



family at the center

SEPTEMBER 2015

Recommendations on
family engagement
from early childhood
stakeholders in
Los Angeles County



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Prepared by Harder+Company Community Research with support from the Los Angeles Partnership for Early Childhood Investment and Deborah Roderick Stark, consultant.

Environmental scan and report funded by The David and Lucile Packard Foundation. For more information about the Foundation, visit packard.org.

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The LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment is a philanthropic funding collaborative comprised of some of the county's largest private foundations, impactful family foundations, and public funders of early childhood development. The LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment is dedicated to realizing the potential of every child in Los Angeles County. We are a diverse collaboration of funders and government agencies that promotes innovations to prepare children for success when it is most effective and impactful for us all: in the earliest years.

About this report

To better understand how family engagement supports school readiness in Los Angeles County, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment convened an advisory group of early childhood leaders and stakeholders to provide advice and explore opportunities to strengthen parent engagement. Harder+Company Community Research and consultant Deborah Roderick Stark brought additional expertise and support by facilitating stakeholder discussions and documenting assets, gaps, and opportunities through a scan of the literature and other relevant data sources (a complete list of advisors and data sources can be found in the Appendices).

The advisory group discussions focused on formal early learning and health settings, as well as informal and community settings where parents, families, and caregivers interact and connect. Discussions were guided by the following broad questions:

- What efforts currently exist to engage diverse parents in multiple settings (informal and formal childcare/early education and health) in Los Angeles County?
- What are the key barriers and challenges to parent engagement?
- What gaps and needs have been identified by parents, caregivers, and providers?
- What innovative and evidence-based models or practices could be expanded or replicated in Los Angeles County?
- What opportunities exist to leverage existing funding streams, initiatives, places, and spaces?

This report summarizes key insights and recommendations that emerged through these discussions and additional research about parent engagement programs and practices. It sheds light on opportunities to leverage existing efforts and innovative and evidence-based models that are ripe for replication. We hope the information and insights highlighted in this report can serve as a resource for all funders and stakeholders interested in strengthening parent engagement in Los Angeles and other communities around the country.

Engaged families, thriving children

Overview

Parents and families play a vital and lasting role in shaping a child's sense of self, igniting their curiosity, and cultivating the skills and attributes that contribute to early learning, healthy development, and success in life.¹ But families need information and resources to provide enriching and nurturing environments where the children in their care can thrive and grow.

Across the country, policymakers, funders and early childhood advocates are calling for new approaches to authentic family engagement. In July 2014, a White House symposium endorsed “a more equitable approach to family engagement based on family strengths as well as shared responsibility assumed by families, schools, and communities... across time and in the many settings where children learn.”² The Office of Head Start National Center for Parent, Family, and Community Engagement argues that “family engagement is everyone's business,” and works to coalesce partners and fuel a broader national movement to embed collaborative, strengths-based, culturally affirming approaches in early childhood organizations and programs.



Many Los Angeles County stakeholders agree that current family engagement practices—where they exist—are inconsistent and do not adequately support and engage families as partners. They believe there are many untapped opportunities to make authentic family engagement a core value and central component of health, educational, and service delivery systems.

Opportunities to strengthen family engagement

Three broad recommendations emerged from advisory group discussions. These recommendations are introduced here, and explored in greater detail throughout the “Opportunities to strengthen family engagement” section of this report.

COMMUNITY

Support families to be their child’s first teacher by strengthening connections to resources and social support in community-based settings. This includes building on the strengths of parents and informal providers by promoting peer support models, social connections, and strategies to enrich community settings with skill-building programs.

FORMAL CARE

Strengthen family engagement practices in early education and health settings. Health and early education settings are critical touchpoints for families and formal institutions. They also represent important opportunities to institutionalize authentic and culturally responsive family engagement practices that help parents navigate formal systems and advocate for the services they need. Institutional commitments can include training staff to effectively engage families, seek and respond to parent questions and concerns, and co-create plans for supporting their children’s development.

SYSTEM SUPPORTS

Promote collaboration and coordination of family engagement efforts through policy, joint funding, and replication of effective practice. Authentic family engagement requires a shift in mindsets and an integrated approach that promotes seamless connections across programs, services, and systems. Creating a more streamlined continuum of care will make it easier for parents to engage system supports. Promising approaches include identifying opportunities to leverage existing funding streams, promote favorable policies, and support informed decision making with robust data, research, and evaluation.



Early childhood in Los Angeles County

A populous and diverse region

With nearly 10 million residents, Los Angeles is the most populous county in the United States and home to more than a quarter of California's residents. If it were a state, Los Angeles County would be the ninth largest in the country. The county is remarkably diverse and a hub for immigration. As newcomers to a region, immigrants often face isolation and lack connections to resources and supports in their communities. Young children of immigrants make up 47% of children ages 0 to 5 in the state of California, with Hispanic immigrants representing the greatest proportion.³ In Los Angeles County, there are approximately 800,000 children between the ages of 0 to 5, and nearly 60% of births in 2012 were to families of Latino/Hispanic origin.⁴

A challenge to connect

Between birth and a child's transition to school, there are multiple touch points and opportunities to engage families and strengthen connections with formal systems and other social supports. But in Los Angeles County, this is a complicated endeavor. While the county has considerable resources, it is difficult for families to engage with formal systems and navigate what stakeholders describe as "a fragmented region" with "complex siloed systems." Continuity of care and collective efforts to improve systems have historically been a challenge in counties as large, diverse, and expansive as Los Angeles.

Los Angeles County is home to a culturally and linguistically diverse population with a broad range of experiences, perceptions, and beliefs about parenting and engaging with formal systems. This context makes Los Angeles a valuable laboratory for understanding the opportunities and challenges of family engagement in early education and healthcare settings.

IN CALIFORNIA

47%

of children under the age of 5 have immigrant parents



IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

there are

800,000

children under the age of 5

57%

of children born in 2012 are of Latino/Hispanic origin

Foundational concepts guiding this work

Rich discussions with the Los Angeles advisory group resulted in several foundational concepts that are central to all of the goals and strategies presented in this report. These were ideas that advisors felt were important to establish at the outset of the process. Specifically, the group called for:

- An **expanded focus on family engagement** (as opposed to a more narrow focus on *parent*) given that families take many forms and many extended family members play critical roles in nurturing and caring for young children.
- A **common definition for family engagement** that draws upon the work of family engagement researchers and practitioners nationwide, and that promotes a *cultural context* that puts children and families front and center.
- A set of **principles for effective practice** that reflect the value of an authentic and strengths-based approach to family engagement—embraced and institutionalized within organizations and across communities.
- An appreciation for local **communities as laboratories** where innovative solutions bubble up and **social connections** are strengthened.
- A **focus on groups that are less connected** with formal systems and supports such as foster parents, men/fathers, working parents, and those caring for children under 3 years old—most often informal care providers, commonly referred to as family, friends, and neighbors, or “FFN.”

“What matters most for the healthy development of an individual child is the quality of interactions the child has with adults and the experiences to which the adults expose the child.”

~ The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Starting Smart Brief

Defining family engagement

Informed by the National Association of Family, School, and Community Engagement, the advisory group adopted the following definition for “high-impact family engagement”:

High impact family engagement is a shared responsibility among providers, caregivers, and families in which institutions and organizations commit to working with families in meaningful and culturally respectful ways. Family engagement is continuous across a child’s life from cradle to career and carried out everywhere children learn—at home, in childcare settings, in health settings, and in community places and spaces.⁵

Guiding principles for effective family engagement

The advisory group also vetted and adopted a core set of principles for effective family engagement practices. When crafting these, the advisors reflected on the principles that have emerged from the broader family support field and stressed the need to embrace these principles across systems that serve families with young children.

