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**BCBSNC Foundation and The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc.
Launch \$3 Million Initiative to Tackle State’s Childhood Obesity Epidemic**
Effort to target youngest North Carolinians, their families and child care professionals

Chapel Hill, N.C. – With North Carolina facing the fifth highest rate of childhood obesity in the country, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) Foundation today announced a three-year, \$3 million partnership with The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC), the organization that oversees Smart Start. Through the partnership, the BCBSNC Foundation and NCPC will launch *Shape NC: Healthy Starts for Young Children*, a groundbreaking initiative that will tackle childhood obesity by focusing on young children from birth through age 5.

More than 31 percent of North Carolina’s children ages 2 to 4 are overweight or considered at risk for becoming overweight. *Shape NC* will build upon existing NCPC networks across the state to target children in child care facilities, their families and child care professionals to increase knowledge and awareness of nutrition and the importance of physical activity.

“*Shape NC* is an answer to a staggering epidemic our state and nation are facing,” said Brad Wilson, chairman of the BCBSNC Foundation. “Bringing a program that reinforces the benefits of a healthy weight, nutritious foods, physical activity and healthy living to these children, their teachers and families is a powerful step in the right direction.”

Shape NC is built upon the foundation of three proven, existing programs, which the BCBSNC Foundation and NCPC have supported. These programs include:

- Nutrition and Physical Activity Self Assessment for Child Care (NAPSACC) developed by The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention,
- Preventing Obesity by Design (POD) developed by North Carolina State University’s Natural Learning Initiative, and
- Be Active Kids[®], a signature program of the BCBSNC Foundation focused on early childhood physical activity.

“Being healthy and fit in adulthood is largely determined by the communities in which we live as children,” said Stephanie Fanjul, president of NCPC. “*Shape NC* is about communities, especially child care communities, creating positive environments and making decisions that allow children to thrive and grow into healthy adults.”

“For the past 17 years, The North Carolina Partnership for Children has been a leader in the state in caring for and preparing our children for success,” said Kathy Higgins, BCBSNC Foundation president. “Their expertise, grassroots infrastructure and proven record for getting things done are

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the essential elements to impacting such a critical issue as childhood obesity, particularly in the young children *Shape NC* will reach.”

***Shape NC* Anticipated Results:**

- A statewide policy blueprint for improving the health of North Carolina’s children.
- 30 communities will create partnerships and action plans for obesity prevention in young children.
- 100 early childhood professionals will broaden impact on healthy weight for young children by incorporating *Shape NC* strategies into their work with children, families and teachers, and as many as 60,000 children, 3,000 families and 2,500 child care teachers/directors will be reached.
- 1,500 early childhood and other related professionals will implement new knowledge about outdoor learning environments and physical activities for children in child care.
- 750 children attending model *Shape NC* early learning programs will maintain a healthy weight.
- 35 early childhood staff in five pilot centers will model healthy behaviors as a result of participating in a health and wellness program focusing on weight management/maintenance, healthy eating, fitness and smoking cessation.

About BCBSNC Foundation

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is a separate, independent nonprofit foundation dedicated to improving the health and well-being of North Carolinians. BCBSNC Foundation focus areas include: Health of Vulnerable Populations – improving health outcomes of populations served by safety-net organizations; Healthy Active Communities – increasing physical activity and encouraging healthy eating habits; and Community Impact through Nonprofit Excellence – increasing the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations. Since its inception in 2000, BCBSNC Foundation has invested more than \$64 million into North Carolina communities.

www.bcbsncfoundation.org

About Smart Start and The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc.

The earliest years of childhood are critical. Experiences during this time literally shape the structure of the brain. Because today’s children are tomorrow’s leaders, parents and professionals, everyone has a stake in making sure all children have the experiences they need to thrive. Smart Start is the system that brings together all the people involved in a young child’s life – families, teachers, doctors, caregivers, social workers and many others – to ensure every child has all they need for healthy growth and development. For more information, visit www.smartstart.org.

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