



County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Room 713, Los Angeles, California 90012
(213) 974-1101
<http://ceo.lacounty.gov>

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Chief Executive Officer

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March 29, 2011

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

CHILD CARE POLICY FRAMEWORK 2011 - 2013 (ALL DISTRICTS AFFECTED) (3 VOTES)

SUBJECT

The Chief Executive Officer, in conjunction with the Policy Roundtable for Child Care, is requesting adoption of an update to the 2009 Child Care Policy Framework. Additional recommendations call for: 1) an analysis of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Strengthening Families implementation plan and recommendations for Los Angeles County; 2) an assessment of the feasibility of implementing a system to: a) monitor the utilization of subsidized child care services in Los Angeles County; and b) assist families known to County departments in accessing these services; 3) the appointments of additional County department representatives to the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Roundtable representatives to relevant County Commissions; and 4) the submission of regular progress reports on implementation of the Child Care Policy Framework to the Board of Supervisors.

JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS WITH THE POLICY ROUNDTABLE FOR CHILD CARE THAT YOUR BOARD:

1. Adopt the Child Care Policy Framework (Framework) for 2011 - 2013 and support stakeholders as they enhance collaborative efforts and negotiate across organizational boundaries to promote access to high quality child development services for children and families;
2. Direct the Office of Child Care (OCC) to analyze the Strengthening Families implementation plan developed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS) Strengthening Families and report back to your Board with

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"

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recommendations by June 1, 2011 on how the child welfare and child development sectors in Los Angeles County could be more effectively integrated;

3. Direct the Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable) to assess the feasibility of implementing a Countywide system to track vacancies in subsidized child development programs for the purpose of facilitating access to these services by vulnerable families known to County departments. The initial report back to your Board will be submitted by September 1, 2011.
4. Direct County Counsel to amend the Roundtable ordinance to add representatives from the Departments of Mental Health, Probation, and Public Health as members and direct the department heads to nominate representatives to serve on the Roundtable. In addition, the Roundtable should be represented on County Commissions that focus on young children; and
5. Direct the OCC to provide status reports on implementation of the Framework in July and January of each year between 2011 and 2013. The July 2011 report will include an analysis of the impact of the California Budget on child development services.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Framework, adopted by your Board on January 6, 2009, directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to update the Framework every two years. This letter is requesting your Board's adoption of the updated Framework and related actions to facilitate realizing the ambitious goals of this policy agenda. **We recognize that State resources for child development services are slated for major reductions. Given this reality, the County's efforts to assist vulnerable families in accessing child development services are extremely important.**

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

The recommendations of this Board letter are consistent with Goals 2 and 3 of the Los Angeles County Strategic Plan:

- Supporting the well-being of children and families, and
- Promoting the delivery of customer oriented services Countywide, including the County's diverse unincorporated communities.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

The majority of recommendations in this letter and the proposed Framework for 2011 - 2013 call for increased coordination and collaboration among County departments and community stakeholders. County departments and stakeholders have made commitments to engage in these activities using existing funding. Goal 1 of the Framework calls for the expansion of the Steps to Excellence Project (STEP), a child care quality rating and support system. Funding

has been identified for this purpose and that contract is expected come to your Board for approval by mid-April 2011.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

On January 6, 2009, your Board adopted the Framework, which included a directive to update the Framework every two years. The attached document fulfills that directive.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

The proposed Framework for 2011 - 2013 builds on the successes and lessons learned over the past two years. It also takes into account California's dire budget situation - **the Legislature is considering reductions to subsidized child development services ranging from 15 to 25 percent.** These reductions will have particularly negative impacts on vulnerable children and families known to County departments. These are the children who stand to reap the most benefit from participating in high quality child development programs and who are most at risk for the preventable but long term negative impacts of poverty, abuse and/or neglect. Therefore, local efforts aimed at maximizing resources and connecting vulnerable children and families to services are critically important.

