First 5 LA

Prenatal Through Three Focus Area

Concept Paper

November 18, 2004
INTRODUCTION

As the Commission’s third strategic plan was being developed, it was determined that more resources were needed to address the specific needs of the prenatal through three child population in Los Angeles County in order to impact the quality nurturing and care that infants and toddlers need. In Los Angeles County there are 581,688 children 0-3 years of age. This target population is constantly in flux with approximately 150,000 births each year (2000 Census).

In November 2003, the Commission approved a $105 million dollar allocation for activities focused on children prenatal through three years of age within the goal areas of the strategic plan. The aim is to achieve up to $300 million based upon available resources for this new purpose. Due to the immensity of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area, and in contrast to an initiative, the specifics of such aspects as budget allocations, and particular program mode or implementation are not in the purview of this Framework. Instead, this concept paper outlines priorities as suggested by a nine-month planning process, involving Commissioners, key experts, the public and staff. First 5 LA recognizes that funding is limited; making it critical not to dilute our efforts but prioritize key areas of potential enhancements by taking into account the Commission’s current and anticipated initiatives and projects. These priority areas of enhancement will be further developed with a consultant team (to be hired) based on supporting evidence demonstrating the most effective way to positively impact multiple domains and levels of child and family functioning. (Note: To the extent that resources are available, the Commission will consider additional funding for current initiatives and partnerships that are demonstrated to be effective by the Commission as part of its third strategic plan.)

As approved in the Next Five Strategic Plan, it is important to leverage both social and financial capital by tying the relationships and activities of multiple individuals, organizations and projects to defined systems-level outcomes. Therefore, the Commission’s efforts will link stakeholders, strategic partners, and in particular, engage parents in creating community based approaches to enhancing systems of care and support. With this allocation, the Commission strives to increase its emphasis toward the very early developmental needs of young children to improve their social, emotional, cognitive and physical outcomes. The general intent is to improve services, supports, policy and advocacy within community and to an extent countywide measures that touch children, and their families especially those most at risk.

Children in high-risk families and communities may display disparities in learning which are evident as early as preschool. Families’ stressors and vulnerabilities can impact the socio-emotional and physical environments of children. Ultimately, this investment capitalizes on the critical and earliest developmental
window of opportunity to optimize the trajectory of children’s lives at a time when interventions are most likely to have life long effects.

The hallmark of this funding is prevention and early identification of developmental problems. The approach will complement the Commission’s current and future investments through the enhancement and integration of First 5 LA flagship initiatives that already incorporate key components of early childhood such as healthy birth outcomes, family strengthening, early learning and overall early childhood health. The initiatives that are key to this Focus Area include Healthy Births, Partnerships for Families, Universal Preschool, and Healthy Kids.

Due to the focus area’s concurrent development with the Next Five Strategic Plan, the Commission decided that the Prenatal through Three Focus Area should be integrated across all of the goal areas, (Health, Early Learning and Safe Children and Families) as well as the key programmatic strategies (Sustainability, Capacity Building, and Systems Improvement). In addition it was determined that the Focus Area should be framed to consider the Commission’s intended levels of accountability: child, family/community, and, systems/public policy levels.

To achieve the integration of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area across First 5 LA efforts, staff and Commissioners worked together over the course of nine months and held various special planning meetings and board discussions. Staff obtained extensive feedback from the Commissioners and public that included numerous outcomes, strategies and a set of planning principles. The specific principles and strategies considered by staff include the following:

- Systemic Strategies,
- Focus on areas where we can make the greatest impact,
- An opportunity to strengthen the strategic plan,
- Flexible Strategies,
- Leverage Opportunities,
- Make Universal Preschool “synergistic” with our new emphasis,
- Consider family outcomes,
- Use overlays from SPA level data,
- Use GIS reports to target vulnerable communities (gather shared understanding of the criteria or measures needed/used for identifying these communities and determine a starting point) in relationship to Universal Preschool “hot zones”, and
- Ensure that families are able to nurture their children in the context of the community culture.

The purpose of the information gathering was to broadly look at the landscape of current efforts to improve the overall well-being of children prenatal through
three; determine common ground across these efforts; and accordingly, develop a set of priorities for this new, integrative focus area of the Commission.

To complement these efforts and the information gathered, staff carefully considered the elements of the Next Five Strategic Plan to identify possible opportunities for enhancements to the adopted goals and objectives for children Prenatal through Three across the priority goal areas of Health, Early Learning and Safe Children and Families.

**Approach**

The last 20 years of research on early child development has demonstrated that for very young children social, emotional, physical and mental development are inextricably linked. The Prenatal through Three Focus Area goal is to increase the number of children who achieve social, emotional, cognitive, language, physical and motor developmental milestones to the best of their potential, with primary emphasis on the most vulnerable families with young children and their communities. In view of the data and information gathered, this new investment essentially points to an approach of programmatic interventions and policy solutions that promote good health, strong family functioning and quality early learning experiences as they work in tandem to create the building blocks for child educational readiness and subsequent success.