- **Foster mutual respect, shared responsibility, and trusting relationships:** Respectful and trusting relationships between parents and providers are critical ingredients for effective family engagement efforts. Building trusting relationships takes time but ultimately bolsters a sense of shared responsibility and connections to responsive services and supports.
- **Support strong social networks and connections:** In addition to trusting relationships, creating space to further strengthen existing social networks and connections among parents and caregivers is an important part of effective parent engagement. This may happen in informal community settings or as a structured part of parent engagement programs.
- **Engage families where they are:** Family engagement programs should be highly accessible and engage families in places and times that are safe and convenient. In addition, they should be strengths-based, responsive to the diverse needs of families, focus on assets and protective factors, and develop over time to deepen and broaden engagement.
- **Respect, value, and be responsive to cultural and linguistic assets:** Culturally and linguistically responsive programs and providers are also critical. Providers should understand and respect cultural assets, norms, and experiences that impact family development and influence families' receptiveness to engagement strategies. Making adaptations (e.g., language, settings) to fit the appropriate cultural context makes programs relevant and accessible.
- **Identify opportunities to strengthen an integrated systems approach:** Parent engagement occurs in multiple settings and systems where providers, families, and children interact, learn, and play. A systems approach should be family-centered, promote and institutionalize—at its core—the value and practice of parent engagement strategies, and create seamless connections across programs, services, and systems. When possible, programs and services should be coordinated to promote and reinforce continuity of care, build on existing parent engagement efforts in the community, and extend reach through existing services and resources.

Family engagement settings

Early childhood field stakeholders discussed three settings for family engagement.

Informal childcare settings: Informal care providers are typically extended family members, neighbors, friends, and other adults (often referred to as families, friends, and neighbors or "FFN") who may or may not receive some sort of compensation for providing care. Many informal caregivers are parents themselves and care for other people's children as well as their own.

Formal childcare settings: Licensed childcare providers are based in a designated care center or in a caregiver's home. Programs include transitional kindergarten, preschool, Head Start, Early Head Start, and other similar arrangements.

Healthcare settings: Prenatal care, birth, and well-baby visits are often the first touchpoints that families have with healthcare institutions. Offices of obstetricians, pediatricians, family practitioners, medical clinics, and other healthcare providers focus on young children or families.

Opportunities to strengthen family engagement

The advisory group defined three primary recommendations for strengthening family engagement. Together, these recommendations aim to support parents and caregivers as their child's first teacher, create opportunities for building critical social networks, and influence formal settings and systems to effectively engage families in ways that contribute to children's early learning and healthy development. The ultimate goal is to ensure children are ready for school and on track for success in life. The following section reviews background, offers key themes and strategies to strengthen family engagement, and highlights promising programs.



COMMUNITY

Support families to be their child’s first teacher by strengthening connections to resources and social supports in community-based settings

The first recommendation focuses on strategies to build on the strengths of parents and informal providers by promoting peer support models, social connections, and strategies to enrich community settings with skill-building programs.



Background

In Los Angeles County, 58% of children age 0-3 and 33% of preschool aged children are cared for by family members, friends, and neighbors.⁶ Family care arrangements (particularly with grandmothers) are more common than friends and neighbors, with Spanish-speaking women making up a significant portion.^{7,8} A recent survey sponsored by First 5 LA also suggests most parents (80%) with children ages 0 to 5 prefer to stay at home or have a stay-at-home parent who cares for their child.⁹

Given the significant number of young children cared for by parents and informal caregivers, Los Angeles stakeholders underscored the fundamental importance of strengthening family engagement in informal and community-based settings. Social connections, respecting and being responsive to cultural and linguistic assets, and “meeting families where they are” comprise the critical principles for authentic family engagement.

IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY



The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) works to secure equal opportunities and better futures for all children and families by shaping policies and systems. Its **Strengthening Families Protective Factors** framework has been applied by public agencies in more than 30 states. First 5 LA, a major early childhood funder that has invested over \$1.2 million in Los Angeles County since 1998, has also adopted this framework. The framework highlights the importance of social connections between friends, family members, neighbors, and community members. Research shows that these groups can build family strength and promote optimal youth development by providing emotional support, helping solve problems, offering parenting advice, and giving concrete assistance to parents. These networks of support are essential for thriving families and also offer opportunities for people to give back to their community.¹⁰

Strengthening Families Protective Factors

- parental resilience
- social connections
- knowledge of parenting and child development
- concrete support in times of need
- social-emotional competence of children

Source: *The Center for the Study of Social Policy*

The Early Learning Lab is a new venture supported by the Packard Foundation devoted to supporting innovation and learning in the early childhood field. Specifically, the Early Learning Lab is interested in testing and showcasing scalable solutions for enhancing caregiver skills to support children's learning and school readiness. Some of these practices already are part of programs that Los Angeles stakeholders identified as supporting parents and informal care providers. Including these practices in local community programming may benefit adults and children alike, especially given that a majority of children are cared for by people who have no formal childcare training and little access to information about developmentally appropriate learning environments for young children.



“Parent engagement is about power. Power for parents to make decisions for themselves and their families.”

~ Best Start community member

Key Themes and Strategies



SUPPORT SOCIAL CONNECTIONS THAT BUILD ON STRENGTHS OF FAMILIES AND INFORMAL CAREGIVERS

Informal caregivers say they often trust and feel more comfortable with other parents and caregivers than with formal organizations and providers.¹¹ One key strategy to help parents and informal providers strengthen their role as the child's caregiver and first teacher is to create more opportunities where they can connect and learn in naturally existing community places and spaces. Members of the advisory group emphasized the need to incorporate cultural assets and build on parent strengths in existing settings where they provide care and/or interact with children (e.g., home, parks, libraries, schools, laundromats, etc.).

Many informal caregivers are monolingual, Spanish-speaking immigrants who may feel isolated and disconnected from valuable community resources. In addition, new immigrant families may avoid engaging with educational, health, and social service systems due to a lack of awareness as well as diverse beliefs, experiences, and perceptions about engaging with these systems. These isolated caregivers may limit how they engage the children in their care by keeping the children at home, making social connections even more critical.^{12, 13}

Learning activities that foster adult-child interaction and exploration to prepare children for preschool and kindergarten can be incorporated into existing programs and settings such as play in recreational parks, community centers, family resource centers, and libraries. Several stakeholders mentioned the opportunity to better leverage libraries by making them more culturally inviting to diverse residents and by integrating opportunities for children and adults to explore and learn.

The advisory group identified several programs and initiatives that fall into four major categories. Examples discussed include:

Place-based initiatives

Research and experience show that strong and supportive communities enable all children and families to succeed and thrive. As a result, funders and public officials have made targeted investments in place-based efforts to improve outcomes for families across the country and in Los Angeles County.

Best Start, an initiative of First 5 LA, builds community capacity and strengthens social connections in 14 low-income communities. Best Start brings together parents, church groups, businesses, local officials, nonprofits, and other stakeholders to collectively develop and implement strategies that help ensure children are healthy, safe, and ready to learn. The initiative incorporates Strengthening Families Protective Factors and provides opportunities to build parental leadership, capacity, and stronger social connections among parents/caregivers, providers, and local organizations.

