of children, youth and families, particularly those most vulnerable.

**Strategy 1.3:**

Advocate for and endorse policies that promote the health, wellness and safety of children, youth and families.

**Recommended Action Steps 1.1:**

**1.1.1** Endorse and support initiatives of the Partnership for Healthier Alexandria and its affiliate subcommittees, such as the Alexandria Childhood Obesity Action Network (ACOAN), that promote the health of children, youth and families, including nutrition awareness and physical activity.

**1.1.2** Promote the resources provided to residents by the Substance Abuse Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA), the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy (ACAP) and the Gang Prevention Community Task Force, and expand the offerings of the FACE Center to include education on healthy habits.

**1.1.3** Promote and support ACPS' operation of its mobile health van.

**1.1.4** Increase and support efforts to address unmet child oral health needs in Alexandria.

**1.1.5** Support the efforts of organizations working to decrease and mitigate the effects of child abuse and exposure to violence, and to improve the safety of environments for children.

**Recommended Action Steps 1.2:**

**1.2.1** Focus resources, particularly information about and access to prenatal care, in areas of the city where the percentages of births to single mothers, mothers with less than a high school education and mothers not receiving prenatal care are higher than the city, state or national averages.

**1.2.2** Ensure that City-supported, out-of-school time programs include adequate access to health, wellness, sports and fitness activities in all areas of the city; are free or low-cost; and are located at neighborhood schools/recreation centers.

**1.2.3** Increase access to available public or subsidized health insurance for uninsured children.

**1.2.4** Collect reliable demographic and outcome data for use in monitoring the impact of culturally and linguistically-appropriate health equity services and to inform service delivery.

**Recommended Action Steps 1.3:**

**1.3.1** Advocate for health promotion policies, including the Medicaid expansion option under the Affordable Care Act and smoke-free policies for multi-unit housing.

**1.3.2** Increase the number of Alexandria's farmers markets that accept payments through the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

**1.3.3** Work with Alexandria's business community to expand support for breastfeeding and awareness of its benefits.

**1.3.4** Support and endorse policies that provide for safe and healthy housing for families in the city and that include mechanisms for supporting the healthy development of children who reside there.

**Goal:** a desired condition of well-being

**Strategy:** an overarching intent, focused on addressing the identified goal

**Action Step:** a defined step to fulfill the strategy

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**Goal 2: EVERY CHILD WILL BE ACADEMICALLY SUCCESSFUL AND CAREER READY**

**Strategy 2.1:**

Support the development and alignment of, and access to, an early care and education system that prepares young children to enter Kindergarten.

**Strategy 2.2:**

Provide every child access to consistent, high-quality K-12 learning experiences.

**Strategy 2.3:**

Ensure all youth have access to the resources they need for educational and career success.

**Strategy 2.4:**

Advocate for and endorse public policies that promote high-quality learning experiences across the age continuum.

**Recommended Action Steps 2.1:**

**2.1.1** Create an integrated and aligned early care and education strategy that focuses on access (no wrong door/single point of entry), quality National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems) and public awareness (all who qualify participate, all parents understand the value of preschool, all parents are aware of the rating system).

**2.1.2** Ensure that high quality early care & education programs are both geographically and culturally accessible, particularly in areas of the city seeing higher than average increases in children ages 0-5 (i.e., West End).

**2.1.3** Create a plan to strengthen early childhood/elementary school alignment to support the transition from pre-school to kindergarten for children, parents and educators.

Examples might include: regular meetings between early childhood program leaders and principals/district leadership on ways to improve alignment of curriculum, assessment and professional development.

**2.1.4** Provide parents with resources to support early literacy learning starting when their children are born.

**Recommended Action Steps 2.2:**

**2.2.1** Coordinate with and support the efforts of ACPS and other schools to demonstrate that every student achieves at least one year of academic progress annually in reading, writing and math, and greater than one year of progress for each student who is below grade-level in those areas.

**2.2.2** In instances where students are not meeting grade-level expectations, align in-school and afterschool programs that deliver academic/social enrichment with the school curriculum.