**First 5 LA Balanced Funding Approach**

During the September 9, 2004 board meeting, the Commission approved an approach to balance universal and targeted Commission activities under the Next Five Strategic Plan that includes: 1) a universal component with strategies intended to have widespread impact; and, 2) a targeted component with focused efforts in a priority group of geographic communities. Based on this decision, the Prenatal through Three Focus Area conceptual framework applies both universal and targeted components. The universal component includes funding policy, communication and outreach methods with widespread reach and availability. The targeted component directs funding to needs being addressed by Commission initiatives and increases communications and outreach methods to selected communities or geographic regions in Los Angeles County. This approach will allow First 5 LA to employ strategies across the County to integrate previous and future Commission efforts at the local community level, produce significant outcomes for Los Angeles County children and families and also increase our ability to track positive changes within communities.

**The Next Five Strategic Plan Programmatic Strategies**

Utilizing the programmatic strategies of Capacity Building, Systems Improvement and Sustainability, as adopted in the Next Five Strategic Plan, the Prenatal through Three Focus Area seeks to bridge the gaps within and among systems
and community level services that serve the prenatal through three population and their families. As evidenced through the passage of the *Next Five* Strategic Plan, the Commission has shown commitment to leveraging both social and financial capital, an approach that collectively enables a significant level of influence to improve services, strengthen resources and support for children prenatal through three and their families. Part of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area investment will use First 5 LA’s unique structure and flexible funding to cultivate partnerships and collaborations to glue these efforts together and infuse Los Angeles County communities and systems with prenatal through three services that are efficient, available and accessible. To support the *Next Five* Strategic Plan strategies, the Prenatal through Three Focus Area presents the Commission with an opportunity to strengthen its leadership role with an expanded group of individuals and strategic partners. These relationships will help to leverage efforts around our county’s community resource networks. They help to develop the social and financial capital of communities by linking each community’s resources and skills into a learning process that generates both continuous improvement in performance and increased commitment to child and family oriented policy, resources and positive outcomes respectively. The Commission can potentially create a form of social cohesiveness by strengthening or expanding inter-organizational collaborative and network structures. These include corporate and governmental social capital that are ready to take action on children prenatal through three issues. Likewise, families can become engaged in community building, knowledge building and advocacy-oriented activities.

The Prenatal through Three Focus Area funds will be used towards the programmatic strategies’ activities that includes but are not limited to:

- Improving access to services of care for infants and toddlers, particularly through existing initiatives such as the single point of entry through Healthy Kids, Partnerships for Families, Universal Preschool, and the Healthy Birth Learning and Best Babies Collaboratives;
- Identify and prioritize key public policies that cut across all goal areas and initiatives that enable leveraging of First 5 LA such as provider training on children with special needs and disabilities; examination of existing funding streams for early childhood services (Title I, TANF and others) as well as financing options for overall infrastructure development;
- Increase the capacity of individuals and organizations focused on the zero through three populations at the community and county level with an emphasis on parents and providers;
- Improve linkages by supporting relationship and communication building, integration and coordination of services across different disciplines of service;
- Identify new partnerships and possibly enhance current First 5 LA Strategic Partnerships, e.g., new children’s’ advocacy groups and First 5 California and Southern California Regional First 5 Association; and
• Improve collaboration and coordination around implementation strategies and data collection, for planning, policymaking, advocacy and evaluation.

**FOCUS AREA KEY CONCEPTS**

**The role of parents and caregivers**

The crucial element in the Prenatal through Three Focus Area --based on extensive review of research, feedback from the public, experts, planning meetings-- is the role of parents, primary caregivers and other systems of support in general. The creation of a feedback loop of knowledge involving parents ultimately benefits the child.

Children’s primary caregivers are central, as we understand them to be children’s first teachers, protectors, doctors, etc. They prepare children for learning and social adaptation so it is important to enhance parents’ support for their child’s development. The quality of children’s interaction with parents and caregivers influences cognitive, social and emotional growth throughout life. Children develop within these relationships that model for them appropriate behavioral interactions, early learning and positive coping strategies. When the ability to care for a child lovingly, effectively and thoroughly is compromised, the long term social and emotional consequences cannot be overstated. Early childhood psychology research consistently point to the connection between the emotional competence of children and parenting practices. Early relationships have permanent effects on brain development, health and later mental health. Research on children’s early attachment experiences has shown that a lack of parental warmth and affection in early childhood can be linked to behavior problems in later years. The impact of this social and emotional development on schooling is visible as early as preschool where research has shown how teachers provide disruptive children less feedback, so these same children spend less time learning and receive less instruction.

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Quality of Services and Support System

Parents are not alone in creating the conditions for optimal healthy development of young children. Another central component of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area Framework is the relationship between service providers and families. The importance of provider quantity and quality cannot be overstated. Inherent within this framework, are the differing capacities of service providers to service families effectively for example, once children are screened for early developmental delays, gaps may exist in community providers’ readiness to deliver appropriate assessment services for children and their families. As previously mentioned public policymaking will be critical to organizations’ capacity and ability to help create and sustain services and conditions for optimal prenatal care, early child health (including comprehensive services for children with special health care needs) and parental bonding and early learning. This communication and relationship is mutually beneficial to both parents and providers as both can model and learn from each other. The personal knowledge parents bring to bear on child rearing as well as the knowledge that service providers feed back to parents with respect to physical and mental health, effective child rearing strategies, the importance of early learning activities, etc. Both parents and providers are integral to this feedback loop of knowledge. Within relationships appropriate support services help build the capacity of parents (and children by implication), of community (through its providers and caregivers) and subsequently create the foundation for sustainability. Furthermore, by creating strong relationships among a wide range of providers larger systems of care and support are improved.