Peer-to-peer skill building

Building on cultural and linguistic assets, peer-to-peer efforts encourage social connections that build caregiver skills in familiar settings. Several Los Angeles-based organizations such as Families in Schools and Abriendo Puertas have peer-to-peer programs and professional development trainings discussed later in this report. In addition to the programs below, peer-to-peer efforts include “buddy systems”¹³ where families become mentors to other caregivers. Mentors can help families connect to resources and invite them to “Parent Cafés” for meaningful and relevant conversations that incorporate the five Strengthening Families Protective Factors.¹⁴

Preschool Without Walls is a culturally and linguistically based early learning program available in parks, libraries, community centers, and faith-based institutions in various parts of Los Angeles County. The program, designed for parents and caregivers, builds the capacity of parents and caregivers to be their child’s first and life-long teacher. It also promotes healthy child attachments and bonding. Parents get to know other parents, strengthen their child development skills, and learn activities that they can practice at home to support early literacy and school readiness in young children.

Early Learning Readiness Program is a national pilot program that helps family, friend, and neighbor caregivers provide a preschool-like experience for the children. As one of the YMCA’s signature programs, it seeks to address the achievement gap by improving the school readiness of children who might otherwise start school at a disadvantage compared to their peers. Based on a travelling preschool in Hawaii called Tūtū and Me, this program uses trained facilitators to work with young children and their parents or informal caregivers.

Employer initiatives

Working families often struggle to identify relevant, high-quality programs for their children. Some employers offer community-based engagement programs to employees and their families.

The Parent to Parent, Building to Building, School to School project from the UCLA Labor Center is an example of how employers can support family engagement. Immigrant parents in low-wage sectors face a particularly acute challenge compared to many other groups. This project trains workers in downtown Los Angeles to conduct parent engagement workshops with other parents who have similar jobs.

Technology supports

Technology can make resources readily accessible anywhere and anytime. Family-friendly websites, apps, and texting programs help families and caregivers learn activities and skills that support early learning, brain development, and holistic health in their children.

Vroom (joinvroom.org) offers a website and application that shows parents how to turn everyday moments into brain building activities. Parents are encouraged to make eye contact, chat, stretch ideas, follow their child’s interests, and take turns with their child.

Text for Baby (text4baby.org) is a free text messaging service that provides expectant and new mothers with text messages three times per week, aligned with their due date through the baby’s first birthday. Information is developed by experts from all over the country. Personalized messages include information such as nutrition for mother and baby, safe sleep tips, baby’s milestones, doctor visits and appointment reminders, breastfeeding advice, health insurance information, and additional resource hotlines and websites.

FORMAL CARE

Strengthen family engagement practices in early education and health settings

The second recommendation focuses on health and early education settings, which are critical touchpoints for families and formal institutions. They also represent important opportunities to institutionalize authentic and culturally responsive family engagement practices that help parents navigate formal systems and advocate for the services they need. Institutional commitments can include training staff to effectively engage families, seek and respond to parent questions and concerns, and co-create plans for supporting their children's development.



Background

Early childhood experts encourage formal care providers to invest more in family engagement. Mario Small, Harvard University professor and author of *Unanticipated Gains*, contends that stronger family engagement is an institutional issue and “successful change requires the various components of the system to work in concert.” Small offers a compelling school-based example: “A teacher’s rapport with parents is shaped by the policies of the principal; a parent’s engagement with the child is informed by the incentives of the school.”¹⁵ Anthony Bryk, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and co-author of *Organizing Schools for Improvement*, calls close ties with families and community one of five essential ingredients for school success. Bryk’s recommendations call for transparency and partnership. He encourages teachers to allow parent observations, to make an effort to understand families’ concerns, and to see families as partners in improving student learning.¹⁶

“Parent education is not an add-on. It’s integral ...”

~ Los Angeles stakeholder



Los Angeles stakeholders identified several opportunities for formal organizations to shift their mindsets, deepen their commitment, and reimagine family engagement. They also recognized the importance of replicating and scaling evidence-based models, while not overlooking innovative practices and programs that show early signs of promise.

Key Themes and Strategies

The following section highlights a number of themes that emerged through the discovery process, including:

- Galvanize commitment to institutionalize authentic family engagement in formal settings
- Connect with families outside of traditional settings
- Engage family members who are often less connected
- Support innovative programs and evidence-based models in healthcare settings
- Support innovative programs and evidence-based models in early childcare settings



GALVANIZE COMMITMENT TO INSTITUTIONALIZE AUTHENTIC FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN FORMAL SETTINGS

Opportunity exists in both early learning and health settings to do more to engage families as partners and “meet them where they are with what they need.” There was collective agreement among Los Angeles advisors about the need to galvanize institutional commitment at all levels of an organization—from the frontline staff to the highest levels of leadership—thereby contributing to an organizational culture that recognizes, values, and supports family engagement. The advisory group discussed a variety of opportunities to create organizational cultures that embrace family engagement as a core value. Some examples include:

Head Start provides useful tools and resources to help all early childhood programs collaboratively identify “markers of progress” for deepening engagement with parents, families, and community partners.¹⁷

Strengthening Families Protective Factors have been adopted by many Los Angeles-based organizations. While widespread, the framework’s impact is limited because “no one is being trained to focus on these things.” More professional development is needed to promote strengths-based and collaborative approaches, and to create a family-centered organizational culture.

Families In Schools, a Los Angeles nonprofit, envisions a public education system where students have the opportunities and resources necessary to succeed in school and in life. The organization’s key ingredients for creating a welcoming environment for families include:

- Establish policies and practices that acknowledge traditional and nontraditional families
- Create an open-door policy and climate in the school that is responsive to parents and their concerns
- Provide translations of printed material and make translators available for all languages spoken in the school, including sign language for hearing-impaired families
- Arrange for flexibility in routine tasks such as registration and orientation (online options, telephone options, day and evening hours, etc.) to accommodate different family needs
- Consider varied family needs and preferences when scheduling meetings and school events; offer childcare, transportation, and refreshments for participating families
- Recognize the special time constraints on families who have children with disabilities or who are caring for aging parents
- Recognize and welcome parents/guardians with same-gender partners



CONNECT WITH FAMILIES OUTSIDE OF TRADITIONAL SETTINGS

It is essential to meet families where they are, both figuratively and literally. Opportunities exist to connect families to resources and support outside of traditional health and early childcare settings. An example repeatedly cited by stakeholders is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which serves nearly 60% of all children ages 0 to 5 in Los Angeles County.¹⁸ Embedding family engagement programming at v centers, neighborhood parks, laundromats, houses of worship, and other places where families convene is a promising approach for further exploration.

Similarly, Los Angeles stakeholders highlighted the need to engage working families, including those who work irregular hours and/or multiple jobs. These families cannot participate in parenting programs that are offered only during their work day. Lack of family participation in programs is often not due to lack of interest, but rather a lack of accommodation of parent schedules.



“Providers serving children ages 0 to 5 need quality tools and training on how to effectively and authentically partner with families to support life-long success.”

~ Los Angeles Stakeholder



ENGAGE FAMILY MEMBERS WHO ARE OFTEN LESS CONNECTED

Los Angeles stakeholders were especially concerned that family engagement programming is too narrowly targeted. By focusing primarily on mothers and traditional family structures, organizations often fail to reach fathers and foster parents, who play an increasingly active role in childrearing and childcare.

