



Date: May 6, 2015

To: Patrick H. West, City Manager *T.H.W.*

From: Kelly Colopy, Director of Health & Human Services *KC*

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

**Subject: Early Childhood Education (ECE) Activities**

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This memorandum serves to inform you of the Health and Human Services Department's activities related to early childhood health and education. Health is a key component to ensuring children are prepared to learn when they enter school.

### **I. Health Department Activities that Support Early Childhood Education**

The Health Department operates a variety of programs that support the healthy development of children so that they have a strong foundation for school readiness.

**Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health (MCAH) Programs (\$1,778,886 annually):** Assist expecting mothers to obtain early and regular prenatal care, remain free of harmful substances, and facilitate health insurance enrollment for parents and their children. Additionally, the MCAH programs provide breastfeeding and nutrition education and support, car safety education, childhood lead poisoning prevention, and education to caregivers and parents on how to prevent sudden infant death syndrome. Public health nurses provide home visitation and intensive case management for pregnant women who are deemed high risk to improve pregnancy outcomes and maternal and child health. Through the Child Health Disability Program, staff work with medical providers on conducting comprehensive health assessments, including the detection of developmental delays or disabilities among low income children. In all of these programs, staff help clients gain skills to become better parents and use community resources to support the healthy development for their children. Staff emphasize early childhood learning resources such as reading and parent-child bonding activities, Head Start, child development centers, libraries, and Parks and Recreation preschool classes.

**Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program (\$4,540,982 annually):** A supplemental nutrition program that provides monthly healthy food vouchers, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and referrals to health and social services. Also available is the Little by Little First 5 LA Literacy Program, which promotes early literacy from utero through the first five years of life.

**Center for Families and Youth (CFY) (\$1,625,895 annually):** Collaborates with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Probation, and community programs to enhance the overall wellness of at-risk families by preventing child maltreatment and reducing out-of-home placements, increasing self-sufficiency, and improving physical and mental health.

**Health Promotions Programs (\$1,433,707 annually):** Provide education and expand opportunities for nutrition, improved fitness and smoke-free environments. These are factors that create a healthy and supportive environment for young children. Community education and group classes are provided to parents and community partners on the importance of proper nutrition and physical activity in early childhood development.

**Lead Hazard Control Program (\$2.3M over 3 years):** Environmental health specialists and public health nurses work together to identify homes that may expose children to the harmful effects of lead. Staff work with home owners and landlords to control or eliminate lead-based paint hazards in low income residential properties. Studies indicate that even low lead levels can cause learning and behavior problems in children.

**Co-located ECE services at Facility Centers:** The Health Department operates three facility centers located at North, West, and Central Long Beach. Two of these centers (North and Central) contain childcare services provided by the Long Beach Unified School District. All three centers offer public health services, provided by the Health Department, and community service nonprofit agencies. A major purpose of the centers is to provide community-based services within close proximity to community members.

## **II. Early Childhood Education Efforts in Partnership with First Five LA Central Long Beach Best Start Initiative (\$413,000 for 16 months)**

The Central Long Beach Best Start Initiative is funded by First 5 Los Angeles. Together, the Central Long Beach Best Start (CLB Best Start) partners have collaborated with a wide-array of audiences, decision-makers and organizations to effectively impact the health and early education outcomes for children and their parents within Long Beach. Some of the collaborating partners for the Central Long Beach Best Start Initiative include, but are not limited to, the Health Department, Long Beach Early Childhood Education Committee, The Children's Clinic, For the Child, Families in Good Health, and Long Beach Memorial Medical Center.

The Department works with local agencies and leads the Home Visitation Collaborative to ensure providers are trained and work together to provide families with services and education necessary to create and maintain positive and nurturing environments for children to thrive and learn at home and in their surrounding neighborhoods.

The Long Beach Early Childhood Education (LBECE) is a board-based membership committee aimed at increasing parental and organizational awareness for early childhood education opportunities. The Health Department collaborates with the LBECE on its Kindergarten Festivals. The festivals are an integral component of a comprehensive outreach program that links families to vital resources and supportive social services. Kindergarten teachers lead parent workshops in early literacy and math to help parents understand what to expect for their children, as well as provide a general overview on school readiness so that parents can create a learning environment at home. In addition, the Health Department works with the LBECE to train parents in leadership in early childhood education. Parents with children 0-5 receive training on educational advocacy, home as a primary learning environment, and developing pre-math and pre-literacy skills in addition to other topic areas.

The LBECE maintains a website with early childhood education resources for parents and service providers. The LBECE also hosts special community events that focus on raising awareness on

the importance of mental health in early childhood development. For example, the “**Me and My Shadow Family Fun Day**” is a community-wide event for caregivers, care providers, family and community members working with or parenting **children 0-5 years old**. Activities are designed to assist adults in strengthening bonds with children through mirroring, modeling, exploration and play. Simultaneously, adults benefit from opportunities to engage in relaxation and mindfulness exercises, work with their children to create art together, and hear from experts providing early childhood mental health and early care and education services.

We are committed to creating environments and harnessing partnerships to ensure that children have a healthy and positive start in life. If you have questions or comments, please contact my office at (562) 570-4016.

KC:dk

cc. Charles Parkin, City Attorney  
Laura Doud, City Auditor  
Tom Modica, Assistant City Manager  
Arturo Sanchez, Deputy City Manager  
Jyl Marden, Assistant to the City Manager