Role and Definition of Community

The Prenatal through Three Focus Area Framework fosters contexts for early learning. Within this focus area “community” is understood as equating to all contexts for early learning: families, neighborhoods, and early learning programs. “Community” may be defined as:

- a geographic location as small as a neighborhood or as large as a Service Planning Area (SPA);
- the families who are served and could benefit from Prenatal Through Three Focus Area interventions;
- a collection of individuals who want to band together to learn or create together, as with First 5 LA’s Healthy Births’ Learning and Best Babies Collaboratives, School Readiness Learning Collaboratives, Family Resource Networks, Community Developed Initiatives Learning Exchange and the upcoming Partnerships for Families support networks; or
- the individuals from social advocacy groups and corporate businesses who are interested in the long term benefits of child health and early identification, have organized themselves into a learning community that
meet together, learn together, and/or are resolutely looking at ways to bring power and influence to change the condition of very young children.

In the Prenatal through Three Focus Area Framework, funding allocations may vary across initiatives or collaboratives, just as community is defined and involved in each initiative differently. An important point in the development of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area is that all types of communities (families, ethnic, providers and geographic/physical locations, etc) can be meaningfully involved in planning, implementing and evaluating this focus area.

**Impact on Early Childhood Developmental Continuum**

The extensive information and research gathered suggests key focal points that highlight the importance of early childhood experiences, relationships and developmental milestones that prepare children for school. The Commission can explore ways to invest in a continuum of care and support to identify early possible problems and maximize opportunities for intervention, to ensure optimal development in the following areas:

- Prenatal Care,
- Early Childhood Health,
- Parental Bonding and Attachment, and
- Early Learning Experiences

Prenatal conditions refer to the physical and mental health of the mother, pregnancy screenings, general prenatal care, and newborn screenings. Early childhood care refers to early developmental screenings for infants and toddlers to assess the child’s developmental progress and regular physical screenings and potential special health care needs. This includes referrals for assessments and service delivery for children with physical, emotional or cognitive delays. The health and well being of parents is also included, encompassing screening and care for maternal depression. Parental-child bonding and attachment are opportunities to strengthen the building blocks for learning, since learning and other social emotional growth exists within the context of relationships. Thus, it is important to support this particular aspect of a child’s life by supporting his/her parents’ literacy skills, knowledge of safety (prevention of abuse and neglect), and early childhood development and effective parenting strategies.

Quality childcare remains important. If a working family needs childcare or preschool to acquire and maintain work the issue of caregiver bonding and quality early learning environments exist. Seventy-three percent of children are cared for by someone other than a parent(s) and sixty-one percent of all working mothers have children under the age of three. Moreover, it is estimated that by 2010 eighty-five percent of the California workforce will consist of parents.

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(Children’s Advocacy Institute, California Working Families Policy Summit, Recommendations on Childcare, January 2003). Research has shown that when children were given the opportunities for early quality educational intervention, the impacts can be seen up until junior high.  

All of these components are central to early childhood experiences and provide the contexts for early learning and together create the three predictors of school readiness and later success in life: good health, strong families and high quality early learning experiences. For instance, creating healthy birth conditions reduces the likelihood of low birth weights, which often contribute to poor learning outcomes. Ensuring regular and high quality developmental screening during the early years of life can assure that developmental delays, disabilities and learning and behavioral problems are identified early, and that children receive prompt and appropriate service interventions that can have long lasting impacts on children’s learning. Furthermore, early literacy, such as letter recognition and vocabulary acquisition exists within the context of relationships and therefore is dependent on emotional and social development.

The Prenatal through Three Focus Area investment of First 5 LA provides an opportunity to create and promote optimal contexts for prenatal care, early childhood health, parent-child attachments and early learning. In turn, these optimal contexts can prevent developmental delays in young children; promote the primary role and engagement of parents. Parents can be empowered to become active participants in the process of service utilization, expand their knowledge, and ultimately become part of the efforts to promote school readiness.

The Commission has an opportunity to promote an innovative, comprehensive multi-level, cohesive, blended array of program options for children and their families within communities, the County and the State as needed. Interventions must occur before disparities in schooling appear, through appropriate transitional supports across the developmental trajectory. Staff’s approach toward creating an outline for a Prenatal through Three Focus Area plan utilized both data and information gathering methodology to inform its recommendations to the Commission.

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PRENATAL THROUGH THREE FOCUS AREA FRAMEWORK

The key concepts previously discussed link research, best practice, and expert testimony about important issues affecting the prenatal through three populations. The Commission’s action and enhanced investments at the child, family/community, and systems levels have the potential to positively impact the outcomes as illustrated by the Framework on Appendix A.