Engage fathers

In Los Angeles County there has been growing momentum for programs that support the engagement of fathers. Recent reports suggest that fathers spend five more hours on childcare each week than they did fifty years ago.¹⁹ Additionally, a recent study of Early Head Start families found that father engagement was associated with increased security and exploration among toddlers and stronger math and reading skills in the fifth grade.²⁰

Project Fatherhood at the Los Angeles-based Children's Institute engages low-income fathers in the care and upbringing of their children. The program is a result of the Responsible Fatherhood Initiative, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance.²¹

The Protective Factors Education Campaign sponsored by First 5 LA will focus on how to best talk to families and disseminate information on child development. Fathers will be targeted in this campaign, as they were found to be an important population to support.²²

Support foster parents

According to a report by First 5 LA, there has been an increase in the rate of substantiated abuse and neglect in Los Angeles County among children prenatal to age 5, which negatively impacts a child's socio-emotional development, health, and school readiness.²³ Children raised in foster care face higher risks for mental health issues and developmental delays than their peers.²⁴ In 2014, nearly 10,000 children in Los Angeles County entered the child welfare system, of which over half were ages 0-5.²⁵ Advisors identified foster parents as a group that may be under-supported and can benefit from informal and formal efforts to bolster their skills and social connections. It is especially important to provide foster parents the additional support they need to effectively recognize and respond to the impact of traumatic stress and re-traumatization of young children in their care. Some current efforts to consider are:

The Foster and Kinship Care Education program provides training and education to potential and current foster parents. It is administered through the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

The Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI)²⁶ is a joint effort between the Youth Law Center, California Department of Social Services, and the County Welfare Directors Association. The goal of QPI is to ensure that every child removed by Child Protective Services is cared for by a family that provides skilled, nurturing parenting and helps maintain connections with family, and that the foster parent is a respected partner in the child welfare system.



SUPPORT INNOVATIVE AND EVIDENCE-BASED MODELS IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

Healthcare experiences are some of the first points of contact families have with formal systems, making these settings an ideal opportunity to engage families early and in meaningful ways. Data indicate 97% of mothers in Los Angeles County complete well-baby check-ups, but pediatricians and health professionals often have limited time with families, and medical offices are typically ill-equipped to provide care coordination and service referrals.²⁷ Enhanced care coordination, warm hand-offs, and strategies for sustaining engagement over time can all improve effectiveness.

Expand home visitation

Home visitation programs have been around for decades and, by design, work to build parenting skills that support children's early development. Los Angeles has the largest investment in home visitation programs in the county, offering a continuum of programs that are funded by county, state, and federal sources. In addition to the examples mentioned below, several others include Early Head Start, Nurse Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, and Parents As Teachers.

Welcome Baby is a voluntary, home visiting program for pregnant women and new families. Nurses, hospital liaisons, and parent coaches provide information and resources both in the hospital and at home. Welcome Baby works with approximately 14 hospitals in First 5 LA's Best Start communities and offers services that span from light-touch support and referrals to more intensive programs based on a family's needs. Additional efforts help link new mothers with Best Start activities as a way to foster social connections and community engagement.

Los Angeles County Perinatal and Early Childhood Home Visitation Consortium is developing a more coordinated, cohesive, and comprehensive approach to what is currently a fragmented collection of home visiting programs across the county.



Increase use of developmental screenings in primary care settings

Los Angeles stakeholders noted the importance of early identification and intervention for developmental delays by ensuring all children receive screening as early as possible. Developmental screenings are part of the California Quality Continuum Framework developed through the Race to the Top Early Learning grants that are now being used as the basis for Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS). Screening tools, such as Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status Online (PEDS Online), Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Third Edition (ASQ – 3), and Ages and Stages Questionnaires: Social Emotional (ASQ – SE2), help to jumpstart conversations between providers and families about their child's development. Parent observation is valued and strategies are co-constructed to best support children.

Help Me Grow, a program implemented in many states and communities, builds on existing resources in a community and weaves them together to create a system for identifying and supporting children ages 0-8 who are identified as at-risk. Help Me Grow includes comprehensive physician and community outreach as well as centralized information and referral centers that link families with programs and services. Ongoing data collection and analysis also help identify gaps in and barriers to the system.²⁸

“Family engagement is everybody’s business.”

~ The Office of Head Start National Center for Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

In 2005, Orange County became the first county in the country to pilot the Help Me Grow model for replication and California became a HMG affiliate state in 2011. Since that time, eight California counties have become affiliates, and another 14 are part of a learning community exploring potential implementation. As part of its 2015-2020 strategic plan, First 5 LA has expressed its intention to build on the infrastructure of past successes with developmental screening programs, such as the Early Developmental Screening Initiative (EDSI), to further implement Help Me Grow in Los Angeles County.

Promote care coordination and navigation

Families often need services from multiple systems to support their child's development, but coordinating this support can be overwhelming. An integrated system requires systems navigators and care coordinators. Models and approaches that surfaced through this scan are described below.

Project DULCE is an evidence-based clinical intervention for families with children birth to six-months that leverages the community health worker model and focuses on the Strengthening Families framework. With family engagement at its center, Project DULCE partners to build strengths and skills that foster optimal child health and development. It provides parents of newborns with information about their child's developmental needs, and the project's efforts within medical-legal partnerships have yielded significant access to concrete family supports. Additionally, to ensure continued family support throughout the child's most critical months and years, Project DULCE Family Specialists seamlessly transfer infants 6 months and older to a primary care team and other service providers in the community. As part of its 2015-2020 strategic plan, First 5 LA plans to expand this model at health centers that offer parent engagement and care coordination.²⁹

Healthy Steps is a successful primary care model that includes a child development specialist who conducts developmental screening, provides age-appropriate guidance, and parent education. Evaluations of Healthy Steps have found it to be effective in improving parenting practices and child development outcomes, however stakeholders noted the persistent challenge of securing sustained funding.

Health Neighborhoods is a placed-based model that seeks to increase access to underserved groups. It is being tested by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. One key strategy is the implementation of place-based community clubhouses for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. Clubhouses are designed to address trauma associated with social isolation and disrupted relationships. In addition to helping parents learn developmentally appropriate play activities and socioemotional literacy, at-risk children will receive referrals to other services and systems.³⁰

211 LA Developmental Screening and Care Coordination program conducts developmental screenings and connects families to appropriate services through an extensive network of providers. Numerous Los Angeles stakeholders encouraged leveraging the 211 LA model, noting its success in helping isolated and at-risk families, as well as its cross-system data sharing. A study is underway to test the effectiveness of telephone-based screening and care coordination through 211 LA for children ages 18 to 36 months. One stakeholder mentioned examples of the Help Me Grow model (which does not conduct assessments), joining forces with 211 programs in other regions which may be worth exploring in Los Angeles County.





SUPPORT INNOVATIVE AND EVIDENCE-BASED MODELS IN EARLY CHILDCARE SETTINGS

Los Angeles stakeholders stressed the importance of supporting both innovative programs as well as evidence-based models that transform formal early childcare programs into hubs for family engagement. Developmental screenings happen in many settings, including early childcare and education. For example, all Head Start and Early Head Start programs are required to conduct developmental screenings, and many home visiting and childcare programs (especially center-based, publicly subsidized programs) have made developmental screenings part of their practice. Specific suggestions are outlined below.

Train early care providers to engage families in supporting child development

Los Angeles stakeholders identified opportunities to build capacity among early care providers to embrace new effective practices and use established models and curriculum to work collaboratively with families.

