

FIRST 5 LA

SUBJECT:

Best Start LA: Baby -Friendly Hospital Project

RECOMMENDATION:

Approval of up to \$10.5 million over 5 years to implement the Baby-Friendly Hospital Project as a key activity to support Best Start LA outcomes and authorize staff to proceed with implementation.

BACKGROUND:

Breastfeeding has been established as the optimal method of infant nutrition with broad benefits for mothers and babies, with significant cost savings for the health care system and employers. Studies have shown that breastfeeding improves health outcomes as it significantly reduces children's risk for acute infections and sudden infant death syndrome and for chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, and obesity. However, breastfeeding initiation is stymied by poor hospital policies.

The purpose of Best Start LA (BSLA) is to optimize the social, emotional, cognitive, language, physical and motor development of our youngest children within the context of the multiple environments that affect their development: (1) Pregnancy; (2) Nurturing Relationships; (3) Family; (4) Early Care and Education; (5) Early Intervention and (6) Neighborhoods and Communities. Therefore, it is critical that Best Start LA includes strategies to increase breastfeeding initiation and duration.

For many women, the hospital is the only source of breastfeeding support and education. In Los Angeles County, the exclusive hospital breastfeeding rate at discharge is 24.1%, compared with California's rate of 42.7%. The national Healthy People 2010 goal, just one year away, is 75%.

BSLA Commissioner Liaisons recognized the great need in LA County to improve breastfeeding rates and directed staff to explore interventions that would improve breastfeeding rates and duration.

DISCUSSION:

Based upon Commissioner Liaisons' directives, staff conducted a wide range of information gathering activities and an extensive literature review in order to understand which strategies and practices have proven effective in improving breastfeeding rates. A comprehensive report was presented to BSLA Commissioner Liaisons on November 6, 2008 which identified and recommended the Baby-Friendly Hospital model as a "best practice". The model is sustainable and a proven strategy to improve initiation and duration of breastfeeding. The Baby-Friendly Hospital project is proposed as a possible investment to support BSLA outcomes.

The BSLA Baby-Friendly Hospital (BFH) Project will be a direct complement to Welcome, Baby! as it will enhance and support a continuum of care to improve initiation and duration of breastfeeding by improving breastfeeding policies and procedures in birthing hospitals.

This improvement in breastfeeding policies will also support BSLA's outcome of attachment and bonding as it is aimed at increasing exclusive breastfeeding, which is an indicator of the attachment and bonding outcome.

BFH will also complement First 5 LA Policy Agenda's goal of "Increased supports for breastfeeding, including expanding the number of hospitals in LA County that strive to earn the UNICEF Baby-Friendly designation for facilities that encourage breastfeeding" as approved by the Board of Commissioners on September 20, 2007.

This project will also leverage new legislation introduced by Assembly Member Kevin de Leon (D-Los Angeles) that would build upon this effort and help sustain its results.

AB 513, as introduced by Assembly Member de Leon, would require Managed Health Organizations (HMOs) and Commercial Health Insurance Plans to provide coverage for lactation consultation and for the rental of breast pumps as part of their health care service plan contract or health insurance policies that provide maternity coverage. This legislation has gained national attention, which speaks to the relevance of this issue for families.

In addition, AB 514, as introduced by Assembly Member de Leon, is currently a spot bill or a placeholder for legislation language that will improve policies to promote breastfeeding for working mothers. AB 514 will mandate employers to allow working mothers at least thirty minutes to pump breast milk for their infants in a safe, secure environment. This bill assists working mothers in maintaining their employment while ensuring their infants receive breast milk.

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Project, was reviewed with BSLA Commissioner Liaisons on January 29th, and includes their input in the following activities:

1. Outreach to Hospitals
 - a. Establishing a "Baby-Friendly Hospital Taskforce"
 - b. Hire a consultant to support the Taskforce objectives in surveying the needs and level of readiness of hospitals to implement a Baby-Friendly Hospital Project
2. Establishing a pilot project in partnership with California Hospital Medical Center (CHMC)
3. Identifying and providing resource support for implementation of the BSLA Baby Friendly Hospital Project based on Taskforce findings and recommendations. This allocation could benefit up to 20 hospitals in LA County with poor exclusive breastfeeding rates

EVALUATION:

The evaluation of the Baby-Friendly Hospitals Project will assess implementation, sustainability and impact of the activities described above using both a countywide and placed based perspective.

COST PROJECTIONS:

It is proposed that an allocation of \$10.5 million be allocated for the Best Start LA Baby-Friendly Hospital. It is estimated that the cost for the Baby-Friendly Hospital Taskforce will be \$100,000 through the estimated life of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Project. A Baby-Friendly Hospital Taskforce Consultant contract is estimated to incur \$400,000. The cost of the pilot project partnership with California Hospital is estimated to be up to \$500,000. The evaluation component of this project is expected to be 5% of the total allocation or \$500,000. The remainder \$9 million will be allocated to the implementation of the project at 20 of the poor performing hospitals with respect to exclusive breastfeeding rates.

Details regarding the Best Start LA Baby-Friendly Hospital Project implementation, evaluation and cost projections are included in the accompanying Best Start LA Baby-Friendly Hospital Project framework.

For Office Use

Board Action Taken:

Approved: Yes No Further Discussion

Referred to Committee/Work Group: _____