

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The purpose of the Baby Zones Concept is to optimize the social, emotional, cognitive, language, physical and motor development of our youngest children by promoting their health and well-being within the context of the environments that affect their development: (1) Pregnancy; (2) Nurturing relationships; (3) Family; (4) Early Child Care and Education; (5) Early Intervention and (6) Neighborhoods and Communities.

Key milestones in the development of the Focus Area are the foundation for this document and include the:

November 2003 Allocation Approval

In conjunction with development of the current strategic plan the Commission approved a \$105 million dollar allocation for the Prenatal through Three Focus Area.

November 2004 Concept Paper Approval

This document introduced key concepts of the focus area and demonstrated integration with the current strategic plan. Further, this document introduced the role of the focus area in coordinating current Commission investments and networking First 5 LA partners.

February 2005 Implementation Plan Approval

This document outlined an implementation model and investments across four components: 1) Data, 2) Direct Services, 3) Capacity Strengthening, and 4) Policy. These four components have been integrated into a cross-cutting approach to optimize the health and development of pregnant women, babies and toddlers.

November 2005 Revised Programmatic and Fiscal Policies Approval

At the same time that the Commission approved its Revised Programmatic and Fiscal Policies of the *Next Five* Strategic Plan it approved an additional allocation of \$20 million dollars, raising the total Focus Area funding to \$125 million. These revised policies have increased the Commission's emphasis on the prenatal through three population, influencing the Sustainability, Capacity Strengthening, Systems Improvement, Data and Policy investments, as well as other initiatives (i.e. Healthy Births).

May 2006 "ABC's of Baby Zones" Approval

This document facilitated the approval of the Prenatal through Three two-pronged Baby Zone and Policy Agenda approach. This approach integrates the four components, while outlining both universal and place-based strategies for investment in the desired results and outcomes for this population.

July 2006 Completion of the Expected Results and Economic Benefits Report

This report is a preliminary economic analysis of the Baby Zone strategy that compares expected results from selected Baby Zone engagement points (prenatal, birthing hospital, universal voluntary postpartum home visitation and the Baby Zone) to similar programs across the state, nation and globe.

Four Components

The four approved components are the foundation of the focus area. Each component represents a key aspect in achieving its desired outcomes and results. In addition, adoption of the four components was inclusive of a directive to integrate the components into a comprehensive conceptual and operational approach. Each component was further defined during this process of integration.

Capacity Strengthening

Capacity Strengthening is the foundation for all aspects of the Focus Area. The elements of capacity strengthening, referred to throughout the document as the “Building Blocks,” are elements that must be addressed in order to implement strategies and achieve outcomes related to the remaining three components. Capacity strengthening will play a significant role in the ability of First 5 LA and its Baby Zone partner communities to meet desired outcomes and results.

Data

Data and the structures supporting its collection, analysis, utilization and quality are needed to ensure that the Policy and Direct Services components are fully realized. Data informs the design of policies and policy-related strategies. Data also supports direct services by informing the design and implementation of family- and community-level outcomes, indicators and strategies, including strategies related to the “Building Blocks.” Further data collected through direct service activities will directly benefit individual children and families by organizing and making available their own pertinent information, a resource that will maximize utilization of services and supports.

Policy

The policy component is intended to make large-scale shifts in the awareness and direction of Prenatal through Three issues. This component is anchored by a broad policy agenda. The agenda addresses policy strategies directly affecting the Prenatal through Three Approach, as well as those that affect the larger system of care for this population (i.e. increased services, workforce development). Further, the policy component is inclusive of local strategies directly affecting individual Baby Zones (i.e. local ordinances and business practices).

Direct Services

The Direct Services component has been designed to reflect a paradigm shift from targeting families for service to engaging families in their role as the most critical developmental environment for young children from the in-utero stage through the toddler years. This component encompasses not only engagement with families at the prenatal stage and at specified points during and after birth, but also the environments in which they live, learn, work and play. In addition to their role as the most significant environment for young children families are key catalysts in molding and transforming the broader environments experienced by their children. This component is an element of the place-based Baby Zone approach, in that families, along with all other stakeholders, will prioritize and develop solutions for transforming their communities into pregnancy-, baby- and toddler-friendly environments.