**2.2.3** Develop community-based programs for children with special needs in order to reduce the number of children in out-of-community care and to increase opportunities for all students with disabilities.

**2.2.4** Identify and eliminate the barriers that inhibit high expectations and achievement for all children and youth, regardless of ability, class, citizenship, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

**2.2.5** Examine the assessment practices that lead to disproportionate rates of students of color in Special Education and in Talented and Gifted programs.

**2.2.6** Establish mechanisms (such as working groups, conferences and dialogs) to allow educational leaders to coordinate their programs to ensure that children are appropriately prepared to move from one educational level to another. Provide cross-training for educators and others involved in supporting children and youth across these key transitions, focusing on developing cross-system communication, sharing/using data and strengthening/continuing parental engagement.

**Recommended Action Steps 2.3:**

**2.3.1** Identify and address barriers to successful transitions for secondary school students moving to higher education, career pathways and/or independent living.

**2.3.2** Provide mentoring, coaching and leadership development for youth (including youth with disabilities) that fosters job readiness/workforce skills and that help youth find and maintain employment. Engage the business community to support these efforts.

**2.3.3** Increase the number of partnerships between businesses and the public/private entities to create job opportunities and encourage entrepreneurship among youth, especially in employment sectors that might be growing (i.e., health/elder care and green housing audits).

**Recommended Action Steps 2.4:**

**2.4.1** Advocate at the city and state level for the recommendations offered by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation around the creation of an integrated early childhood longitudinal data system.

**2.4.2** Support and advocate for efforts at the state level to ensure effective measurement of children's readiness and growth through a comprehensive kindergarten assessment.

**2.4.3** Advocate for the City Planning and Zoning Commission to create viable incentives for developers to include early child care and education space in all new developments.

**Vision: ALL OF ALEXANDRIA'S CHILDREN AND YOUTH SUCCEED TODAY AND TOMORROW**

**Goal 3: EVERY CHILD WILL BE SOCIALLY CONNECTED, EMOTIONALLY SECURE AND CULTURALLY COMPETENT**

**Strategy 3.1:**

Support the development and alignment of programs that foster social-emotional development of children and youth in and out of school.

**Strategy 3.2:**

Increase access to opportunities for social emotional development, particularly for the most vulnerable children and youth.

**Strategy 3.3:**

Advocate for and endorse public policies that promote the social-emotional development of children and youth.

**Strategy 3.4:**

Cultivate cultural competence and connections among children and youth and those that serve them.

**Recommended Action Steps 3.1:**

- 3.1.1** Create an integrated and aligned out-of-school time system that includes review of best practices/ quality, assessment of needs and preferences, identification of service gaps, access (no wrong door/single point of entry), affordability and opportunities to develop civic responsibility.
- 3.1.2** Expand, coordinate, and align youth mentoring programs to ensure all children have a relationship with a responsible mentor.
- 3.1.3** Develop programs, in partnership between the City and schools, that build skills in healthy decision making, anger management, coping and problem-solving.

**Recommended Action Steps 3.2:**

- 3.2.1** Create awareness of and promote therapeutic recreation services and sports programs for children with disabilities (e.g. Miracle League).
- 3.2.2** Seek resources to expand mental health/ substance abuse prevention and treatment programs in a variety of settings.
- 3.2.3** Train trainers in Youth Mental Health First Aid and develop a plan for educating the youth-serving community.

**Recommended Action Steps 3.3:**

- 3.3.1** Educate boards, commissions and neighborhood associations about the importance of involving youth in decision-making.
- 3.3.2** Use education, recruitment and incentives to encourage youth participation in decision-making bodies.
- 3.3.3** Increase funding to support more accessible programs for children with special needs and other vulnerable populations.