Given the local emphasis on the Strengthening Families framework, stakeholders also identified the need for more provider trainings on this model, with an emphasis on partnering with families in multiple settings.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy offers trainings for “child and family-serving professionals” and is aimed to engage parents as partners. CSSP works with the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Fund to offer in-person and online training options that support the implementation of the protective factors including content and materials on partnering with parents and concrete examples of everyday actions that strengthen families.³¹

Stakeholders suggested that training efforts can align with the core competencies for prenatal to age 3 developed by First 5 LA and the ZERO TO THREE Western Office. These competencies are now being expanded to cover prenatal to age 5 and incorporate five critical domains of early development and learning, including: 1) early care and education, 2) mental health, 3) physical health, 4) child welfare, and 5) early intervention. They also cover eight critical practices, including but not limited to, family-centered practice, relationship-based practice, cultural and linguistic responsiveness, service planning, coordination, and collaboration.³²

Early Head Start and Head Start were frequently cited as models for family engagement. With new federal Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership funding, there may be more opportunities to extend Head Start resources and practices to formal childcare programs.

Brazelton Touchpoints is a nationally recognized organization that provides trainings on topics such as children’s development and behavior, relationship-based practices, and effective family engagement practices for early childhood providers.³³

Families In Schools offers local professional development training for staff from schools (pre-K to 12), community organizations, or any other entities working with parents on educational issues. The trainings promote best practices for engaging parents in meaningful ways. Families In Schools also provides trainings focused on creating welcoming environments and relationships to encourage parental involvement in a variety of educational settings.³⁴

Abriendo Puertas is the nation's first evidence-based comprehensive training program developed by and for Latino parents with children ages 0 to 5. The training includes lessons on early literacy, language development, civic participation, and social-emotional wellness. It promotes parent leadership, helping parents become active advocates for their children in the schools and in their community. Abriendo Puertas uses a train-the-trainer model (i.e., parents are trained to train other parents) that helps local service providers improve family outreach and retention. Abriendo Puertas has implemented a successful partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) school-based parent centers.

The partnership between Abriendo Puertas and LAUSD can be an early gateway to engaging families with the school system. Under its new strategic plan, First 5 LA plans to partner with Abriendo Puertas and learn from this program's successes to support the development of similar approaches for additional populations. The organizations also plan to work together to leverage and strengthen Abriendo Puertas' curriculum with the goal to "take the research off the shelf and make it accessible to parents in a warm and welcoming environment."³⁵

Integrate family engagement into Quality Rating Improvement Systems

Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS) are a tool for establishing professional standards in early childcare programs. The Los Angeles stakeholders called for the inclusion of family engagement measures in QRIS as a way to challenge programs to deepen their institutional commitment and help families identify programs with high ratings for family engagement practices, staff training, and other standards that reflect a commitment to engaging families as partners. In addition to institutionalizing parent engagement, stakeholders also highlighted the importance of helping parents become better consumers.

Currently there are multiple QRIS in use in Los Angeles County, and leaders across several agencies are working to integrate and streamline these tools. While QRIS efforts create an ideal opportunity to integrate a family engagement component into the rating system, it is important to note that provider participation in these voluntary systems is quite low. According to a recent report from the Advancement Project, less than one-tenth of all childcare centers and about 2% of all family childcare homes in Los Angeles County are participating in a QRIS effort.³⁶

SYSTEM SUPPORTS

Promote collaboration and coordination of family engagement efforts through policy, joint funding, and replication of effective practices

The advisory group’s third recommendation acknowledges that authentic family engagement requires a shift in mindsets and an integrated approach that promotes seamless connections across programs, services, and systems. Creating a more streamlined continuum of care will make it easier for parents to engage system supports. A promising approach includes identifying opportunities to leverage existing funding streams, promote favorable policies, and support informed decision making with robust data, research, and evaluation.



Background

Effective family engagement requires a coordinated approach that bridges the many systems, programs, and settings where families with young children live, learn, work, and seek services. Given the scope and scale of Los Angeles County, systemic coordination is not an easy task. However, there are numerous opportunities to coordinate, collaborate, and leverage current funding streams, initiatives, places, and spaces. There are also opportunities to support advocacy efforts and advance discussions and policies that are important to families with young children. This section highlights systemic strategies, regional assets, and opportunities for a more robust system of family engagement.



“When do public systems get into the game of community building?”

~Los Angeles Stakeholder

Key Themes and Strategies

The following section highlights a number of themes that emerged through the discovery process, including:

- Shift mindsets and change the conversation about family engagement
- Leverage funding streams, resources, places, and spaces
- Identify, promote, and replicate promising policy change efforts
- Support and share research, data, and evaluation findings



SHIFT MINDSETS AND CHANGE THE CONVERSATION ABOUT FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Consistent with other national thought leaders on family engagement, Los Angeles stakeholders echoed the need to elevate awareness about the importance of family engagement in healthy child development and to reimagine interactions between families, institutions, and broader public systems. As one stakeholder said, “Parent engagement needs to be universally embraced and practiced.” Changing the narrative can be accomplished through public education or strategic communication campaigns aimed at modifying the way organizations and communities think and talk about the role of families.

Talk, Read, and Sing, Too Small to Fail, and Campaign for Grade Level Reading are public-awareness campaigns that can help raise awareness and shift mindsets. In addition, First 5 LA plans to implement a public awareness campaign on the Strengthening Families Protective Factors. Together, these and other campaigns that have a family-centered, strengths-based focus have the opportunity to enhance a family’s sense of pride and responsibility for their role as a child’s first and life-long teacher. These campaigns may also have the potential to influence how organizations and systems think about family engagement, honor the role of families, and expand skill-sets that support children’s development and learning.





LEVERAGE FUNDING STREAMS, RESOURCES, PLACES, AND SPACES

In Los Angeles County, there are momentum and resources to support intensive place-based efforts that actively engage families and caregivers with children ages 0 to 5. The California Endowment's *Building Healthy Communities*, the California Community Foundation, and federally funded Promise Neighborhoods bring intensive resources to various communities with components that focus on early childhood. These places, initiatives, and funding streams provide additional opportunities to build on local momentum and expand family engagement practices. Other examples of local place-based and policy opportunities include:

Best Start, an initiative of First 5 LA, builds community capacity and strengthens social connections in 14 low-income communities. Best Start brings together parents, church groups, businesses, local officials, nonprofits, and other stakeholders to collectively develop and implement strategies that help ensure children are healthy, safe, and ready to learn. Best Start communities become laboratories where innovative solutions bubble up, resources are leveraged, and social connections are strengthened.

Health Neighborhoods is a place-based approach led by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LADMH), part of the Mental Health Service Act (MHSA). It seeks to support communities by creating collective will to employ various strategies for people of diverse ages to decrease risk and reduce the degree of trauma experienced by community members.³⁷

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) is a new process for budgeting and priority setting in school districts across California. Los Angeles stakeholders pointed to potential opportunities to embed family engagement principles and practices in this process. LCFF opens the door for school districts to increase support for the early childhood years, and family engagement is one of seven areas of focus. It is conceivable that school districts could invest in some of the evidence-based programs mentioned above to bolster parent skills and leadership, and ensure children enter kindergarten with the skills needed to be successful in the classroom.

Grade-Level Reading Disparities

According to the California Department of Education, 53% of third graders are still not reading at grade level, and the disparities are even more acute among Latino and African American students in Los Angeles County. Data from LAUSD reveal only 34% of Latinos and 37% of African American students are scoring at or above third-grade reading proficiency.