Two-Pronged Approach

The four components of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area have been integrated into a two-pronged approach consisting of a dynamic place-based strategy called *Baby Zones* coupled with a broad *Policy Agenda*. *Baby Zones* will catalyze transformation in the places where children and their families live, learn, work and play by building upon and leveraging current and potential social and fiscal capital investments in this population at local and county-wide levels. The *Policy Agenda* will support the Prenatal through Three vision embodied by the *Baby Zones* through strategies designed to promote positive sustainable changes in the environments surrounding pregnant women, very young children and their families, as they directly relate to the desired results and outcomes of the Focus Area.

Policy Agenda

The *Policy Agenda* for the focus area will both support the implementation and sustainability of the strategies of the *Baby Zones*, as well as address broader issues affecting the health and well-being of infants, toddlers and pregnant women countywide. Further, the actions outlined in the *policy agenda* are projected to have positive affects on the prenatal through five population and beyond.

Family and Community Engagement Points

Engagement with families and communities is at the core of *Baby Zone* activities. While family engagement points will be conducted in a standardized manner, community engagement will be conducted utilizing a menu of standard methods to engage in a process. This community engagement process builds on the strengths of communities, with the intent to enhance the environments surrounding this population by creating social connectedness between families, private sector and community leaders and those providing community resources. A brief description of the five family engagement points follows:

- Prenatal Engagement: Third trimester of pregnancy
 - An introduction to and friendly registration with the *Baby Zone* to be conducted no later than the last trimester of pregnancy
- Birth Engagement: Soon after time of birth

- A Family Risk screening and invitation to receive a home visit soon after the time of birth
- Postnatal Engagement I: 48-72 hours post-discharge
 - A Home Visit in the first few days after delivery with an emphasis on health and safety
- Postnatal Engagement II: 4-8 Weeks post-birth
 - A Home Visit between 4 and 8 weeks after birth with an emphasis on social support and infant development
- Postnatal Engagement III: 12-16 Weeks post-birth
 - A Home Visit between 12 and 16 weeks after birth with an emphasis on ensuring strong connections to any needed formal services and to the Baby Zone
- Ongoing Prenatal through Three engagement will occur throughout the Baby Zone through provision of:
 - Play Environments for Children
 - Family Education and Supportive Services
 - Resource Center and an “interactive” Baby Registry
 - Information and Guidance on Developmental Screenings
 - Community Resource Connections and Linkages
 - Volunteer, Leadership and Organizational Development

This family engagement approach will provide an opportunity to build on the strengths within communities through innovative strategies that affect the various environments that impact children.

In order to successfully implement this comprehensive, multi-layered approach, the Commission seeks to build upon and leverage community strengths and assets, fill gaps as appropriate, and build a policy agenda with countywide and community-based aspects that will allow the Commission to take a strong leadership role in creating universal change in the ways that families with pregnant women, babies and toddlers are supported.

Role of First 5 LA

First 5 LA has designed an ambitious vision for pregnant women, babies and toddlers in Los Angeles County. In order to achieve the long-term results for children, families and communities First 5 LA will need to partner with other individuals and entities working to achieve similar results. First 5 LA’s unique contribution will be to catalyze or support emerging movement around the Baby Zone and Policy Agenda strategies and outcomes. First 5 LA will invest in strategies to identify and realize sustainable solutions to the challenges that families and communities face in achieving healthy and safe pregnancies and the optimal development of very young children. This role will require the commitment of not only First 5 LA’s fiscal capital, but also its social and intellectual capital. Further, it will require the utilization of innovative and flexible funding approaches, including the Commission’s participation in a rigorous development phase to be executed in partnership with five demonstration sites and which will have a significant impact on the design of future funding approaches for this focus area.