The goals of the Framework for 2011 - 2013 are as follows:

1. The quality of child development services for children birth to five years of age in Los Angeles County will be improved as the STEP is expanded and support services to STEP participants are intensified;
2. Utilization of local, State, and Federal child development resources will be maximized. All available resources and policies will help strengthen the child development infrastructure and support the expansion of high quality child development programs that integrate family support, health, mental health, and other relevant services;
3. County departments will work collaboratively with each other and community partners to maximize the utilization of available child development resources, support quality improvements and promote the delivery of integrated services for children and their families;
4. County departments will work collaboratively with the Los Angeles County Office of Education, key school districts and community-based child development services to integrate services; and
5. The CEO will facilitate County department efforts to work internally, across departments, and with community partners, to integrate the Strengthening Families Approach (SFA) and Protective Factors into their work with children, families, and communities and engage families in high quality child development services. The CEO, with assistance from the Center for the Study of Social Policy and key local partners, will establish a multidisciplinary

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SFA learning community designed to support ongoing professional development and SFA projects that are underway or emerging in County departments.

County departments and community stakeholders have signed on to achieve these goals. The funding reductions we anticipate to all human services will certainly increase the challenges before us. However, we also recognize that these reductions will "add value" to efforts to coordinate service and resources.

CONCLUSION

We have worked with a range of County departments and community stakeholders to develop the policy recommendations before you. We are confident that continued progress on these measures is both possible and more important than ever before during this tough economic climate. Upon adoption by your Board, we will launch the implementation of the Framework.

Respectfully submitted,



WILLIAM T. FUJIOKA
Chief Executive Officer



TERRI CHEW NISHIMURA
Chair, Policy Roundtable for Child Care

WTF:KH:LB
KMS:hn

Attachment

- c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
- County Counsel
- Children and Family Services
- Los Angeles County Office of Education
- Mental Health
- Probation
- Public Health

Los Angeles County Child Care Policy Framework 2011- 2013

Promoting Healthy Children, Strong Families and Vibrant Communities

The *Los Angeles County Child Care Policy Framework (Policy Framework) 2011-2013* reaffirms the commitment of the Board of Supervisors (Board), County departments and community stakeholders to close the gap between what we **know** and what we **do** to support the healthy development of young children, their families, and our communities.¹

Despite significant budget challenges in the last few years, implementation of the original Child Care Policy Framework², adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 6, 2009, resulted in significant accomplishments by several departments, a deeper understanding of ongoing challenges and a host of lessons learned; however, much work remains. The *Child Care Policy Framework 2011-2013* builds on those successes, shared learning across departments, community-based agencies and clients, and seeks to engage new partners who share the vision of promoting healthy children, strong families, and vibrant communities.

Goals for 2011-2013

1. The quality of child development services for children birth to five years of age in Los Angeles County will be improved as the Steps to Excellence Project (STEP) is expanded and support services to STEP participants are intensified. *Why? The quality of care impacts early brain development.*
2. Utilization of local, State, and Federal child development resources will be maximized. All available resources and policies will help strengthen the child development infrastructure and support the expansion of high quality child development programs that integrate family support, health, mental health and other relevant services. *Why? Financial and regulatory support is needed from all sectors.*
3. County departments will work collaboratively with each other and community partners to maximize the utilization of available child development resources, support quality improvements and promote the delivery of integrated services for children and their families. *Why? The most vulnerable children need assistance to access services.*
4. County departments will work collaboratively with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), key school districts and community-based child development services to integrate services, thereby supporting effective:
 - a. articulation between child development and kindergarten, including approaches to effectively engage parents in the education of their children;
 - b. design of developmentally appropriate transitional kindergarten programs; and
 - c. identification and/or utilization of new or nontraditional funding for child development services such as, but not limited to, Federal Title 1 funds, to serve special populations. *Why? County departments are critical to providing integrated services for families*
5. The Chief Executive Office (CEO) will facilitate County department efforts to work internally, across departments, and with community partners, to integrate the Strengthening Families Approach (SFA) and Protective Factors into their work with children, families and communities; and engage families in high quality child development services. The CEO, with assistance from the Center for the Study of Social Policy and key local partners, will establish a multidisciplinary SFA learning community designed to support ongoing professional development and SFA projects that are underway or emerging in County departments. *Why? To ensure quality and consistent services.*

¹ Issue addressed by the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child in *The Science of Early Childhood Development*, (2007)
<http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>.