The **Campaign for Grade-Level Reading** has also gained momentum in the County over the last several years. Led by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, local efforts fueled the creation of the Los Angeles Compact Collaborative, a public-private coalition of funders, businesses, and community stakeholders. More recently, the Campaign's School Readiness Working Group identified family engagement as one of its top three priorities. Specifically, they are looking to identify and support a common measure or dashboard of measurements for quality family engagement systems in Los Angeles County.



IDENTIFY, PROMOTE, AND REPLICATE PROMISING POLICY CHANGE EFFORTS

At the state level, the First 5 Association of California is rallying support for several key policy issues that impact family engagement, including universal access to a continuum of research-informed and evidence-based voluntary newborn home visiting programs. The Association is advocating to ensure that 100% of California children receive recommended developmental screenings, and calling for a statewide system of accountability to ensure children's health insurance plans cover developmental and behavioral screenings at no cost under state and federal law. Other policy objectives include expanding access to family education and parent-child learning programs that strengthen families' resilience, expanding support systems, and reducing child abuse and neglect.³⁸



SUPPORT AND SHARE RESEARCH, DATA, AND EVALUATION FINDINGS

Los Angeles stakeholders support new research, program evaluation, and building an evidence base that advances and strengthens the quality of family engagement. They also recognize the need to use and share data more effectively. In addition to sharing data and evaluation findings with organizational stakeholders, advisors stressed the importance of sharing data with families. Finally, stakeholders stressed the importance of cross-sector communication and data sharing, particularly of developmental screening results, to help improve care coordination when concerns are detected. There are a variety of current assets and efforts in Los Angeles County that can be leveraged to enhance and expand the sharing and use of data.

Children's Data Network, based at the University of Southern California, is a data and research collaborative focused on the linkage and analysis of administrative records. In partnership with public agencies, philanthropic funders, and community stakeholders, the Children's Data Network seeks to generate knowledge and advance evidence-rich policies that will improve the health, safety, and well-being of children.³⁹

Considerations for future work

As early childhood stakeholders have recommended and evidence supports, family engagement supports a child's school readiness. Much more can be done to connect with families as they nurture their children to thrive and grow.

Opportunities and areas of engagement include:

- Supporting families to be their child's first teacher by strengthening connections to resources and social supports in community-based settings
- Strengthening family engagement practices in early education and health settings
- Promoting collaboration and coordination of family engagement efforts through policy, joint funding, and replication of effective practices

Families need information and support to make critical decisions about childcare providers and to navigate the labyrinth of health and social services to advocate for their child's needs.

While it's important to support programs that build parenting skills and connect families to formal systems and services, there must be a parallel effort to build the skills and capacity of providers and systems to effectively engage families as partners and create clear pathways for families to access the services they need and want. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan refers to this as a "dual-capacity" framework and is encouraging K-12 schools to focus on building the skills of families as well as educators and educational systems to engage families in support of student achievement.

Stakeholders in Los Angeles echoed the importance of partnership and authenticity. Family engagement strategies should develop the skills and capacity of families, providers, and the systems in which they operate. Further, they should build upon the strengths of families and local communities and support community-based efforts where innovative solutions bubble up, resources are leveraged, and social connections are reinforced.

By embracing an authentic approach to family engagement, and aligning effective efforts currently underway, we can realize our shared goal—that our communities' youngest children are healthy, ready for school, and on track to reach their full potential.

"Staff mis-assumptions about parents' abilities; cultural mismatches between home and school environments; and time and resource constraints for teachers, administrators, and parents all hinder robust parental/family involvement. Further, foundations, funders, and other stakeholders lack understanding of what they need to do in order to effectively impact the issue. We can and must do better if we are to succeed at authentically engaging parents/families in their children's early education and consequently reap the benefits of such involvement."

~ Los Angeles Stakeholder

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Abriendo Puertas / Opening Doors*

Provides training programs for Latino parents to help them understand their role in the development of and long-term impact of their children's educational outcomes. They partner with organizations nationwide to train community leaders to deliver the curriculum to parents in their neighborhood.

Building Healthy Communities

An initiative of The California Endowment, Building Healthy Communities partnered with 14 communities in California to focus on building lasting community change. Efforts at each community site (BHC) seek to include parents, residents, and other stakeholders to impact systems and policy.

California State University Northridge (CSUN) Institute for Community Health and Wellbeing

The Institute for Community Health and Wellbeing is a collaborative of campus and community affiliations focused on strengthening individuals and communities through creative partnerships and education. They match campus expertise and resources with regional needs.

Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading focuses on brain development, early learning, school readiness, and ultimately the number of children reading proficiently by the end of third grade. The campaign's Healthy Readers Initiative focuses on strategies to ensure that children from low-income families are in good health and developing on track at four key milestones in their development from birth through third grade: Born Healthy, Thriving at Three, Ready at Five, and Present and Engaged in the Early Grades.

Center for the Study of Social Policy: Strengthening Families

"A research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building five protective factors."

Child Care Alliance of LA (CCALA)

The Childcare Alliance of LA is a partnership of agencies in Los Angeles County that offer a variety of early education and child care services and programs. Additionally, the CCALA helps parents navigate the early education and child care systems in Los Angeles County.

Child Care Resource Center (CCRC)

CCRC develops and sustains networks of support to ensure access to integrated, comprehensive programs and services that strengthen families and prepare young children for success. They also connect parents to quality child care and resources and support child care providers through training, technical assistance, and professional development.

Child Development Institute (CDI)

CDI focuses on the development of the whole child, including his or her early relationships, environments, and communities. CDI's intervention services include professional therapists who ensure children reach their developmental potential and are ready for success in school by supporting social-emotional, language, cognitive and motor development. They also provide trainings to schools, teachers, and professional organizations.

Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)*

CPP was "designed to restore the child-parent relationship, the child's mental health, and developmental progression that have been damaged by the experience of trauma and/or domestic violence."

City of LA: Family Source Centers

Family Source Centers located throughout the City of Los Angeles serve, assist, and support residents in their local neighborhoods and communities. Each center offers a variety of educational, family, child and youth services including counseling, cultural, recreational, and after school activities onsite or nearby through referrals.

* Evidence-Based

Clinica Romero

Clinica Romero is a community clinic with multiple sites in Los Angeles that aims to provide quality, affordable, and culturally sensitive health care and other services to the uninsured, insured, and underserved communities. They have programs such as the Women and Children Program where Certified Perinatal Health Workers' (CPHW) focus is to promote prenatal and postnatal healthcare, family planning, social service case management, and home visitation care.

County of Los Angeles Office of Child Care

The Office of Child Care shapes policy recommendations, facilitates planning, and provides a range of services aimed at improving the availability, quality, and access to early care and education programs. The Office supports efforts to promote informed parents' choice of early care and education services and the meaningful engagement of parents in those services. And finally, the Office works across disciplines to promote access to concrete supports that families need.

Crisis Oriented Recovery Services (CORS)*

CORS focuses on providing immediate assistance in short-term crisis intervention situations as well as assistance with mental health and case management services. "The primary objective is to assist individuals in resolving and/or coping with psychosocial crises by mitigating additional stress or psychological harm. CORS promotes the development of coping strategies that individuals can utilize to help restore them to their previous level of functioning prior to the crisis event."

Developmental Screening Tools: PEDS; Ages and Stages ASQ-3, ASQ-SE2*

Screening tools like PEDS and Ages and Stages help increase the early identification of developmental and behavioral problems, improve access to early treatment, support creating a relationship between families and health professionals, and teach parents and caregivers about healthy behaviors and their child's development.