**Recommended Action Steps 3.4:**

- 3.4.1** Create a subcommittee of the CYFCC to focus on cultural competence. Activities of the committee could include: developing a report about what cultures exist in Alexandria; researching best practices for increasing cultural competence and equity in schools and other youth programs; identifying and evaluating measures of cultural competence and connection; and making recommendations about the use of those measures.
- 3.4.2** Promote awareness of opportunities for the community to support the special needs population, such as volunteering at Miracle League games or attending "Family Day" at therapeutic recreation programs.
- 3.4.3** Advocate to include an expanded definition of culture beyond "color" to determine the culturally, linguistically, racially and ethnically diverse groups within the Alexandria community.
- 3.4.4** Provide diversity training for all City and school staff, focused on developing skills for cross-cultural awareness, understanding and communication.
- 3.4.5** Host a series of Courageous Conversation sessions to engage the Alexandria community in dialogue about diversity and to promote an understanding of diversity.
- 3.4.6** Offer a variety of training programs for youth and families that focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and inclusion.
- 3.4.7** Support opportunities to diversify afterschool programs and intergroup contact for youth.

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**Goal 4: EVERY FAMILY WILL BE EQUIPPED AND EMPOWERED TO EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT THE WELL-BEING OF THEIR CHILDREN**

**Strategy 4.1:**

Support high-quality, coordinated services for parents and guardians to be leaders in the learning and development of their children.

**Strategy 4.2:**

Increase awareness of and access to programs and services for families.

**Strategy 4.3:**

Advocate for and endorse public policies that promote the social-emotional development of children and youth.

**Strategy 4.4:**

Ensure that services and programs for families are client-centered, culturally responsive, and welcoming to all families.

**Recommended Action Steps 4.1:**

**4.1.1** Support parenting programs, services and support groups by helping to eliminate barriers to participation (i.e., transportation, childcare, interpreter services, outreach and facilities) and to coordinate joint efforts.

**4.1.2** Implement a cross-agency performance management system to assess quality, share data, monitor progress, manage referrals, and report outcomes of family-focused programs.

**4.1.3** Develop an early warning system among schools and other child-serving/ social service agencies to identify problems early and engage families in addressing such problems.

**Recommended Action Steps 4.2:**

**4.2.1** Implement a cross-agency outreach campaign to increase awareness among underserved populations of local, state and federal supports available to them.

**4.2.2** Explore ways to identify early those children most at risk (i.e., those with multiple risk factors) and enroll them in all services for which they are eligible.

**4.2.3** Provide the families of students with special needs in the city with the information they need to access services, programs, activities and supports.

**4.2.4** Implement a comprehensive language support system for all city programs.

**Recommended Action Steps 4.3:**

**4.3.1** Establish and fill seats on relevant city commissions for youth and their families, improve recruitment strategies for those seats, promote participation and provide appropriate orientation to new members and returning commission members.

**4.3.2** Designate members of various city-wide committees - including the CYFCC, the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee, and the Alexandria Transportation Committee - to serve as liaisons to each other's committees in order to ensure coordination in planning and advocacy.

**4.3.3** Promote the expansion of current economic development opportunities for youth and families, by supporting the work of other city commissions focused on economic development, economic opportunity and housing.

**Recommended Action Steps 4.4:**

**4.4.1** Provide professional development and customer service training for all staff across ACPS and city programs that serve families. Training should include the idea of "no wrong door," so staff are prepared to offer excellent customer service beyond their specific department.

**4.4.2** Develop and adopt a Parent's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities to be posted in all ACPS and City facilities reflecting the City's commitment to parental engagement and parents' value as partners in their children's education and healthy development.

**4.4.3** Identify meaningful metrics to evaluate City programs and services for families as client-centered, culturally-responsive and welcoming to all families.

**4.4.4** Create an annual satisfaction survey of City-provided and City-funded services, with results incorporated into all relevant performance metrics.

**Vision: ALL OF ALEXANDRIA'S CHILDREN AND YOUTH SUCCEED TODAY AND TOMORROW**

**Goal 5: ALEXANDRIA'S SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS WILL BE RESPONSIVE, COORDINATED, EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE IN SERVICE TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**Strategy 5.1:**

The City Council and ACPS school board, by approving and adopting this Children and Youth Master Plan, takes responsibility for its timely implementation and the positive outcomes for children, youth and families.

**Strategy 5.2:**

Utilize incentives and build capacity for alignment and collaboration among public and private organizations and systems serving children, youth and families in Alexandria.