Objectives

Using the Next Five Strategic Plan’s objectives as the blueprint for crafting the Prenatal through Three Focus Area’s objectives, staff reviewed an extensive list of eighteen objectives that correlated and applied to the intention of this focus area. Two lists of objectives were identified – one which are objectives currently being met by existing Commission investments and another list of objectives which does not yet have any investments. Key to this consolidation was the Commission’s request that this focus area integrate existing initiatives. By combining these two lists of objectives to create the Prenatal through Three Focus Area objectives, staff recommends maximizing existing investments in prevention oriented activities at the individual, organizational, community and systems level changes with attention to early identification of developmental problems. Staff proposes this be achieved through a strength-based approach that expands or creates linkages with community assets and resources that exist in Los Angeles County. The following objectives are built upon the Commission’s belief that the health, physical and social-emotional well being of children are the building blocks for their school readiness. The foundation of these recommended objectives is that the earliest interventions are the most critical. The objectives are as follows:

1) Increase the percentage of children whose developmental and behavioral needs are screened, assessed, and as needed, met, universally but particularly in communities in which major First 5 LA investments exist;
2) Increase parents/families/providers’ knowledge of and support for early childhood development and appropriate parenting strategies, universally but particularly in communities in which major First 5 LA investments exist;
3) Increase the number of parents/families/providers who have knowledge of age-appropriate nutrition, physical activity strategies and the developmental and behavioral needs of infants and toddlers, universally but particularly in communities in which major First 5 LA investments exist;
4) Increase the engagement of key elected leaders/providers/parents/families about the value and availability of early learning, health and safe children and families programs through existing local governments, community organizations, foundations, philanthropic groups, and private business; and
5) Improve or develop systems that support the needs of families with children prenatal through three and their communities.
Proposed activities

The results from the planning process outlined above highlights the importance of prevention, the role of and relationship between parents and providers, and the need to link all systems of physical, mental and emotional care and supports for children and their families, as central to the activities of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area. Staff has conducted a preparatory review of the degree of common ground across First 5 LA initiatives and projects. This review included implementation approaches such as strengthening or creating community based resource networks and collaboratives, to identify gaps, opportunities and enhancements that can potentially align with the Commission’s increased emphasis on children prenatal through three.

Based upon this information gathering process, there were four major themes that were repeatedly identified as areas of needed enhancement within current Commission activities: early screening and assessment of developmental delays, improving services for children with special health care needs, parent and provider support and education, and systems level enhancements in service coordination and integration. Integral to each of these themes is the role of public policy, advocacy and community engagement. The Commission has an opportunity to play a leadership role in the enhancement of the prenatal through three issues at the community, county, and to an extent, the state and national level.

Recommended Service Enhancement for Children Prenatal Through Three: Early Identification, Referral and Assessment & Special Health Care Needs Services:

The Commission’s existing initiatives indicate there are various services to be provided such as early learning through Universal Preschool, prenatal care through Healthy Births and child welfare services and other family supports through Partnerships for Families. An examination of these initiatives specific objectives as well as feedback from key informants and an expert panel, suggest two general areas as possible enhancements to improve the behavioral and physical needs of infants and toddlers: early developmental delays and the special health care needs of behaviorally, cognitively and physically disabled children.

With respect to developmental delays, there is a lack of early, high-quality screening, assessment and referrals and services for infants and toddlers who have developmental delays, disabilities, learning or behavioral problems. This recommendation points to possibly funding this area. One example could be to enhance the Healthy Kids program by having providers participate in a demonstration where funding incentives would be provided for the early screening and assessments for developmental delays. Early screening of
developmental delays (which includes social-emotional, mental health and behavioral problems) produces potential long-term academic and socio-economic benefits for children, and society as a whole. The early identification of less severe emotional and behavioral disabilities can prevent the development of severe delays that later require more intensive services and interventions.

The second recommendation points to an opportunity for the Commission to enhance the Early Developmental Screening and Intervention Initiative (formerly Quality Enhancement-Q.E.), by possibly investing in improving the delivery of care and support to children identified with special health care needs and their families (e.g. a child’s birth defect, a mother’s mental health, or children identified at the prenatal stage due to a mother’s health status and other critical factors). Many young children have significant medical problems requiring special services and systems of support through the coordination and integration of providers. Therefore, to increase the opportunity for screening by all providers who come in contact with young children it is just as important to improve the community and county-level infrastructure of service providers through related policy and advocacy activities.

These recommended programmatic components are in line with other local and state level activities regarding screening and assessment, which present leveraging opportunities for the Commission to link with other programs, leaders and policy makers. For example:

1) First 5 California screening efforts through the Special Needs Project Demonstration Sites.

2) The Los Angeles County Early Identification and Intervention Group is a Collaborative that includes representatives from the Departments of Health Services and Mental Health, school systems, professional organizations, universities, foundations, program administrators, service providers, advocates and parents. This collaborative is creating a community based screening and follow up service component known as a “pod,” –to find, fund and follow children with disabilities, delays, or problems. This is a potential systems enhancement that can become the access point for initial screening (and additional assessment as needed) and the locus of “systems navigation” to inform and support parents’ efforts to foster school readiness, provide effective referrals for needed services, and increase connectivity among service providers.

