

Summary of Commission Actions

Meeting of February 12, 2015

Board Approves New 3-Year Contract for Belshé

The Commission unanimously voted to approve a new, 3-year contract for Executive Director Kim Belshé beginning February 1, 2015. Belshé's original three-year contract was set to expire in November, 2015.

Best Start Learning By Doing Implementation Update

In a milestone step forward for [Best Start Communities](#), the Commission allocated \$413,033 for the City of Long Beach to work in collaboration with the [Best Start Central Long Beach](#) Community Partnership to implement strategies and activities identified through the "[Learning by Doing](#)" (LBD) process.

The focus of the LBD process is to strengthen the capacity of the 14 *Best Start* Community Partnerships through the implementation of results-focused strategies and activities.

Best Start Central Long Beach is the first of 14 *Best Start* communities to implement strategies and activities designed to achieve the core results of the [Building Stronger Families Framework](#), which maintains that if families are strong and communities support families to succeed, then children will be healthy, safe, and ready for school.

In particular, the City of Long Beach will work with the *Best Start* Central Long Beach Community Partnership to improve family capacities by building parent leadership abilities and strengthening existing collaborations across systems related to home visitation and child abuse prevention.

Each of the 14 *Best Start* Communities is working through the LBD process to identify core results within the Building Stronger Families Framework. Through the implementation of results-focused actions, Community Partnership members within and across the 14 *Best Start* communities will improve their collective knowledge and skills to address complex community conditions in a focused, integrated and strategic way.

While *Best Start* Central Long Beach's core result is to decrease child abuse and neglect in the 0-3 population, in Best Start [Metro LA](#), the focus of their LBD process is improving social connections by promoting a culture of respect which will be accomplished by identifying and understanding family and community values that impact family interactions.

In [Panorama City](#), the *Best Start* Community Partnership wants to improve social connections by providing opportunities for immigrant parents to make connections with other parents and learn how to find information and services to help families raise young children.

In [Palmdale](#), the *Best Start* Community Partnership is focused on leadership development and establishing concrete supports to raise awareness among parents of existing childcare, preschool and educational services.

In the coming months, First 5 LA staff will work to release solicitations to identify contractors for the other 13 communities.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Board Approves New 3-Year Contract For Beshé
- *Best Start* Learning By Doing Implementation Update
- Welcome Baby Implementation Update
- First 5 LA Launches Transformational Management Office

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Welcome Baby Implementation Update

In a presentation to the Board, First 5 LA staff provided an update on the implementation of the Welcome Baby Initiative.

Program History

Home visiting programs have been shown to prevent child abuse and neglect, and promote child health and development – all core First 5 LA goals. Through First 5 LA's free, voluntary [Welcome Baby Initiative](#), pregnant women in the 14 [Best Start Communities](#) receive information, support and a trusted partner to help them through the journey of pregnancy and early parenthood.

Working with a hospital liaison, nurse and parent coach, each Welcome Baby participant receives phone calls, home visits and an in hospital visit to evaluate the child's health and development, screen for maternal depression, encourage bonding and provide tips on everything from breastfeeding to home safety.

Key updates of Welcome Baby included:

Program Expansion

Started in 2009, the Welcome Baby program has expanded from a single pilot to 13 hospitals countywide, with an additional two hospitals in contract negotiations. Between July 2013 and mid-December 2014, 17 percent of all children born in *Best Start* communities participated in Welcome Baby. Between July 2015 and June 2016, that number is estimated to expand to 38 percent. An estimated 47 percent of children born in *Best Start* Communities each year will participate in Welcome Baby when the program reaches full capacity by 2017-2018.

Countywide, between July 2013 and mid-December 2014, 5 percent of all children born participated in Welcome Baby. That number is estimated to grow to 21 percent between July 15 and June 2016. When at full capacity, an estimated 25 percent of all babies born in L.A. County (approximately 128,000 in 2014) will be a Welcome Baby baby.

Data and Evaluation

Several evaluation studies of the Welcome Baby program have been completed or will be completed at the end of fiscal year 2014/2015, including data from an evaluation that followed families for several years after completing the program. These studies have informed ongoing program model improvements, as well as identified program outcomes.

According to these studies, mothers who participated in Welcome Baby were more likely than comparison families to:

- Have breastfed exclusively for the first 4 months postpartum (40 percent of Welcome Baby mothers vs. 33 percent of comparison mothers)
- Engage in more home learning activities (such as singing songs, telling stories) with their children
- Be more responsive and encouraging towards their children during a play activity than mothers who did not receive Welcome Baby

In an effort to continue to enhance the rigor of Welcome Baby assessment, multiple evaluation activities are planned for 2015-2020 Strategic Plan period. These activities will allow First 5 LA to make a contribution to the field of moderate intensity home visiting programs nationwide and support its efforts to advocate for public and private funding streams for Welcome Baby and similar programs.