² The original Child Care Policy Framework is available for review at www.childcare.lacounty.gov.

What We Know

Building on our collective experiences – we know that:

- Families must be active partners in determining which services and/or supports they need.
- Services and supports from multiple County departments and community-based agencies are frequently required to strengthen families and ensure the safe and healthy development of young children.
- Providing families with the services they need - when they need them - becomes significantly more difficult when County departments and community stakeholders attempt to work across disciplines with related but distinct goals, using different funding sources and their respective requirements.
- While these hurdles are sometimes overcome by valiant individual efforts, they should be systemically addressed by policies, systems and supports that bridge initiatives using common language and goals.
- A number of County departments, community stakeholders, and local philanthropies including First 5 LA and the LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment are rethinking their practice models to align with the SFA. This approach seeks to engage the programs, services, and systems that are already supporting and working with children and families as partners in preventing maltreatment and promoting optimal development.
- The Protective Factors are the foundation of the SFA. Research indicates that when these factors are present and robust in families, the likelihood of child abuse, juvenile delinquency, school failure and poor connection to the labor market diminishes.

A Publication of the Office of Child Care
Within the Service Integration Branch of the Chief Executive Office

The Protective Factors are:

- Parental Resilience
 - Social Connections
 - Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
 - Concrete Supports in Times of Need
 - Children's Social and Emotional Competence³
- Adopting the SFA, along with an action plan to speed implementation, will provide County departments, community-based agencies, local school districts and philanthropic organizations a common language to bridge a variety of disciplines. In addition, families working with these entities will be engaged in intentional partnerships aimed at promoting the optimum development of their children.



³ "Small but significant changes that strengthen families and prepare children for success," page 2, Center for the Study of Social Policy, www.cssp.org.

What We Will Do

GOAL ONE: The quality of child development services in Los Angeles County will be improved as the Steps to Excellence Project (STEP) is expanded and support services to STEP participants are intensified.

Lessons Learned 2009 - 2011:

Research has demonstrated that high quality child development services can generate substantial benefits compared to costs,⁴ contribute to significant reductions in child abuse and juvenile delinquency,⁵ and narrow the achievement gap.⁶ These laudable results are however, limited to high quality programs. Unfortunately, both national and local research has consistently documented that the majority of child development services offer mediocre quality. Programs with mediocre quality do not produce strong child outcomes.

STEP is a locally developed child care quality rating and support program administered by the Office of Child Care (OCC). STEP focuses on licensed child development centers and family child care homes serving children from birth to six years old and was launched in Los Angeles County in 2007. Currently, over 400 child development programs, representing 62 percent of the original recruitment goal, are enrolled in STEP and more than 1,500 early educators have participated in STEP trainings

⁴ Kilburn, M. Rebecca, Karoly, Lynn A., *The Economics of Early Childhood Policy: What the Dismal Science Has to Say About Investing in Children* (2008) RAND. Per this analysis, the Perry Preschool generated a benefit of \$17.07 for each \$1 invested and the Chicago Child Parent Centers generated a benefit of \$7.14 for each \$1 invested.

⁵ Reynolds, Arthur J., Temple, Judy A., Robertson, Dylan L., Mann, Emily A., *Age 21 Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Title I Chicago Child-Parent Center Program Executive Summary*, (2001). Participants in the Chicago Child-Parent Center Program experienced a 51 percent reduction in child maltreatment, a 33 percent lower rate of juvenile arrest, and a 42 percent reduction in arrest for a violent offense.

