FIRST 5 LA

Agenda Item: 9
Date: September 8, 2011

SUBJECT:
Modification of Peer Support Groups for Parents Project

RECOMMENDATION:
Approval of an additional $300,000 to Enhance and Modify Implementation of the Peer Support Group for Parents.

BACKGROUND:
On November 18, 2010, the Commission approved $2.2 million for five years for the establishment of Community Peer Support Groups for Parents of infants and small children ages 0-5 in communities where support, social cohesion, and connections to neighborhood peers are weak or lacking.

The project would provide a maximum of 100 mini-grants of $20,000 to sponsor a peer support group to support the development of county-wide opportunities that foster social connections, reduce isolation, allow for transfer of knowledge and skills relating to parenting, breastfeeding and nutrition, and provide for positive mental outlook over the long-term. A community-based organization would be contracted through an RFP process to support the management and evaluation of the strategy for a total of $200,000.

The project draws upon existing evidence with regards to breastfeeding promotion, provision of emotional support, prevention of post-partum depression and social isolation, and cost-effectiveness of peer support interventions.

DISCUSSION:
Peer support occurs when people provide knowledge, experience, and emotional, social or practical help to each other. It commonly refers to an initiative consisting of trained supporters, and can take a number of forms such as peer mentoring, listening, or counseling.

Social support is the existence of positive psychosocial interactions with others with whom there is mutual trust and concern. Positive relationships contribute to positive adjustment and buffer against stressors and adversities by offering emotional support (empathy, attachment, and reassurance), instrumental support (material goods and services), and informational support (advice, guidance, and feedback).

The proposed modified implementation approach would include:

- An additional allocation of $300,000 for the development of Core Competencies, Training, Technical Assistance and a Peer Support Network
- Implementing the $2.2 million allocation over two and a half (2½) years. The First 6 months of the contract will include curriculum development, peer leaders recruitment, and implementation planning.
- Expand the number of participating CBOs to five across the County to ensure widespread dissemination of Peer Support Groups for Parents.
The approved $2.2 million allocation will be used to support:

- One hundred (100) Peer Support Groups. Each Peer Support Group will receive stipends of up to $7,500/year for a total of $1.5 million over two years;
- Five (5) community-based organizations (CBOs) with regional reach in five different geographic areas of the County. Each CBO will be selected through an RFP process and:
  - Receive up to $140,000 over two and a half (2½) years ($28,000 for the first six months and $56,000/year in years two and three of the project)
  - Provide administrative and program oversight to support groups
  - Facilitate data collection and report statistics to First 5 LA

The additional $300,000 for Technical Assistance (TA) and Training will be utilized to:

- Develop core competencies curriculum;
- Provide training to peer support group leaders;
- Provide TA to the four local CBOs providing oversight to PSP groups; and
- Coordinate continuing education and support to PSP leaders

Selection of the TA and Training provider will be via an RFQ to be released no later than December 2011. The selected TA and Training provider will have significant expertise in organizing and providing TA and Training for peer/community leaders/community health workers.

Training – Core Competencies and Subject Matter Expertise
Standardized, consistent training of Peer Support Group Leaders will strengthen community capacity and ensure sustainability.

Peer Support Group Curriculum may include the following topics:

- Confidentiality
- Ethics and boundaries
- Safety
- Communication
- Structure and planning
- Establishing a PSP meeting agenda
- Icebreakers & Team-builders
- Group facilitation
- Systems of care
- Community resources — mapping and referrals
- Advocacy
- Working with diverse populations and cultural competency

Building Peer Support Group leaders' knowledge and expertise in specific matters will be achieved through training on perinatal depression, childhood nutrition including breastfeeding, and other topics relevant to parents with very young children. Training will be delivered by the selected CBO to provide Training and TA in partnership with other organizations that possess the subject matter expertise (e.g. the Breastfeeding Taskforce, WIC, Los Angeles Perinatal Mental Health Task Force, etc.)
Peer support group leaders will:

- Attend training sessions
- Conduct outreach and promotion activities
- Facilitate peer support group sessions (once a week)
- Provide follow-up and connect support group participants to resources
- Attend regular peer support group leaders meetings
- Participate in evaluation activities

CONCLUSION:
This modified implementation plan will support and enhance existing systems of care for families by integrating peer support activities to existing efforts that aim at achieving First 5 LA's Strategic Goals of children are born healthy, children maintain a healthy weight, children are safe from abuse and neglect, and children are ready for kindergarten. Particular emphasis will be made in areas where available evidence suggests peer support is a viable strategy.

The geographic distribution of funds in five geographic regions will ensure widespread dissemination of Peer Support Groups for Parents throughout Los Angeles County.