Through its initiatives and projects, the Commission acknowledges that early identification, referral and assessment of developmental delays are important including, identifying the specific service improvements for children with special health care needs. Staff’s analysis suggests there is an opportunity for these to be enhanced to an extent through the Commission’s allocation. As with all of the
Prenatal through Three Focus Area recommendations the feasibility and degree of emphasis will be determined with the assistance of a consultant team.

**Recommended First 5 LA Initiatives’ Enhancement for Families and Communities: Parent and Provider Education and Support**

The Commission’s current initiatives have made significant progress toward organizing providers, parents, policy makers within collaboratives and networks of support, such as the Healthy Births Learning Collaboratives, Best Babies Collaboratives, the Partnerships for Families’ Community Networks, and the School Readiness Learning Communities. Furthermore, existing initiatives have focused on implementing strategies that build on community resources and strengthen family networks of support. Staff’s review of these activities suggests there is an opportunity to enhance these family and community building efforts by strengthening two areas: parent/family and provider support and education. Specifically these enhancements may be around early childhood development, age-appropriate nutrition and physical activity, developmental screening and assessment, parental literacy, the importance of early learning activities, and effective parenting strategies. Currently, these different components are part of some of First 5 LA’s flagship initiatives; however, parent support and education and provider training could be enhanced as appropriate to the target population and the particular intent of each initiative goal area. (See Appendix B: for Prenatal through Three Programmatic Organization). For example, the implementation phase could determine that enhancements may be in the area of developmental screening training for families and service providers but not in parenting strategies. The opposite could be true as well. In order to promote best practices, policies, and provide quality environments in health, safety of children and families, and early learning, this recommendation points to establishing a standard level of readiness. This readiness may apply to all groups of adults who provide parenting, care giving or health services support to infants and toddlers, ranging from parents, health care providers, teachers, early care and education providers, and other care providers.

Some examples of opportunities for the Commission to invest in these service enhancements include but are not limited to:

- Integrating Prenatal through Three Focus Area objectives through its Universal Preschool efforts, to correlate quality improvement objectives that relate to the training of formal and informal child care providers. For example, a critical element identified has been the transitional needs of children from daycare settings to preschool centers. Universal Preschool sites and/or participating family child care settings could be where early child care providers and parents of children in the prenatal through three stages would receive early developmental screening education, increased knowledge and awareness of developmental milestones among other
training. Concurrently, children would also receive screening services within or through these settings.

- Supporting Partnerships for Families’ activities around early developmental screening services to possibly enhance parental education services, provider education and the expansion of the community networks established through this initiative.

- First 5 LA can enhance its infrastructure building projects. For example, its investments in community-based infrastructure improvement and capacity building activities has created collaboratives, targeted community driven activities and family/provider support networks, and the strengthening of the Service Planning Area Councils (SPA Councils), etc. This infrastructure can be enhanced to function as hubs that help provide families opportunities to receive parental education and other early support services.

- Expanding the Best Babies Collaborative and the Healthy Births Learning Collaborative could enhance the Healthy Births Initiative. This initiative specifically concentrates on increased access to improve prenatal conditions and birth outcomes through a community based approach. Enhancements could also be in the area of early developmental screening and/or parent education and provider support services, particularly as this relates to nutrition and physical activity.

As presented above, including parents as active participants in the process of getting services for their children strengthens families, which then strengthens communities. Community empowerment feeds back to build stronger families and improved outcomes for children. The Prenatal Through Three Focus Area planning process, in particular discussions with a number of experts, points to the importance of impacting the community based and county level service infrastructure, including the ranges of necessary providers, and other community members that come into contact with parents directly. Since the window of opportunity to educate prospective parents is relatively small, it is crucial to strengthen the circle of service providers and support networks that will come into contact with families more readily.

**Recommended First 5 LA Systems-level Initiative:**

The need for enhancing systems of care and support, and increasing the accessibility of these services to families is clearly needed for all children prenatal through five. The feedback from providers, experts, parents and Commission meetings suggests two types of systems of care and support that may benefit First 5 LA through initiative and project enhancements based on the Prenatal Through Three Focus Area investment – one system targeting the
infrastructure created by First 5 LA initiatives and another targeting the larger countywide systems of care.

The First 5 LA investments present a unique opportunity to identify innovative and effective ways to create an "Initiatives Network" across existing initiatives. Integrating all efforts across goals and initiatives and improving care and support for children, families and providers, this network can potentially link together to form a First 5 LA network to strengthen or expand communications and coordination across initiative collaboratives and other programs to maximize the Commission’s efforts. (See Appendix B for Programmatic Organizational model). Most importantly for parents, this network can help facilitate families’ seamless entrance into services of care within the context of their communities. This may include extending opportunities for parent and community capacity building, which may help enhance individual and organizational knowledge, public engagement and a sense of belonging in neighborhoods.

