Solutions in Health Care: Advantages of Telemedicine

With healthcare costs on the rise and families struggling to keep up, communities are looking for solutions to handle healthcare needs in a more efficient and economical fashion. Recently The Children's Partnership, a non-profit child advocacy organization, published an Issue Brief to inform leaders and the public of how telemedicine can address the health care needs of California's children.

Telemedicine is the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to provide patient care from a distance. Types of ICT can range from a doctor regularly communicating with a patient via e-mail to using satellite technology and video-conferencing to conduct real-time consultations between medical specialists.

Innovative telemedicine programs are currently being used across the nation. One of them is Baby CareLink. This program was developed to enhance interactions between families, staff, and community providers to improve the health of low-birth weight babies. Through videoconferencing, families can participate in virtual visits and distance learning from home during an infant's hospitalization.

Short-term studies show that, although the initial investment in a telemedicine program can be costly, the longer term benefit pays dividends. Also, according to the report, underserved communities stand to benefit the most. ICT cuts out transportation costs for doctors and families, and link families with expert doctors who may not otherwise serve children and families in otherwise medically underserved areas.

To download a copy of the report click here.

POLICY PICK
Reducing Infant Mortality Through Inter-Pregnancy Care

A child's best start in life begins with a healthy pregnancy and a healthy birth. First 5 LA is dedicated to ensuring that the children of L.A. County have access to the best care beginning at the prenatal stage. This is why First 5 LA, along with numerous other maternal and child advocates, recently asked Governor Schwarzenegger to sign AB 741, an "Infant Mortality: Inter-Pregnancy Care" bill, which aims to reduce child spacing and adverse pregnancy outcomes for women, particularly African-American women.
November 1, 9:30am-4:30pm: "Assisting Mothers to Successful Baby-Led Latching," is presented by the Breastfeeding Taskforce of Greater Los Angeles at Cedars Sinai Medical Center, Harvey Morse Auditorium, South Tower Plaza Level, 8700 Beverly Blvd., L.A. 90048. The event will feature Christina Smillie M.D., and Kittie Frantz, R.N. For more information call Debbie Cowley at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org and go to upcoming seminars.

November 3, 10:00am-2:00pm: "Festival of Readers," a community celebration of the power of reading in the home, presented by Friends of the Family, CCRC, and First 5 LA. The event will be held at Los Angeles Mission College, 13356 Eldridge Avenue, Sylmar 91342.

November 14: NEXUS XII Training Conference, "Violence in the Home and its Effects on Children," is being held at the Sheraton Universal Hotel, 333 Universal Hollywood Drive, Universal City, 91608. This event is sponsored by ICAN Associates, First 5 LA and the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. To register visit www.cce.csus.edu/ican.

November 16, 7:30am-10:00am: "18th Annual Legislative Forum," breakfast and panel discussion with local elected officials on early care and education. The event is located at the Odyssey Restaurant, 15600 Odyssey Drive, Granada Hills 91344. RSVP is required for this event. Please contact External Relations at (818) 717-1031.

Lecture Series: "Building A Community With Greater Compassion, Research and Outreach to Eliminate the Black Infant Mortality Crisis." The lecture series is being co-hosted by The USC Center for Premature Infant Health and Development. Please click here for dates and locations.

In California, African-American infants are twice as likely to die in their first year of life in comparison to other infants. A variety of factors may be the cause of this, including a mother's inability to access proper care before and/or during pregnancy and, consequently, very low birth weight (VLBW) deliveries of less than 3.3 pounds. Introduced by Assembly Majority Leader Karen Bass, AB 741 will offer women with previous VLBW deliveries an opportunity to receive continuous medical care between births to better ensure a safe and healthy delivery.

The measure calls for a three-year pilot program to take place in L.A., Oakland, and San Francisco. At least one program per city would be set up and administered by a community-based organization and/or service provider. The bill also directs the state Department of Public Health to seek funding for the pilot.

Studies show that VLBW babies are 600 times more likely than normal-weight infants to die in their first year of life. Those that do survive have a higher likelihood of developing cerebral palsy, lung and liver disease, and severe brain damage. With the kind of continuous medical care provided for in the Bass bill, unrecognized and poorly-controlled health problems in low birth weight babies can be detected earlier and effectively treated. Moreover, birth mothers will be given the opportunity to improve their lives and health, enabling them to become the best mothers they can be.

CHAMPION STAFF

Broadous Ready for School Staff Works Together to Nurture the Community

This new Monday Morning Report column is dedicated to featuring the special contribution that First 5 LA grantee staff and administrators make as they work on behalf of the families they serve.

At Broadous Ready for School, a First 5 LA-funded grantee in the San Fernando Valley, an atmosphere of love and nurturance is palpable, thanks to the gifted staff. Deemed "the best staff in the world" by Site Director Barbara Baldwin, this multi-talented group has a unified rhythm that has benefitted their more than 650 regular participants.

Case Manager Irma Escandon, a former breastfeeding consultant, has been with the program for five years and consistently works with 40 to 50 families at a time. Offering training to childcare providers and parents, Early Education Consultant Fatima Rivera has built up the school's childcare provider network to total 851 providers.

Well known in the community, Rosalba Zamora serves as a part time community liaison for Broadous and a part time parent center director for LAUSD. Parent Outreach Specialist Lourdes Torres meets regularly with the "Parent Cadre," a group of 16 local parents, to help strategize where to target outreach. Tito Gonzales has been named the "glue" that holds the staff together as program services assistant, and Parent Aides Viviana Sandoval and Maricela Molina care for the children when class is in session.
Recently I acknowledged the efforts of local elected officials to combat obesity in the communities they represent. Today, I’d like to recognize NBC Universal’s efforts to reduce the number of unhealthy food and beverage ads children have to watch.

Currently all 26 NBC Universal stations nationwide have stopped airing national ads for unhealthy foods, such as candy bars, during their three-hour block of educational children’s programming. Beginning July 1, 2008, this ban will extend to local ads as well.

It is my hope that these efforts will reinforce the message to advertisers and stations that marketing unhealthy foods to children must stop. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, children under six cannot distinguish between programming content and advertising. It is unfair and unethical to try and persuade young and impressionable children to want foods that may ultimately cause them harm.

Collectively the staff works to empower the families that attend Broadous. An example of the staff’s positive influence is the “Broadous Valet Student Drop off Program.” The Parent Cadre recognized that chaos created as parents drop off and pick up their children at Broadous and the adjacent Elementary School was dangerous.

With support from Broadous staff, the Cadre contacted the LAPD, who then conducted two trainings for parents and community volunteers instructing them on how to safely expedite children getting out of cars. The LAPD also provided safety tools including street cones and bright colored vests for the parent aides “valet”-ing children out of the cars.

First 5 LA would like to commend the staff at Broadous for their hard work and dedication to the children and families of L.A. County. Keep up the good work!

GRANTEE PROFILE
St. Anne’s Family Literacy Program: Celebrating Water Animals
The parents and children at St. Anne’s Family Literacy program celebrate creatures under the sea through art.

| Mary Jane and Helena hold up their froggies |
| Mary Jane smiles for the camera |
| Helena happily looks forward to her next project |
| Quadir drew his own aquarium |
| Quadir and mom Tiffany |
Rudy made a jellyfish from streamers and a paper bowl

Rudy enjoys making art at St. Anne's