

# Summary of Commission Actions



Champions For Our Children  
www.First5LA.org

## Meeting of November 14, 2013

### Commission Funds Best Start Implementation Plan

In a unanimous vote, the First 5 LA Commission allocated up to \$4.9 million in funds to begin implementing the Building Stronger Families Framework (BSFF) within its 14 Best Start Communities.

As part of the organization's 2009-2015 Strategic Plan, First 5 LA shifted its grant-making approach to partner with and strengthen families in 14 select communities in Los Angeles County, while continuing to fund a broad array of investments that touch children and systems countywide. Best Start is First 5 LA's place-based initiative to improve outcomes for young children by working with these select communities to develop and lead a common agenda to strengthen and support families.

The Best Start framework reflects First 5 LA's belief that if parents are strong and communities support families, then child health, safety and school readiness will improve. Towards that end, First 5 LA is partnering with Best Start communities to support parents to develop the capacities foundational to early learning and positive child outcomes.

The 14 Best Start Communities are; Central Long Beach, Compton and East Compton, East Los Angeles, El Monte and South El Monte, Lancaster, Metro LA, Pacoima, Palmdale, Panorama City, South Los Angeles/Broadway-Manchester, South Los Angeles/West Athens, Southeast L.A. County Cities including Bell, Bell Gardens, Cudahy and Maywood, Watts-Willowbrook and Wilmington.

### Commission Approves More Than \$8 Million For Black Infant Health, Other Programs

First 5 LA Commission Chair and County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas presented a successful funding motion for the Commission to allocate \$7.2 million to maintain and enhance the Black Infant Health (BIH) Program over a five-year period; \$500,000 to support policy and systems changes that address the disparity in positive birth outcomes in African American families; and \$600,000 for a two-year effort that supports young at-risk fathers of children 0 to 5 years who are or have been on probation or have been in foster care but demonstrate motivation to become part of their child's life.

Recognizing the importance of the Black Infant Health program, the Commission voted in 2009 to support this effort after large reductions in state

### Highlights

- Best Start Implementation Plan Funded
- Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas Spearheads Black Infant Health Program Enhancement of \$7.2 million
- Countywide Vision Services Increased by \$1.5 million
- Farewell to Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas

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funding. The program in Los Angeles County, which seeks to lower the rate of black infant mortality, was facing severe cutbacks without the state funding for its three local programs, provided by the cities of Pasadena and Long Beach and the L.A. County Department of Public Health. First 5 LA agreed in 2011 to continue funding these contracts until the end of June 2014.

The state-wide program began in 1989 to address the alarming number of black infant deaths. Even now, black infants still have twice the mortality rate than their white counterparts, according to recent data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health. The additional funding will be used to enable the current Black Infant Health programs to maintain some individualized case management while also implementing the new group intervention approach as required by the California Department of Public Health.

The Black Infant Health program targets pregnant women and new mothers and aligns with First 5 LA's Building Stronger Families Framework. It strives to empower and connect mothers to important social support programs that help women develop healthy and supportive relationships with their children and partners and it also educates communities so that health outcomes can improve for African American infants.

## **Vision Services for Young Children Enhanced**

The Commission also approved a motion by Chairman Ridley-Thomas to allocate \$1.5 million to expand funding for First 5 LA's Children's Vision Care Countywide Initiative to a total of \$5.6 million, targeting the additional resources to Vision to Learn in an amount not to exceed \$1.2 million over four years and Junior Blind of America in an amount not-to-exceed \$300,000 over two years.

Since 2008, the Junior Blind of America Vision Screening Program has provided free comprehensive screenings to preschool children throughout Los Angeles County. Vision to Learn provides free eye exams and eyeglasses to children in low income communities through its innovative mobile eye clinics through an existing partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District.

The American Optometric Association has labeled vision disorders as one of the most prevalent disabling conditions among children. In addition, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force has recommended that children should have their vision examined between the ages of 3 – 5.

## **Commission Chairman's Report**

At his last meeting as Commission Chair, Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas took a moment to thank First 5 LA staff, Executive Director Kim Belshé and his fellow commissioners for the year of hard and productive work on behalf of children 0-5 and their families.

He also reflected upon the strides First 5 LA has taken in the past 15 years since the passage of Proposition 10. The work of First 5 LA speaks for itself, he said, and that it just keeps getting better and better.

## **Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Kim Belshé recognized the leadership of outgoing Commission Chair Mark Ridley-Thomas, citing his sense of urgency on issues affecting children 0-5 and their families. In particular, she



acknowledged his spearheading of efforts to strengthen Best Start and the Welcome Baby and Home Visitation programs, the latter two which have grown to reach nearly 40 percent of births countywide and 60 percent of births in Best Start Communities. In honor of his leadership promoting healthy starts for children, Chairman Ridley-Thomas was presented with a basket of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Belshé also remarked on her upcoming one year anniversary as executive director of First 5 LA, which she deemed as “quite remarkable”. The agency has spent a year learning “what we are doing well and not doing as well.” And now, with new leadership, the organization has made some mid-course corrections to improve the outcomes for children. She expressed optimism for the future.

## **New Agreements Made, Amendments Approved to Maintain Important Services**

The Commission approved 24 new agreements totaling \$7,079,451. These include:

- Three from the Research and Evaluation Investments area. One with UCLA Center for Health Policy Research for the Oral Health Exploratory Study: one with Harder + Company Community Research for the Countywide Systems Improvement Evaluation project and one with Mathematica Policy Research for the Comprehensive Professional Development Evaluation - \$796,537
- Twenty from the Place-Based Investments area for the implementation of the Select Home Visitation project and one for the implementation of the Welcome Baby/Universal Assessment of Newborns project - \$6,282,914

Four amendments for additional funding totaling \$1,080,682 which include:

- Two from the Countywide Investments area for the completion of Tot Parks and Trails - \$493,583
- One from the Countywide Strategies Investments area which provides additional funding for the second phase of the Data Systems Integration-SharePoint project - \$160,000
- One from the Place-Based Investments area which seeks additional funding for Providence Little Company of Mary Corporation on behalf of Torrance Memorial - \$427,099

Two renewals totaling \$561,333 which include:

- One from the Research and Evaluation Investments area to renew a contract with the National Opinion Research Center to continue the administration and data analysis of the First 5 LA Family Survey - \$280,973
- One from the Countywide Strategies Investments area to renew the contract with NetChemistry, Inc., for continued implementation of the Welcome Baby & Select Home Visitation program database – \$280,360

Tabled for future consideration were seven items from the Countywide Investments area for the implementation of the Early Identification of and Referrals to Early Intervention Services for Autism and Other Developmental Delays project.

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The First 5 LA Board of Commissioners is comprised of 17 members (nine voting, four ex-officio, four alternates). The board includes voting members appointed by each of the Los Angeles County supervisors and the L.A. County departments of Children and Family Services, Public Health and Mental Health. The Chairman of the L.A. County Board of Supervisors also serves as Chairman of the First 5 LA Commission. The Board also includes representatives from other educational, children and families organizations throughout the county. The Board of Commissioners meets on the second Thursday of each month at 1:30 p.m. unless otherwise indicated at the First 5 LA offices. All meetings are open to the public and agendas are posted [here](#) at least 72 hours in advance.