Policy and Advocacy

In July 2013, the Commission approved home visiting advocacy as one of two key policy priority areas, the other being early childhood education. This was reaffirmed in the new 2015-2020 Strategic Plan approved by the Board in November 2014.

In its efforts to advocate for home visiting, First 5 LA's policy department has engaged policymakers on discussions targeting future investment in Welcome Baby, and in home visiting programs broadly.

The policy department is pursuing two separate yet related tracks of action: narrow (Welcome Baby) and broad (Home Visiting).

The broad track involves educating policymakers about Home Visiting (such as the February 2014 [Sacramento Informational Briefing](#)); supporting local, state and federal coalitions and partnering with other HV programs and advocates.

The narrow track identifies opportunities to leverage First 5 LA investments by partnering with groups such as Healthy Families America, identifies specific opportunities in Medicaid/Medi-Cal policy and pursues alternative financing and private support/partnerships such as Pay for Success, the James Irvine Foundation and the Nonprofit Finance Fund.

In March, First 5 LA's legislative advocates, [California Strategies](#), will share updates with the Commission on policy and advocacy work, including home visiting.

Key Agreements and Amendments Approved

In addition to the *Best Start* Metro Long Beach investment (see above) the Board approved one new key agreement and two amendments totaling \$1,402,283:

One new agreement from the Research and Evaluation Investment area with [Abt Associates, Inc.](#) for \$947,028 for the first year of \$3 million study over 4 years and 4.5 months to evaluate the collective impact of First 5 LA's nutrition and physical activity investments aimed at [reducing early childhood obesity](#) in Los Angeles County.

There are two new amendments:

One from the Place-Based Investment Area for \$413,755 for the [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#) (CSSP) as part of a five year effort to maintain the level of capacity building support needed by the Best Start Community Partnerships. CSSP provides technical assistance (TA) to strengthen the core capacities required to develop and maintain high-functioning, results-focused community partnerships.

One from the Operating Budget for \$41,500 for the Sandoval Group as part of a 2.5 year effort to continue providing support to the Executive team during the implementation planning for the First 5 LA 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.

Executive Director Report

In her address to the Commission, Executive Director Kim Belshé focused on three areas from her report:

- With the help of [Tulsi Consultants](#), First 5 LA has launched the Transformation Management Office (TMO), which provides a framework for Strategic Plan implementation activity. Anchored in the overarching objective of preparing the organization to execute the Strategic Plan through 2020, the TMO will enable staff to organize, prioritize and sequence the multiple strands of activity underway. An overview of the TMO and its work streams will be presented to all interested Commissioners at the Program and Planning Committee (P&P) meeting on Feb. 26. Informed by the initial work of the TMO and discussion at P&P, the staff will return to the Commission with an updated calendar of implementation activity that reflects our best thinking regarding implementation priorities, sequencing, and pace as well as internal capacity and resource requirements.
- First 5 LA Commissioners Dennis and Pleitez-Howell joined Belshé and other County Commissioners in Sacramento on February 10 to meet with legislative leadership and staff to discuss priorities affecting early childhood development. Commissioner Dennis represented First 5 LA on a panel of Commissioners discussing the "pivot" of commissions to a greater emphasis on policy and systems change.
- First 5 LA Staff and Belshé joined with leaders representing the philanthropic community, business and government at the [Los Angeles Partnership for Early Childhood Investment](#) annual meeting. The meeting featured the approval of the 2015 strategic plan and priorities, governance, and educational sessions on parent engagement innovation, as well as the election of Teresa Nuno, First 5 LA's Acting Chief of Programs and Planning, as Vice President of the Partnership. The educational workshops featured two innovative communications strategies to engage parents in their child's learning and development: "[Vroom](#)" (an initiative of the Bezos Family Foundation) and "[Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing](#)" (a multimedia campaign by Too Small for Next Generation). Both of these parent engagement initiatives are worthy of deeper exploration, given their alignment with First 5 LA's new strategic plan's emphasis on the role of parents to increase protective factors in the early months and years of children's lives. First 5 LA staff are in discussion with these two organizations and others to examine where there may be a strong alignment of goals and efforts.

Click [here](#) to read the full Executive Director's Report.