Early Developmental Systems Initiative (EDSI)

"The Early Developmental Systems Initiative (EDSI) designs, tests, and spreads better ways of providing developmental care to young children. The aim is to build systems that provide reliable and effective supports for prevention, health promotion, and recognition and response to developmental concerns in children ages 0-5 years. EDSI uses a proven approach to help health care and early education providers make lasting improvements. The Initiative's process of innovation and refinement finds cutting-edge solutions to reduce the time and cost of improving care."

Early Head Start*

Early Head Start provides early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income infants and toddlers and their families, and pregnant women and their families.

Echo Parenting and Education

"Echo Parenting and Education teaches parents, teachers, and others who strongly influence children's lives an approach that integrates current research in human development and trauma-informed care with the practice of nonviolence."

Families In Schools

Families in Schools involves parents and communities in their children's education to achieve lifelong success. They implement programs and trainings for parents and teachers, as well as professional development for school staff.

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC)

FQHCs must serve an underserved area or population, offer a sliding fee scale, and provide comprehensive services (including dental care) for qualifying families.

First 5 LA: Best Start Communities*

"Best Start brings together parents and caregivers, residents, organizations, businesses, government institutions, and other stakeholders to collectively build a vision and develop strategies to create the best possible community for young children and their families." The organization facilitates and supports community opportunities for skill-building and leadership training to help Best Start Communities achieve their goals and ensure that children are born healthy, are free from abuse and neglect, maintain a healthy weight, and enter kindergarten ready to learn. Best Start uses the Strengthening Families Framework and Protective Factors as theoretical frames for its work.

* Evidence-Based

First 5 LA: Families, Friends and Neighbors (FFN) Program

The FFN program aims to enhance home-based providers' skills and knowledge regarding child development and child care. FFN serves providers who offer child care either in the child's home or the provider's home, and who are not required to be licensed by the State Community Care Licensing Division. Each provider meets one-on-one in their home with their mentor, who offers on-site suggestions and coaching.

Friends of the Family

"Friends of the Family is a comprehensive family resource center known for pioneering innovative, practical programs where families are recognized as central to a child's well-being and are supported to build on their skills and strengths."

Head Start: Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

Head Start encourages parents and families to become involved in their children's education, both in and out of the classroom. Head Start encourages the role of parents as their child's first and most important teachers. Because parents and families play a critical role in helping their children prepare for academic success, Head Start uses the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) framework to build relationships with families that lead to positive and enduring change.

Health Neighborhoods

According to the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) website: "The Health Neighborhood Initiative brings together health, mental health, and substance use disorder providers to establish and enhance collaborative relationships and promote the integration of whole person care. Participating service providers are linked to an extensive network of governmental and community supports including, but not limited to: County and city agencies, educational institutions, housing services, faith-based groups, vocational supports, advocacy and non-profit organizations, prevention programs, social services, etc. These providers come together with vital input from the community to enhance the health and well-being of neighborhood residents."

Healthy Families America (HFA)*

Healthy Families America uses a home visiting program model designed to work with overburdened families who are at-risk for adverse childhood experiences, including child maltreatment. HFA services begin prenatally or right after the birth of a baby and are offered voluntarily, intensively, and over the long-term (3 to 5 years after the birth of the baby).

Healthy Steps for Young Children (Healthy Steps)*

Healthy Steps is a national initiative that focuses on the importance of the first three years of life. It emphasizes a close relationship between health care professionals and parents in addressing the physical, emotional, and intellectual growth and development of children from birth to age three.

Help Me Grow (HMG) Orange County*

Funded by the Children and Families Commission of Orange County. "Help Me Grow Orange County (HMG) connects children and their families to developmental services to enhance the development, behavior, and learning of children birth through five years. Parents, caregivers, child care providers, early educators, and health care providers can call the toll free number, or use the online link to access information and referrals to developmental services for all young children who live in Orange County. HMG Care Coordinators provide intake, triage, referrals, and connection to developmental services, and the Community Liaisons develop ongoing relationships with community programs to help maintain an up-to-date inventory of resources."

Hope Street Family Center

"Hope Street Family Center is a community program of California Hospital Medical Center that provides in-home and on-site educational, health wellness, behavioral health, developmental, and social services that support children (thru adulthood) and families." Hope Street Family Center has been recognized as a national model for integrating health care within its community and has received the national NOVA Award.

Incredible Years (IY)*

"A curriculum-based, multifaceted, developmentally appropriate intervention targeting primarily children ages 2-12, using videotaped scenes to structure content and group discussion."

* Evidence-Based

Maternal Mental Health NOW (formerly LA County Perinatal Mental Health Task Force)

The Los Angeles County Perinatal Mental Health Task Force is a volunteer network of over 30 individuals representing more than 35 public, private, and community agencies whose mission is to remove barriers to the prevention, screening, and treatment of perinatal depression and related mood and anxiety disorders throughout Los Angeles County.

LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment

The Partnership invests in and promotes innovations that advance the lifelong health and well-being of LA County children, age 0-5. The Partnership focuses on three critical areas: Strengthening Families, Leveraging Public Investments, and Engaging Business.

L.A. Trust for Children's Health

The L.A. Trust provides strategic funding and support for LAUSD Wellness Networks, school health centers, and other student health services. It increases access to health services for the children of the Los Angeles Unified School District and promotes collaboration among health organizations to address the needs of children. The L.A. Trust also increases awareness of critical health issues and promotes the research of health issues and practices.

LA Universal Preschool (LAUP)

LAUP, funded by First 5 LA, advances “early education program quality and capacity by supporting the development of the whole child, growing a qualified and diverse workforce, and strengthening family engagement. The LAUP Parent Engagement Resource Specialists ensure our providers offer a variety of opportunities for parents to be engaged in their child’s education and learning. They provide assistance in increasing communication with parents, create opportunities to be hands-on in the classroom, encourage connections between the home and school, and utilize resources in the community.”

LAUSD Linkages to L.A. Trust Wellness Centers

According to the L.A. Trust website: “Partnering with the First 5 LA program; we envision the advancement of child wellness and development through the connection of families to preconception, infant and toddler care, physical, mental and oral health care services offered by LAUSD Wellness Centers and broad community resources.”

LAUSD School, Family and Parent/Community Services: Parent Community Services Branch

“Parent Centers provide a safety net for parents to gain know-how across a broad spectrum without embarrassment, provide basic language and social skills and can help parents assimilate to a new culture. The Parent Center also provides a portal, which links the surrounding community to the school and vice-versa.” Parent, Community and Student Services supports school efforts to implement effective family engagement activities that value partnerships with parents and grandparents for the benefit of children’s learning and achievement.

Los Angeles County Perinatal & Early Childhood Home Visiting Consortium

LA County Department of Public Health’s Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Programs and LA Best Babies Network are partnering in the development of the LA County Perinatal & Early Childhood Home Visitation Consortium. The Consortium aims to help all expectant and parenting families in Los Angeles County gain access to quality in-home support delivered by well trained, culturally sensitive individuals to promote optimum health, safety, and child development, and strengthen family functioning, resiliency, and self sufficiency.

Los Ninos en Su Casa (A Place of Our Own)

KCET and First 5 LA bring bilingual programming and a website to childcare providers. It’s a daily television series, a website, and an extensive outreach program devoted to the unique needs of people who care for children.