First 5 LA has the opportunity to target a larger system of care by assuming the role as convener of existing partners and identifying new strategic partners. The Commission can convene philanthropic foundations, cities/counties/state/federal agencies, private capital sources and businesses, and corporate sector entities to address the Prenatal through Three Focus Area and overall Commission interests across initiatives. This collaborative can identify leveraging, sustainability, and systems improvement opportunities. Additionally, this collaborative will support policy change to open funding streams and a mechanism to support the Commission’s funded programs throughout Los Angeles County. Some examples of this collaborative are:

- Partnering with other organizations in the public and private sectors with similar funding interests and/or programmatic strategies, and
- Creation of partial and continuous responsibility for First 5 LA funded investments to ensure sustainability of positive outcomes.

These program and systems-level recommendations specifically have the potential to address the needs of children prenatal through three via current and new initiatives. They hold the potential to be effective approaches and establish performance goals that can be tracked across initiatives (See Appendix C: Intersection and Impact of Activities Model).

This recommended systems-level enhancement opportunity can potentially create a model for integrating public health, mental health and community based services to address the needs of children and their families. This model of integrating services and using professionals and paraprofessionals in multi-disciplinary teams can offer useful lessons for other communities embarking on similar initiatives. This emphasis on systems level integration provides the Commission an opportunity to align with other efforts such as:
• The California Department of Health Services’ initiative, State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (SECCS) whose purpose is to strengthen the state's early childhood system of services for young children and their families. Their objective is to develop a state-level, comprehensive, integrated approach to the coordination of these services.

• San Mateo Prenatal to Three Program is a comprehensive system for information, support and care for prenatal to age three Medi-Cal families in San Mateo County. It connects agencies and health care providers to families in culturally appropriate ways to foster healthier behaviors and practices regarding nutrition, parenting approaches, reduced environmental risks, and improved psychosocial interactions.

• Alameda County’s Every Child Counts focuses on prevention oriented system of care and support. It is an effort to develop a comprehensive, integrated system for planning and providing services and support to families with children up to age five. Its mission is to develop and implement a high quality, community-based, countywide system of continuous prevention and early intervention services to improve environments critical to the health and well-being of young children and their families.

• The State Commission is currently strengthening its focus on children prenatal through three. This provides another level of enhanced activities potentially within the legislative arena and with targeted state departments such as the departments of education, health, social services and finance among others.

• Los Angeles County and Statewide policy and established child and family advocacy groups as well as major grant making organizations and corporations are increasingly reaching out to First 5 LA and seek collaboration in addressing workforce readiness, early care and education, health care, economic wellbeing, and environmental safety issues (Welfare Redesign, Family Support Funders’ Group, Governor's Workforce Readiness Committee, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Children Now and others).

These recommendations impact the different levels of accountability that the Commission has committed to in the Next Five Strategic Plan – the child, family/communities, and systems.

**Focus Area Outcomes**

The Prenatal through Three Focus Area’s recommended approach, in general, is one that supports parents, caregivers and communities’ ability to promote the
healthy development of their children. Therefore, the objectives, activities and programmatic strategies that drive the concept are linked to the following five desired focus area outcomes:

- Good Health
- Positive Early Child Experiences and Relationships
- Strong Family Functioning
- Engaged Stakeholders
- Improved Policies and Legislation

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Implementation of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area Conceptual Framework requires a two-phase approach: 1) comprehensive planning; and 2) implementation of specific First 5 LA initiative enhancements potentially around Healthy Kids, Healthy Births, and Partnerships for Families, etc.; and collaborative and resource network enhancement plans. It is anticipated that this implementation plan, in total, will consist of approximately nine months (See Appendix D for Implementation Structure).

**Phase I: Comprehensive Planning of First 5 LA Initiatives and Prenatal Through Three Focus Area (January-April 2005)**

Implementation of Phase I will begin by identifying a consultant team to work with staff to further develop the Prenatal through Three Focus Area conceptual framework as well as develop the integration and the collaboratives/systems change piece, both internally and the larger systems, respectively. For the service component, the consultants along with staff will be responsible for developing specific approaches of how best to enhance current Commission investments. This will include considering ongoing initiative activities and evidence based analysis of the interventions related to developmental screening and assessment services as well as the parent/provider education and support services component. For example, the consultant team, along with staff, will help determine which component, if not all three, of the early identification and assessment of developmental delays services (screening, referral and assessment) will be enhanced, and which parent-provider education and support intervention has cross cutting, multiple benefits.

For the systems component, the consultant team will be responsible for initializing the coordination of the First 5 LA Initiatives Network. The consultants will develop a working knowledge of the various First 5 LA initiatives and become actively involved with the initiatives’ activities in order to determine best how to create a seamless network of services and information. The members of the consultant team that will be focusing on systems components of this plan will be responsible for bringing together all appropriate stakeholders (e.g. stakeholders and constituents as appropriate) to discuss and coordinate leveragings,
sustainability, and systems improvement opportunities that address the opportunities for improving prenatal through three populations’ health, early learning, and safety. For example, with respect to our systems improvement activities, this could include developing a plan for involving families in the planning, involving geographic communities (identify and involve key community organizations, SPA councils, etc.), and involving the provider community – individuals with an interest, responsibility or expertise on the respective topic. The consultant team would also identify mechanisms for stakeholder involvement such as program surveys of families, training networks for providers, professional organizations and neighborhood centers. More importantly the consultant team would develop ways to get this information to the First 5 LA Commission in a systematic way over time. In addition to these activities, a feedback loop would be developed for the First 5 LA Commission to have ongoing discourse from geographic communities, family communities, and provider communities.