⁶ Karoly, Lynn, Zellman, Gail, Li, Jennifer, *Promoting Effective Preschool Programs* (2009). A Publication of the Office of Child Care Within the Service Integration Branch of the Chief Executive Office

or received technical assistance. As of June 2010, 160 child development programs were rated by STEP. These ratings revealed that the majority of programs (83 percent) scored a "3" or below on the STEP rating scale. This indicates that most programs are meeting a minimal threshold in terms of the quality of services being provided.⁷ Children and families throughout Los Angeles County would benefit from a substantial improvement in child care program quality.

Strategies for 2011-2013:

- Expand STEP to additional communities.
- Expand STEP's on-site coaching.
- Link STEP participants to County resources so they can offer families "concrete supports in times of need".

Partners and Commitments for 2011-2013:

- Implement agreement with Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to support and process 50+ Early Education Centers in STEP during FY 2010-11.
- Implement agreement with Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) to expand STEP to additional communities.
- Work with child care resource and referral agencies to expand on-site coaching.
- Work with the Department of Public Health to research nutrition, activity standards, and obesity prevention for inclusion in the STEP rating matrix and training activities.

Success Story

"Thanks STEP for helping our center with funding to enhance our inside and outside environments, and providing staff with professional development support that has improved our service delivery to the children and families in our community."

Maxine Higa, Salvation Army
South Los Angeles Child Development Center

⁷ STEP Annual Report, 2011.

GOAL TWO: Local, State and Federal policies and budgets will strengthen the child development infrastructure and support the expansion of high quality child development programs that integrate family support, health, mental health and other relevant services into their operations.

Lessons Learned 2009 - 2011:

Both the State and Federal governments play a critical role in funding subsidized child development services. Los Angeles County has the capacity to act both in Sacramento and Washington D.C. Ensuring access to high quality child development services is consistent with meeting County Strategic Plan Goal 2 "Child, Family and Adult Well-Being: Enrich lives through integrated, cost-effective and client-centered supportive services."

There is a need for a strong, unified voice including parents and a range of stakeholders, to effectively advocate for the expansion of child development services. In addition, coordination at the County level can help to maximize the utilization of all available resources.

The ability to impact policies related to child development services are enhanced when families are full partners in the process and local stakeholders, both traditional and non-tradition, work toward common goals.

Strategies for 2011-2013:

The OCC, working in conjunction with the CEO Intergovernmental and External Affairs (IGEA) and the Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable), will continue efforts to enlist public and private sector partners to aggressively advocate for the continuation and/or expansion of funding for high quality, comprehensive services which ensures the safety of children, promotes school success, strong families and communities. At the same time, the OCC and Roundtable will expand efforts to assure that all available resources are used to benefit families and children. A decades-long pattern of returning available

funds and under-utilization of existing capacity must be addressed. The OCC and Roundtable will lead efforts to develop a countywide mechanism to track use of existing capacity. Other specific actions will include informing members of the Los Angeles County Legislative Delegation of the need to restore or maintain funding to:

- California Department of Education/Child Development Division (CDE/CDD) Programs, and
- Child development infrastructure including but not limited to local child care planning councils, child care resource and referral services, and Community Care Licensing.

Similar efforts will be engaged at the local level to enlist public and private sector partners to advocate for local support of services that ensure the safety of children, promote school success and strong families. Activities will include:

- Work with local philanthropic organizations to develop a "Bridge Funding" mechanism to assist State funded child development programs during times of State Budget stalemates.
- Work with First 5 LA and the local child development community to ensure both targeted and countywide support for high quality child development services.

**A Success Story
(Under the Circumstances)**

Despite experiencing the worst budget crisis in recent history, child development and other service providers stood together in opposition to Governor Schwarzenegger's budget for 2010-11. This unified front fueled the Legislature's refusal to accept the Governor's proposal to eliminate funding for the CalWORKs Program and most State funding for child development services.

Partners and Commitments for 2011-2013:

- Consistent with Board adopted policies, the CEO IGEA and County departments will continue to advocate to maintain and expand high quality child development services for children and families in Los Angeles County.
- OCC will work with a range of external advocacy partners to maintain and expand high quality child development services for children and families in Los Angeles County. Partners will include but not be limited to the Advancement Project, First 5 LA, Los Angeles County Office of Education - Head Start (LACOE-HS), LAUP, LAUSD, and Preschool California.



Challenges Ahead

California's budget crisis presents serious challenges to the well-being of children and their families. The California Budget Project has noted the following issues:

- California workers and their families face the toughest job market in decades, battered by the longest and most severe national recession in the post-World War II era.
- Millions of low- and middle-income Californians are struggling to make ends meet in the face of job loss or reduced hours of work.
- Consequently, more of California's families are turning to public programs such as Food Stamps, Healthy Families, Medi-Cal, and CalWORKs for assistance.
- Increased demand for public programs comes at a time when recent budgets have made deep cuts to health and human services programs and the Governor has proposed more reductions to close the state's budget gap.⁸

Governor Brown's proposed budget for 2011-2012 includes further cuts to human services. Families in need of subsidized child development services may be facing a smaller pool of subsidized programs, higher parent fees, shorter periods of assistance, and lower income ceilings. "Infrastructure" supports such as Community Care Licensing, local child care planning councils, child care worker retention services, training and support are also facing serious reductions or complete elimination.

GOAL Three: County departments will work collaboratively with each other and with community partners to maximize the utilization of child development resources and promote the delivery of integrated family support services. Particular emphasis will be placed on connecting the following populations to child development resources and when appropriate, early intervention services:

- CalWORKs families who are homeless and have young children.
- Children under the supervision of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Probation Department, including those in foster care, kin care, and with their families.
- Teen parents under the jurisdiction of DCFS and/or the Probation Department.

Lessons Learned 2009 - 2011:

The “subsidized child care system” is, in reality, a complicated conglomeration of programs serving specific age groups, during specific times, with different funding sources and different eligibility requirements. The current array of child development services are a reflection of available resources – not necessarily family needs. High quality child development programs with the option of full-day, full-year services for children across age groups are in short supply.

We know that the demand for subsidized child development services far exceeds the supply – currently, over 29,000 income eligible children in Los Angeles County are waiting for a space to become available.⁹ We know that young children and families in stressful circumstances benefit from access to high quality child development services with stable and nurturing relationships. We know that access to such services can reduce incidents of abuse and neglect, or mitigate the long term impacts of trauma on children who experience abuse

and/or neglect. We know that children in families coping with homelessness, domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health issues are among the most vulnerable and have the potential to reap significant benefits from participating in high quality child development services. Unfortunately, these children are among the least likely to access such services. In order to promote connections to child development services, Los Angeles County departments will work to identify vulnerable families with young children who are in need of child development services and will inform these families of local child development resources.

Additional resources are needed to support programs designed to meet the needs of low income working families as well as families dealing with additional challenges. New strategies are needed to ensure that the most vulnerable children and families are able to participate in high quality child development services.

Success Stories

A unique collaboration was launched between the LACOE-HS and the DCFS in 2009. DCFS piloted a variety of Head Start enrollment drives and found that DCFS Children’s Services Workers were more likely to promote the use of child development services and foster families were more likely to enroll children when the application process was significantly streamlined. As a result of these “enrollment drives”, 197 children in foster care were connected to local Head Start programs that were prepared to enroll and serve them.

LACOE-HS also collaborated with the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). DPSS distributed LACOE – HS recruitment flyers to clients with age eligible young children. The opportunities for further collaboration have expanded as Head Start and Early Head Start have identified homeless children as priority populations for their services.

⁹ Data from the Los Angeles County Centralized Eligibility List as of December 2010.
A Publication of the Office of Child Care
Within the Service Integration Branch of the Chief Executive Office

Strategies:

- OCC will work with County departments, child development program operators, child care resource and referral agencies and community stakeholders to develop strategies to make the subsidized child development system more accessible to vulnerable children and families in Los Angeles County.
- OCC, in collaboration with the Department of Parks and Recreation and the County Library, will convene a forum with after school community-based providers to identify opportunities to increase the enrollment of DCFS and Probation youth in safe and educationally enriching activities during non-school hours.
- OCC, in conjunction with DCFS, will convene child care resource and referral agencies and child development stakeholders to explore possible collaborative efforts to include child development personnel in Team Decision Making conferences.
- Building on the successful DCFS-LACOE HS collaboration, DPSS will launch a targeted outreach effort aimed at CalWORKs participants with young children who are experiencing homelessness.
- The Roundtable will assist DCFS in promoting, among Children's Services Workers, an understanding of the lifelong impacts of early brain development including cognitive, emotional and physical well being.

Partners and Commitments for 2011-2013:

- Working in conjunction with the child care resource and referral agencies, DCFS will expand its "enrollment drives," to include LAUP and California State Preschool Programs.
- Transition Age Youth who are teen parents and teen parents who are clients of both

DCFS and Probation will be introduced to their child care resource and referral agency and assisted in enrolling their children in child development services prior to their leaving the child welfare system.

- The Roundtable will convene members representing DPSS, LACOE-HS, Long Beach Unified School District Head Start Programs, Regional Centers and Children Today, as well as other stakeholders, for the purpose of 1) exploring the unique array of services available to families with young children in Long Beach who are experiencing homelessness, substance abuse, domestic violence and/or mental health issues, and 2) creating opportunities to replicate similar service systems in other parts of Los Angeles County.
- The ICAN (Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect) Task Force on Pregnant and Parenting Teen will review materials developed by the OCC which are intended to facilitate the enrollment of teen parents and their children in high quality child development services and assist with the distribution of these materials.
- The Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles and the University of Southern California – School of Social Work will pursue the development of an intern program for Social Work graduate students. As currently conceived, interns would be stationed at local child care resource and referral agencies. As their understanding of the child development and family support service sector grows, they will guide families identified by specific County departments through the child development referral process, interfacing as needed with the County department.



GOAL FOUR: County departments will work collaboratively with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), key school districts and community-based child development programs to integrate a range of services, thereby supporting the effective:

- articulation between child development and kindergarten, including approaches to effectively engage parents in the education of their children,
- design of developmentally appropriate transitional kindergarten programs throughout the County, and
- identification and/or utilization of new/nontraditional funding for child development services such as, but not limited to, Federal Title 1 funds, to serve special populations.

Lessons Learned:

Children who experience poverty, abuse, neglect, parental substance abuse, mental illness, and/or exposure to violence are “at risk” for negative impacts on their physical and mental health. High quality child development programs that include family support services have proven to be an effective intervention for children and families in these circumstances.¹⁰ The trajectory for high school graduation, employment, and economic self sufficiency is set in these very early years.

Some studies have shown that the cognitive benefits associated with high quality child development services can erode by third grade. Rather than trying to fix the blame for this “erosion of benefits” it may be more appropriate to identify how to effectively bridge the child development and public school systems for the purpose of sustaining these benefits. Such efforts would build on the intensity of relationships common in child development programs, while also enhancing

¹⁰ *The Impact of Early Adversity on Children's Development.* Center on the Developing Child, www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

the instructional support in these programs. When child development programs, transition kindergarten, kindergarten and elementary grades are viewed as a continuum rather than as separate entities, the likelihood of actually meeting the needs of individual children is increased.

Low-income working families, families involved with the child welfare system, and those struggling with homelessness, mental health, substance abuse, and/or domestic violence could all benefit from access to high quality child development services. Unfortunately, the supply of high quality subsidized child development services is dwarfed by the demand. While accessing these services can be complicated for any family, those without a fixed address or other challenges are at a serious disadvantage.

New resources are needed to expand the supply of high quality subsidized child development services for low-income working families and families experiencing trauma and to integrate family services into child development programs.

