



Staff Report

February 4, 2008

Item 13.0

ACTION: _____

DISCUSSION: _____ X _____

TITLE: POTENTIAL COMMISSION APPROACHES TO THE HEALTHY AND ACTIVE BEFORE 5 PRINCIPLES

BACKGROUND

The percentage of toddlers and preschoolers considered overweight has more than doubled in the last 25 years. According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, young children who are overweight during their early years are more likely to be obese later in life and more likely to experience Type 2 Diabetes, high-blood pressure, and other health problems. The Commission raised its concern about this alarming increase in childhood obesity and the health risks associated with it at its February 2007 retreat.

Staff have responded to this concern by actively participating in the Healthy and Active Before Five Collaborative over the last year, which has drafted a set of principles for increasing physical activity and nutrition for Contra Costa children 0-5. At the September, 2007 Program and Evaluation Committee meeting, staff presented the following description of obesity prevention activities currently funded by First 5 Contra Costa through existing strategies and programs.

EXISTING FIRST 5 ACTIVITIES ADDRESSING CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION

Coalitions & Partnerships: *Healthy and Active Before 5*

Spearheaded by Kaiser, Contra Costa Health Services, Contra Costa Child Care Council, Families CAN, and First 5 Contra Costa, *Healthy and Active Before 5* is a countywide effort to develop an action plan that addresses the problems of early childhood obesity and provide strategies for healthy eating and active living for children ages birth through five years. Parent forums, coordinated by First 5 Contra Costa's volunteer Regional Groups, were held during 2007 to solicit input for the plan. Some of the issues raised by participants included:

- More age-appropriate, inexpensive, or free programs for children 0-5.
- Increased safety of parks by addressing illicit activities and proper maintenance.
- Increased healthy food in schools and child care.
- More neighborhood stores with healthy offerings and fresh produce.
- More family-friendly shopping environments that limit marketing to children (i.e. candy-free check out aisles).
- Increased affordability of healthier foods.

The *Healthy and Active Before 5* collaborative presented the plan to the Commission at its January 7 meeting and convened a community forum January 11 to release the final action plan principles to the public and enlist community support for implementing the plan.

Community Engagement

First 5 Contra Costa's three Regional Groups have focused their efforts on the issue of childhood obesity for the last year. The three large fairs produced by these groups had "Healthy and Active Kids" themes, and provided information for parents on nutrition and healthy, active lifestyles. The fairs drew over 8,500 people.

In a survey of 300 parents conducted by the East County Group, parents identified the need for more affordable or free physical activities for young children as the top priority. The Group has approached East County park and recreation departments to partner on providing affordable dance, karate, soccer, and gymnastics classes that take place in the evenings and on weekends. Because of this effort, the cities of Oakley, Pittsburg, and Antioch have agreed to begin offering low-cost sports classes for toddlers that are accessible to working parents.

The Central County group organized free gymnastics classes for low-income children as well as free family gym memberships.

Community Grants

Over the last five years, First 5 Contra Costa has funded 24 playground improvement projects totaling \$224,335. Furthermore, 26 Family-Family Community Grants have been awarded for projects that provide nutrition education and physical movement, such as dance classes.

The Arts Enrichment program, which provides free music and movement classes throughout the county, has attracted over 700 families since 2004.

Home Visiting

The home visiting programs funded by First 5 Contra Costa provide nutrition education and support for pregnant mothers and babies, including breastfeeding support, referrals and resources.

In addition, Welcome Home Baby conducted nutrition workshops for 57 families last year. The Medically Vulnerable Infant program monitors infant caloric intake, and works closely with breastfeeding support specialists and other consultants. The Lift Every Voice Project worked with officials at the county detention facilities to provide more nutritious meals for pregnant incarcerated women.

First 5 Centers

The five First 5 Centers provide a variety of classes and activities that address obesity prevention, including:

- Nutrition classes
- "Vegetable and Fruit of the Month" celebrations
- Health Fairs
- Type 2 Diabetes prevention class

- Physical activity and movement classes: My Gym, Gymsters, Tiny Tumblers, Dance Movement, Mighty Mites, Creative Movement, Family Olympics, Family yoga

Some sites have also started providing healthier snacks for families.

Early Childhood Education

Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) caregivers are offered a nutrition class by the Contra Costa Child Care Council.

The Early Learning Demonstration Project assists sites in meeting NAEYC accreditation standards for food and nutrition.

School Readiness

School readiness outreach workers provide nutrition and obesity prevention workshops on a regular basis. They have received training, curriculum and workshop materials from a variety of sources, including the Child Care Council and Five A Day program. In addition, outreach workers now serve healthy food during workshops.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES IN FIRST 5 PROGRAMS

Staff will continue to look for innovative ways to incorporate the Healthy and Active Before 5 principles in ongoing First 5 activities. One such activity will be the development of nutrition guidelines for First 5 events to ensure that all foods served are healthy and appropriate for young children.

Staff will continue to actively participate in the Healthy and Active Before 5 collaborative and will allocate up to \$10,000 in public education and advocacy funds to support collaborative activities.

In the 2008 community grants cycle, we are adding a new category of grants of up to \$5,000 for "Projects That Promote Healthy and Active Children". Funded projects would include breastfeeding promotion and support, increased access to affordable healthy food, such as implementing or improving farmers markets or community gardens, nutrition education workshops for parents, and improved opportunities for physical activity and play. Funds for Community Playground Projects – up to \$10,000 per project – will still be available.

The Community Engagement Program will continue to foster community action and advocacy for increased opportunities for physical activities for children 0-5 and will approach the City of Concord and City of Richmond to enlist their support for providing low-cost, accessible sports classes for toddlers.

ATTACHMENTS: "Healthy and Active Before 5 Plan"