Phase II: Implementation of Service and Collaborative Plans (May-September 2005)

The objective of Phase II will be to allocate funds based on the information obtained by the consultant team in their assessment/planning phase. Since the purpose of this focus area is not only to enhance existing initiatives through needed additional services but also to support integration and coordinate existing resources within First 5 LA and through the county, funding allocations will look different depending on the initiative being enhanced or the collaborative being created.

Following funding by the Commission, the consultant team will support the implementation activities of the respective initiative and provide any needed training or technical assistance. The consultant team will also foster linkages and sharing of best practices among networks and other entities addressing prenatal through three populations. The consultant team will also: 1) coordinate and convene stakeholders; 2) leverage funds and resources; and 3) work with policymakers and County Departments to infuse services in communities.

It is important to note that Community assessments are an on-going process. The consultant team will work with the collaborative and/or resource networks and First 5 LA program planning, implementation, finance and research staff to collect data on an on-going basis to inform Commission funding decisions as well as to leverage additional funds and informing other key stakeholders. (See Appendix E: Roles and Responsibilities)

Evaluation and Data Development

As part of the implementation, the Prenatal through Three Focus Area evaluation will assess the impact of the framework at the child, family/community and county levels. An evaluator will be identified who will develop a comprehensive process
and outcome evaluation to be implemented at all levels of activities to link the Prenatal through Three Focus Area’s conceptual framework to the expected outcomes. Additionally, the evaluator will work with current First 5 LA evaluation contractors to determine the integrative, complementary and unique impact of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area efforts across related, ongoing initiatives and projects.

First 5 LA staff and partners will also assess the existing prenatal through three data sources, both internal and external to First 5 LA. Based on that assessment, a development plan will be implemented incorporating existing research partners such as; Los Angeles Department of Health, PHFE WIC, and USC School of Communication. The desired outcome of this assessment would be to broaden the knowledge base regarding prenatal through three data issues in Los Angeles County and draw attention to the programmatic efforts of First 5 LA.

**Next Steps**

Following Commission approval, staff will apply the Prenatal through Three Focus Area Conceptual Framework. During Phase I, staff will develop a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to identify the Prenatal through Three Focus Area team of programmatic consultants and evaluator. The Prenatal through Three Focus Area consultant team will begin comprehensive planning of services and systems level change activities across First 5 LA initiatives and systems of care and support across Los Angeles County to the degree and extent identified in the assessment phase. Research and evaluation partners will implement the Commission’s accountability framework. Overall, staff is developing a list of broad county-wide indicators and initiative specific benchmarks.
### APPENDIX A: First 5 LA Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Conceptual Framework

**Goal:** To increase the number of children who achieve appropriate social, emotional, cognitive, language, physical and motor developmental milestones to the best of their potential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accountability Levels</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>First 5 Existing Investments</th>
<th>Approaches to Potential Enhancements</th>
<th>Focus Area Outcomes**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Child**             | 1) Increase the percentage of children whose developmental and behavioral needs are screened, assessed, and met, universally but particularly in communities in which major First 5 LA investments exist; 2) Increase parents/families/providers’ knowledge of and support for early childhood development and appropriate parenting strategies, universally but particularly in communities in which major First 5 LA investments exist; 3) Increase the number of parents/families/providers who have knowledge of age-appropriate nutrition, physical activity strategies and the developmental and behavioral needs of infants and toddlers, universally but particularly in communities in which major First 5 LA investments exist; 4) Increase the engagement of key elected leaders/providers/parents/families about the value and availability of early learning, health and safe children and families programs through existing local governments, community organizations, foundations, philanthropic groups, foundations and private business; and 5) Improve or develop systems that support the needs of families with children prenatal through three and their communities. | Health  
Healthy Births  
Healthy Kids - Early Developmental Screening and Intervention (formerly Q.E.) | **Child**  
Early Screening and Assessment  
**Families and Communities**  
Parenting Support and Education  
- Developmental Screening and Assessment  
- Age-appropriate nutrition and physical activity  
- Early Childhood Developmental Education  
- Parenting/Play strategies  
**Families/Communities & Systems**  
First 5 LA Initiatives Network  
**Systems**  
Strategic Collaborative for Systems Change | **Good Health**  
Positive Early Child Experiences and Relationships  
**Strong Family Functioning**  
Engaged Stakeholders  
**Improved Policies and Legislation** |
| **Family/Community** | | | | |
| **Systems/Policy** | | | | |

**The Prenatal through Three Focus Area will utilize the appropriate School Readiness Indicators to measure impacts, as specific enhancements and activities become more clearly defined.**
Appendix B: Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Programmatic Organization

Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Enhancements Across Initiatives:

| Developmental Screening and Assessment | Early Childhood Developmental Education |
| Parent/Provider Support | Parenting/Play strategies |
| Age-appropriate nutrition and physical activity |

First 5 LA Flagship Initiatives
- Healthy Kids - Early Developmental Screening and Intervention (QE)
- Healthy Births
- Partnerships for Families
- Universal Preschool

Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Initiatives Network
- Collaboration and communication across initiative collaboratives to create an overarching First 5 Network across investments – making them accessible and available across goals and initiatives

First 5 LA Strategic Collaborative for Systems Change
- Consisting of philanthropic foundations, cities/counties/state/federal agencies, private capital sources and businesses, and corporate sector entities
- Convenes Collaboratives to:
  - Identify leveraging, sustainability, and systems improvement opportunities
    - EX: Partner with other organizations in funding strategies
    - EX: Create partial and continuous responsibility for First 5 LA funded investments to ensure sustainability of positive outcomes.
  - Create policy change that will open funding streams and mechanisms to support the Commission funded programs throughout Los Angeles County.
APPENDIX C: Intersection and Impact of Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Activities Model

First 5 LA Priority Goal Areas

First 5 LA Collaborative for Systems Change

First 5 LA Initiatives Network (First 5 LA – IN)

Good Health

Early Learning

Safe Children and Families

Child & Families

UPK

Healthy Kids

PFF

Healthy Births

Early Dev. Screening

Other First 5 LA Investments
Appendix D: Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Implementation Structure

The Prenatal through Three Focus Area conceptual framework distributes the various responsibilities across the different identified consultants who will serve as the primary coordinators of activities. Governance and administration for the Prenatal through Three Focus Area will function similarly to other Commission and will include:

- First 5 LA
- Programmatic Consultant Team
- Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Evaluator
- Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Initiatives Network
- Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Strategic Collaborative for Systems Change.

PRENATAL THROUGH THREE FOCUS AREA IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

First 5 LA
Initiative Management and Support

Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Consultant: Technical Support and Leveraging

Evaluator

Enhancement of Existing Investments

Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Initiatives Network

Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Strategic Collaborative for Systems Change
Appendix E: Roles and Responsibilities

Role of First 5 LA

First 5 LA will be responsible for general management and fiscal oversight of initiatives that emerge from the Prenatal through Three Focus Area. Other roles include:

1. Utilizing Prenatal Through Three Focus Area dollars to fill gaps in resources, services and supports for children zero through three and their families;
2. Leveraging additional resources;
3. Coordinating and collaborating with public/private agencies; and
4. Participating in large scale systems improvement planning and advocacy with other entities focused on the prenatal through three systems of care.

Role of the Consultants

There will be a team of consultants who will work in coordination and be responsible for identifying and developing appropriate integration of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area framework into existing Commission investments. Other roles include, but are not limited to:

1. Developing a comprehensive technical support plan;
2. Identifying appropriate service integration into the existing initiatives of Healthy Births, Healthy Kids - Early Developmental Screening and Assessment, Partnerships for Families, and Universal Preschool;
3. Develop evidence-based recommendations to determine specific service enhancement to existing initiatives with respect to early identification of developmental delays and parent-providers education and support;
4. Coordinating and collaborating with various entities interested in enhancing and streamlining the prenatal through three systems of care;
5. Facilitating and leveraging opportunities for pooling resources for the networks;
6. Assisting with prenatal through three community and initiative assessments and plans; and,
7. Coordinating and collaborating with First 5 LA, the other programmatic consultants and the evaluator.

The selection of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area consultants will be based on the following criteria:

1. Knowledge of prenatal through three systems of care, policies, and appropriate practices;
2. Demonstrated ability to work successfully with diverse communities in Los Angeles County;
3. Ability to leverage social and financial capital;
4. Knowledge of business sector;
5. Experience working in complex community based initiatives;
6. Experience providing technical support to community based organizations;
7. Experience with community assessments and evaluation processes;
8. Availability to dedicate a significant amount of time to the project; and,
9. Submission of a reasonable proposed budget for the project, given its scope.
Role of the Prenatal Through Three Focus Area Evaluator

First 5 LA will contract with an evaluator who will be responsible for working with the First 5 LA initiatives, the programmatic consultant team, and First 5 LA staff to develop and implement a comprehensive process and outcome evaluation plan to determine the effectiveness of this model. The evaluator will also be responsible for assessing the effectiveness of the Collaboratives Network and the Strategic Collaborative for Systems Change.

The evaluator will be responsible for:

1. Conducting cost-benefit analyses to demonstrate potential cost savings that result from a comprehensive community and systems-based approach;
2. Analysis about the added benefits to children, families and communities affected by existing First 5 LA Programs;
3. Assessing the integration and improved performance across existing initiatives;
4. Assessing the effectiveness of the programmatic consultants; and,
5. Conducting research and policy related activities based on:
   a. First 5 LA School Readiness Indicators that are refined and specific to the Prenatal Through Three Focus Area enhancement activities; and
   b. First 5 LA’s lead role in facilitating a Systems Change Collaborative and the related cost-benefit, policy, and leveraging impacts.

The selection of the Prenatal through Three Focus Area Evaluator will be based on the following criteria:

1. Experience evaluating complex community-based initiatives;
2. Experience evaluating prevention projects;
3. Demonstrated ability to work successfully with diverse communities in Los Angeles County;
4. Experience implementing a participatory evaluation approach;
5. Availability to dedicate a significant amount of time to the project; and,
6. Proposed budget for the initiative evaluation is reasonable given the Commission’s evaluation resources.