



Community Health Commission

ACTION CALENDAR
May 30, 2017

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Community Health Commission
Submitted by: Holly Wertman, Chairperson, Community Health Commission
Subject: Increasing Parental Support with Age-Paced Parent Education and Child Health Information Mailers

RECOMMENDATION

Ask the City Manager to ask the Public Health Division to create a new information service that provides standardized and inclusive age-paced parent education and child health information mailers, in multiple languages as needed, to Berkeley families once a month from birth to age five, and ask that staff include funding for this service in upcoming budgetary negotiations and discussions.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

While the specific costs will vary based on number of families with children within the birth to five years old age range in Berkeley, the strategy the Public Health Division employs to staff this service, cost of keeping track of child ages, and the actual cost of printing and mailing these parent education and child health information mails, data from a University of Wisconsin and State of Wisconsin program that inspired this recommendation. For this Wisconsin program, the cost of supplying monthly child health mailers each year was \$5 per family per year. Plus, as the University of Wisconsin has made the mailers from Month 1 to Month 36 publicly available on their website, along with the CDC, and these mailers lack any information specific to Wisconsin other than saying University of Wisconsin on them, these same mailers can be used if Public Health staff decide to, which would likely significantly reduce paid staff time used to provide mailers for families with newborn or 3-year-old children.

Additionally, the CDC provides free positive parenting tip handouts on its website for the ages 0-5 years old and even up to 17 years old, so these handouts could be used, which would significantly reduce costs of staff time to make these mailers.

Link to CDC resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/freematerials.html>

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Despite all of the effective services offered by the Public Health Division such as the Black Infant Health Program and nurse home visits to help mothers and newborns, there does not seem to be a program that directly resembles an age-paced parent

education and child health information mailer service wherein families receive a monthly child health information mailer depending on the age of their child or children. Plus, most city services require a parent and child to visit a clinic or seek out resources. Thus, there is opportunity to utilize a proven strategy to provide more parental support and facilitate the success of Berkeley children in significantly formative years of their lives.

This topic was discussed at the regularly scheduled Community Health Commission meeting on March 23rd, 2017 where the following motion was approved.

M/S/C (Franklin/Neal) Motion to approve Increasing Parental Support with Age-Paced Parent Education and Child Health Information Mailers

Ayes: Commissioners Engelman, Kesarwani, Speich, Stein, Morales, Wong, Wertman, Franklin, Lingas, Nathan, Chin, Chen and Katz.
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Commissioner Carter and Teunis
Excused: Commissioner Wang
Motion Passed.

BACKGROUND

According to the 2010 Census, there are 4,136 children in Berkeley who are less than 5 years old, which accounts for 3.7% of the population of Berkeley whose parents would receive parenting and child health information mailers such as those provided in the University of Wisconsin service.

Various evaluations of the Wisconsin program have observed the following results regarding the outcomes of monthly age-paced parent education and child health information mailers comparing parents who received the mailers to those that did not:

Study results of Wisconsin “Parenting the First Year” Mailers:

- Parents who benefitted most were parents at greatest risk for parenting difficulties—single parents, first-time parents, and parents who were less educated, lower income, and more socially isolated
- Parents reported they found [mailer] information and advice to be “highly useful” significantly more often than any other source, including physicians and one’s own relatives
- Parents reported a parenting attitude more dissimilar to attitudes of child abusers¹

¹ Riley, D., & Bogenschneider, K. (1999, October). Do we know what good parenting is? And can public policy promote it? In K. Bogenschneider & J. Mills (Eds.), *Raising the next generation: Public and private parenting initiatives* (Wisconsin Family Impact Seminar Briefing Report No. 13, pp. 1-17). Madison: University of Wisconsin Center for

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The mailers ought to be printed on paper from recycled paper sources; however, if parents want, they should be able to share their e-mail address so that these mailers can be directly e-mailed to parents so that the mailers do not have to be printed and mailed. This capacity for electronic mail would likely both significantly reduce costs while also improving the environmental sustainability of the program by avoiding the use of paper, ink, plastics, and other environmentally involved or damaging products.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Berkeley Community Action Forum was an event related to the May release of the 2007 City of Berkeley Health Status Report (HSR), which highlighted inequities in health behaviors and outcomes in the City as a key concern, as stated in its following report. Some of the key themes derived from this forum were:

- The need to address health inequities by helping children in the 0-5 age range by working with parents, families, and systems to improve health outcomes for all.
- Prevention-based education/health information for children, youth, parents and families is key to healthy communities by avoiding inequities in information
- We (The City of Berkeley) need to increase our linkages to and engagement of community residents to strengthen community building.

Moreover, the Winter 2009 City of Berkeley and BE A STAR- Promoting Healthy Early Child Development for Berkeley Children Gap Analysis Report stated that:

- There is increasing recognition that the first five years of a child's life are a particularly sensitive period in the process of development, laying a foundation for cognitive functioning, physical health and behavioral, social and self-regulatory capacity.
- A variety of referral and treatment services exist for young children in Berkeley. However, the majority of these are directed at screening, assessment and treatment for children with severe delays and who meet specific eligibility standards. Few programs offer support to families to prevent developmental delays and to identify mild problems that may respond to relatively simple and inexpensive interventions.

The report went on to recommend several action steps to address the identified gaps such as:

Excellence in Family Studies.

- Conduct an awareness campaign to educate the broader community on the importance of early childhood development, the value of developmental screening and the role of parents in supporting their child's development
- Expand services to support healthy parenting, including community playgroups, therapeutic developmental playgroups and parent education and support groups

Therefore, as community members and the City of Berkeley have recognized a serious need for additional interventions to increase the equitable access to health information, specifically help children in the 0-5 year old age range, and facilitate primary prevention that public health aims to realize, the Community Health Commission recommends this intervention. With evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach in helping parents and children at a considerably lower cost than more intensive services, a monthly age-paced parent education and child health information mailer should be provided to parents with children between the ages of newborn and five years old.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

1. Extend the age range during which parent support and child health information mailers will be sent to parents to parents with children between the ages of 0-12 years old to facilitate the majority of child health and help parents navigate parenting adolescent children.
2. Provide the parental support and child health information by a request basis rather than automatic age-paced delivery of the mailer, which would enable interested parents to choose to receive these mailers and avoid any waste that may occur from giving uninterested parents these mailers.
3. Limit the age range to 1 Month to 36 Months so no new mailers have to be made if the University of Wisconsin mailers can be used, which would save any staff time that would have been needed to create new mailers, especially those for Month 37 through Month 60. Similarly, just use CDC handouts which are in terms of years 0-1, 1-2, 2-3, 3-5, and even include age brackets up to 17 years old.

CITY MANAGER

See companion report.

CONTACT PERSON

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