Success Story

The Packard Foundation and First 5 California are working with the Ounce of Prevention and The Buffet Early Education Fund to bring Educare to Los Angeles and Santa Clara. Under the leadership of LAUSD, a coalition is forming to plan and apply for the development of an Educare site in Los Angeles.

Educare is a network of state-of-the art child development centers operating full-day, full-year programs for children birth to five years of age. There are Educare sites in ten states, each serving from 140 to 200 low-income children and their families. These centers have highly qualified teaching staff in all classrooms, address a range of family service needs, and are actively engaged in research aimed at improving the practice in individual centers while also contributing new information to the field. Educare centers form a growing network committed to advancing quality and changing public policy in their own states and across the country.

Strategies:

- The OCC and the Roundtable shall work in partnership with LACOE and key school districts to promote articulation between child development programs and grades K-3, and the establishment of developmentally appropriate transition kindergartens with effective parent engagement practices in school districts throughout the County.
- OCC and County departments will support the development of an Educare site in Los Angeles County and will promote co-location of County and other family services at the site.
- The Roundtable will work in partnership with DCFS, Probation, and other stakeholders to:
 - ✓ Engage the CDE/CDD in a dialogue regarding the potential long term impacts (physical, emotional and mental) of child abuse and neglect, and the role of high quality child development services to mitigate those impacts.
 - ✓ Explore regulatory or legislative remedies to facilitate access to high quality child development services for children determined to be at risk or who have experienced child abuse and/or neglect, including children who have been removed from their homes.
 - ✓ Identify and/or access new or nontraditional funding for child development services such as, but not limited to, Federal Title 1 and Title IVE Waiver funds, to serve special populations.

Partners and Commitments:

- LACOE will work with local school districts to promote articulation between child development and K-3 systems and the use of Title 1 funds for early education services.

- LAUSD will expand Transition Kindergarten services designed to build the cognitive, social and emotional skills needed for school success.
- The Roundtable will convene representatives of the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and local child care resource and referral agencies to explore the use of child development settings for mental health services including but not limited to multidisciplinary team evaluations for children who are enrolled in child development programs.

Success Stories

The Preschool Clinics are a part of LAUSD's commitment to "recognize and respond" to the unique needs of individual children. The clinics target children birth to five years of age and make an array of professionals available including school psychologists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, audiometrists, and social workers. The clinics are held in preschool settings and all screenings are conducted with age appropriate tools. At the end of the clinic, families receive a written report, a toolkit of supporting materials, and have the opportunity to discuss follow-up options.

Beginning in April 2011, the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles will launch an innovative seasonal flu vaccine outreach and distribution program serving the hardest-to-reach, most vulnerable populations, throughout Los Angeles County.

Alliance agencies will collaborate with Health Educators from DPH to develop vaccine health literacy materials and will create innovative trainings and workshops for parents and providers that are aimed at "re-norming" the community's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to vaccine-preventable illnesses. Further, the program is intended to create a "cocoon" of people in the lives of young children. When caregivers are protected from seasonal flu, the risk of serious flu illnesses are reduced for the children in their care.

Goal Five: The Chief Executive Office (CEO) will facilitate County department efforts to work internally, across departments, and with community partners, to integrate the Strengthening Families Approach (SFA) and Protective Factors into their work with children, families and communities; and engage families in high quality child development services. The CEO, with assistance from the Center for the Study of Social Policy and key local partners, will establish a multidisciplinary SFA learning community designed to support ongoing professional development and SFA projects that are underway or emerging in County departments.

Lessons Learned:

As noted earlier in this document, SFA seeks to engage the programs, services, and systems that are already supporting and working with children and families as partners in both preventing maltreatment and promoting optimal development. Developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, SFA began as an approach to child abuse prevention which focused on children from birth to five years of age. This age group was targeted because it accounts for a significant proportion of children who experience abuse and/or neglect. This period of high risk for abuse is also a time of critical brain development in young children. Adverse experiences during these early years have the potential for lifelong negative impacts to both physical and mental health.

A number of federal government agencies and national and local foundations are actively engaged in the SFA and 33 states that have adopted the SFA are participating in the Strengthening Families National Network. The Director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Erwin McEwen, describes why Illinois has adopted this approach to promoting child safety and well-being:

"We protect children when we strengthen and support families. Strengthening Families Illinois brings early education and child welfare professionals together not only to

prevent harm, but to build protective capacity in the place where it matters most: the family."¹¹

As in other parts of the county, young children, birth to five years of age account for a substantial portion (averaging 30 percent per month) of the open cases managed by the DCFS. Local philanthropies, community-based agencies and specific programs within some County departments, have adopted the SFA to serve children and families in Los Angeles County.

It is time to expand the commitment to SFA, including the five Protective Factors, from specific projects within various County departments, to a countywide commitment. Adoption of the SFA could provide a common language and approach to services across disciplines, County departments and community-based agencies. SFA could also facilitate coordination across diverse initiatives. Fortunately, the Center for the Study of Social Policy is prepared to provide guidance to County departments as we move forward in this endeavor. The Center for the Study of Social Policy will draw on the extensive experience of working with public and private entities around the country.

Success Story

During 2009-2010, the OCC and LACOE-HS provided a full day of training on the SFA, early brain development, and the range of local child development resources available to families to nearly 300 Deputy Juvenile Probation Officers. This training supported the Probation Department's effort to adopt a "family engagement focus", modify their emerging "practice model" and implement the SFA. Working with the same collaborative partners, the Probation Department has identified a series of action steps to reinforce and expand the first year training activities.

¹¹ Strengthening Families Illinois E Update, January-February 2008 at www.strengtheningfamiliesillinois.org.

Success Stories

The DMH Birth to Five Program has infused the SFA and Protective Factors into the 0-5 Initial Assessment training that is required of all Birth to Five mental health providers. In addition, substantial efforts have been made with the DMH staff co-located at the DCFS offices to ensure inclusion of the approach in their work. Numerous other DMH and/or community agency sponsored trainings have similarly incorporated the role of the Protective Factors as part of trainings on multiple topics in the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health field that are designed for mental health providers, Head Start mental health consultants, early care and education providers, and representatives from other disciplines.

Evaluation of the Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP) funded by DCFS between 2008 and 2010 includes promising indications that Protective Factors can be enhanced through community-based social networking strategies that complement more intensive and expensive service strategies, and are effective across a broad range of families and communities. Findings from the Relationship-based Organizing Protective Factors Survey include responses from over 1000 parents and youth who participated in PIDP activities. Data collected from the survey and focus groups held in all eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs) highlighted the benefits that parents and youth felt they had received; those who participated in Neighborhood Action Councils and social networks reported a pattern of benefits including greater involvement in their community, more desire to engage in community activities, and feeling less lonely or isolated.

Strategies:

- Consistent with the CEO's mission to facilitate "effective program implementation", the OCC will work with the Center for the Study of Social Policy to promote the integration of the SFA into County department practices by

establishing a multidisciplinary learning community and convening multi-disciplinary professional development opportunities.

- Work collaboratively with First 5 LA, LAUP, the LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment and other local entities to integrate work across County departments and among community stakeholders.
- Work collaboratively with the Education Coordinating Council and County Commissions to support departments in accessing child development services for their clients.
- Work collaboratively with First 5 LA in their place-based approach and countywide efforts to promote the SFA.

Partners and Commitments:

- CEO/SIB/OCC will lead efforts to establish a SFA learning community involving County departments and community stakeholders with assistance from the Center for the Study of Social Policy.
- OCC will work collaboratively with County departments, First 5 LA and stakeholders such as the child care resource and referral agencies to inventory existing materials and organizational access to traditional and social media that could be used to inform parents of the critical importance of early brain development and the role of high quality child development services in supporting optimum brain development.
- The Roundtable to work collaboratively with CEO Public Information, Cable and Telecommunications to develop a coordinated public information campaign using the materials identified above and various forms of media.





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