Magnolia Place Community Initiative*

Magnolia Place creates sustainable change for families by promoting and strengthening individual, family, and neighborhood protective factors through increasing social connectedness, community mobilization, and access to needed services.

Make Parenting a Pleasure

“A comprehensive group-based positive parenting curriculum for stressed parents of children 0-8. In addition to reducing parent stress, Make Parenting a Pleasure addresses the Protective Factors shown to reduce the potential for child abuse. The facilitated approach is designed by parenting educators for parenting educators, and helps parents achieve their goals for their families and respects the diversity of those goals.

* Evidence-Based

Managing and Adapting Practice (MAP)

“Designed to improve the quality, efficiency, and outcomes of children’s mental health services by giving administrators and practitioners easy access to the most current scientific information and by providing user-friendly monitoring tools and clinical protocols.”

Mindful Parenting

Mindful Parenting is a framework whereby parents intentionally bring moment-to-moment awareness to the parent-child relationship. This is done by developing the qualities of listening with full attention when interacting with their children, cultivating emotional awareness and self-regulation in parenting, and bringing compassion and nonjudgmental acceptance to their parenting interactions.

National Foundation for Children’s Oral Health

The National Foundation for Children’s Oral Health supports the delivery of oral health education and care beginning at the prenatal level. The Foundation is focused on creating an oral health zone in the San Fernando Valley, with an emphasis on parent education.

Nurse Family Partnership*

“Through ongoing home visits from registered nurses, low-income, first-time moms receive the care and support they need to have a healthy pregnancy, provide responsible and competent care for their children, and become more economically self-sufficient. From pregnancy until the child turns two years old, Nurse-Family Partnership Nurse Home Visitors form a much-needed, trusting relationship with the first-time moms.”

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)*

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is an empirically-supported treatment for conduct-disordered young children that places emphasis on improving the quality of the parent-child relationship and changing parent-child interaction patterns. Coached sessions engage both parent/caregiver and child.

Preschool Without Walls

“Preschool Without Walls (PWW) provides a participatory, parent-child early learning program in accessible community locations... Parents also develop their individual skills to educate young children, with focused support for early literacy and school readiness, early social skills development, and healthy physical activity and nutrition.”

Project DULCE (Developmental Understanding & Legal Collaboration for Everyone)*

“Partner(s) with parents of newborns – with the dual goals of improving child development and reducing maltreatment. This is accomplished by providing families with support for any unmet legal needs and age-related information on child development.”

Reflective Parenting (RP)

Designed to enhance parental reflective functioning. The Reflective Parenting Program includes workshops to help parents build strong, healthy bonds with their children and actively engage parents in an experiential learning process that includes strategies, techniques, and exercises.

South Los Angeles Child Welfare Initiative (SLACWI)

“The South Los Angeles Child Welfare Initiative (SLACWI) is a collaborative of 7 organizations implementing cross-agency care coordination for children 0-5 years at risk for child welfare involvement, with special emphasis on kinship caregiver families and pregnant and parenting teens.”

Text4baby

“Text4baby is the first mobile information service designed to promote maternal and child health through text messaging. Text4baby is a free service of the nonprofit National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB) and was created in collaboration with Founding Sponsor Johnson & Johnson, and founding partners Voxiva, The Wireless Foundation, and Grey Healthcare Group (a WPP company).”

* Evidence-Based

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)*

“Tūtū and Me aims to identify, recruit, and service this underserved segment of the Native Hawaiian population through an early intervention for children who may be at risk for symptoms of depression and psychological trauma, subsequent to any number of traumatic experiences, particularly those individuals who are not currently receiving mental health services.”

Triple P - Positive Parenting Program*

Triple P gives parents simple and practical strategies to help them confidently manage their children’s behavior, prevent problems developing and build strong, healthy relationships.

Tūtū and Me

“Tūtū and Me aims to identify, recruit, and service this underserved segment of the Native Hawaiian population through an innovative traveling preschool program done in cooperation with churches and community organizations serving the Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian community. Tūtū and Me aims to meet the developmental needs of these young children and to support the grandparents as well as parents and other primary caregivers who are raising them.”

UCLA TIES Transition Model (UCLA TTM)

UCLA TTM significantly reduces barriers to the adoption of children with special needs and supports their successful transition into permanent homes with stable, nurturing families.

Vroom

Vroom is a website and application born out of a need for creative tools and materials that inspire families to turn everyday moments into brain building moments. It was developed with thoughtful input from parents, early childhood experts, neuroscientists, and community leaders.

Welcome Baby

“Welcome Baby provides L.A. County pregnant women and new moms with information, support and a trusted partner to help you through the journey of pregnancy and early parenthood.”

Women, Infants & Children (WIC)

“The WIC program serves pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants and children up to 5 years old in low-income families. WIC provides free, supplemental foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and education, and other support services.”

YMCA Early Learning Readiness Program

“The YMCA’s Early Learning Readiness Program provides a stimulating environment for children ages 2-4 to play and learn while developing the physical, verbal, and social skills they’ll need to start school ready to succeed.”

Youth Policy Institute: Promise Neighborhoods

YPI Promise Neighborhoods aim to transform the communities of Pacoima and Hollywood with a continuum of integrated cradle-to-college-and-career services. Will focus on integrating wrap-around services that include prenatal and early childhood development, extended learning time, likened learning, etc. Every Promise Neighborhood Center will be a one-stop shop for families, modeled on YPI’s Hollywood Family Source Center.

211 LA County

“...one of the largest and most effective resource lines in the nation providing access to comprehensive social services and disaster support for L.A. County residents. 211 LA’s innovative programs are examples of the best practices in assessing, coordinating, and integrating the health and human services needed by the most underserved and vulnerable populations of one of the most culturally diverse counties in the country. With one phone call, clients are directly screened and connected with the services they need for themselves or their children, including shelters, meals, autism screening, veterans’ services, substance abuse programs, health care, and mental health services, and access to jobs.”

* Evidence-Based

Percent of Children (Ages 0 to 5 Years) Who Are Cared for in Their Own Home

	RELATIVE		NON-RELATIVE	
	Percent	Estimated Number	Percent	Estimated Number
LA County	69.3%	108,000	29.1%	44,000
By Child's Age				
Less than 1 Year	70.3%	10,000	29.7%*	4,000
1 Year	59.0%	11,000	41.0%*	8,000
2 Years	55.8%	13,000	44.2%*	10,000
3 Years	70.8%	23,000	29.2%*	9,000
4 Years	79.2%	15,000	20.8%*	4,000
5 Years	80.4%	33,000	19.6%*	8,000

Percent of Children (Ages 0 to 5 Years) in Childcare Who Are Cared for in Their Own Home on a Regular Basis

	Percent	Estimated Number
LA County	37.5%	153,000
By Child's Age		
Less than 1 Year	49.7%	15,000
1 Year	57.7%	19,000
2 Years	32.4%	24,000
3 Years	38.5%	33,000
4 Years	21.8%	19,000
5 Years	43.1%	41,000

Source: 2011 Los Angeles County Health Survey
Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

The information presented is based on self-reported data from a randomly selected, representative sample of 6,013 Los Angeles County parents/guardians. The 95% confidence intervals (CI) represent the margin of error that occurs with statistical sampling, and means that the actual prevalence in the population, 95 out of 100 times sampled, would fall within the range provided.

* The estimate is statistically unstable (relative standard error >23%) and therefore may not be appropriate to use for planning or policy purposes.