**Strategy 5.3:**

Develop and use a common system of measurement to improve the delivery of services.

**Strategy 5.4:**

Engage with the public to ensure long-term successful implementation of this Children and Youth Master Plan.

**Strategy 5.5:**

Provide effective, equitable, understandable and respectful quality care and services that are responsive to diverse cultural beliefs and practices, preferred languages, levels of literacy and other communication needs.

**Recommended Action Steps 5.1:**

**5.1.1** City and ACPS staff shall use Youth Master Plan goals, objectives and strategies to modify their work plans and determine the amount of outside support needed to implement the strategies.

**5.1.2** The City Council should direct the City Manager to incorporate the Goals, Strategies and Action Steps contained in this Youth Master Plan as part of the Healthy and Thriving Residents Focus Area of the City Manager's Performance Plan for fiscal year 2015, and work with all City departments and agencies to develop and to report on a schedule for implementing this Plan.

**5.1.3** The School Board should direct the Superintendent to fully implement this Children and Youth Master Plan and to develop a schedule for its implementation.

**5.1.4** The City Council/School Board Sub-Committee - which includes the Alexandria Mayor and Chair of the ACPS board, and the City & Schools Staff Group - should prioritize the implementation of this Children and Youth Master Plan and monitor the related progress.

**5.1.5** The City Manager and the Superintendent of Schools should work together to ensure timely and effective cross-department coordination and collaboration to carry out this Plan, and commit to inviting, learning from and collaborating with nonprofit youth and family-serving programs in the city.

**5.1.6** The Children, Youth and Families Commission should report on a regular basis and in its Annual Report to the public and the City Council on the progress made on the action steps contained in this Youth Master Plan.

**Recommended Action Steps 5.2:**

**5.2.1** The City should offer a competitive opportunity to select an entity or entities responsible for facilitating and structuring an approach that fosters collaboration among public and private agencies serving Alexandria children, youth and families. Such an entity or entities should have the ability to raise funds from public and private sources to support the collaborative efforts in this Plan, as well as to conduct research and hire skilled staff.

**5.2.2** Require that private organizations that receive funds or support from the City or ACPS, and that serve children, youth and/or families, review and support the implementation of this Children and Youth Master Plan.

**5.2.3** Advocate for federal and state reporting requirements that allow cities to be more flexible in the use of funding and reporting results.

**5.2.4** Strengthen the Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission to ensure it has the capacity and expertise to effectively support and monitor the implementation of this plan.

**Recommended Action Steps 5.3:**

**5.3.1** CYFCC, with the support of its Data Subcommittee, will prepare a report of best practices from other communities and recommended strategies for moving forward with a common system of measurement.

**5.3.2** Advocate and work with state level agencies to improve both access to and quality of key metric data.

**5.3.3** Support and advocate for ACPS (and other schools when possible) to administer the Developmental Assets and Youth Risk Behavior surveys on a recurring basis.

**Recommended Action Steps 5.4:**

**5.4.1** To create maximum transparency for all stakeholders, by fiscal year 2016 the City Finance Department shall create a section of the City and ACPS budgets that clearly enumerates all funding streams and expenses that support services for children, youth and families. The Commission shall work with the City Manager, City budget officials, ACPS budget officials and the Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee to develop a recommended structure for the Children and Youth Budget and regularly recommend a clear set of priorities that aligns with the Children and Youth Master Plan for the use of funds allocated to public and private agencies.

**5.4.2** The Commission shall communicate regularly with other Boards and Commissions, community groups and the public regarding the status of implementation of this Plan and the impact of implantation on key indicators, using all available means of communication.

**5.4.3** The Commission should hold regular hearings regarding the status of Plan implementation by the City, ACPS and private agencies.

**Recommended Action Steps 5.5:**

**5.5.1** Provide easy-to-understand print and multimedia materials and signage in the languages commonly used by the populations in Alexandria.

**5.5.2** Partner with the community to design, implement and evaluate policies, practices and services to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness.

**5.5.3** Implement a measure of cultural competency across all city departments and schools in order to demonstrate organizational capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve.