Why Parents Matter

• Broad consensus that healthy parenting leads to better outcomes for children and supports their resilience in the face of adversity.

• Parents are their children’s first nurturers, teachers, advocates, and buffers from stress.

• Positive parent-child relationships set the stage for children’s success in school and in life.

• Parents are our most important partners for supporting the development and well-being of young children.
What Family Strengthening Provides

Effective, evidence-based parenting interventions have been shown to result in:

• increased social and emotional competence
• increased language and literacy
• increased child attachment and/or relationship with parent
• decreased problem behaviors

And, parents report greater satisfaction and pleasure in their role as caregivers and in their family functioning.
Why Family Strengthening Works

- Directly connects mothers (and fathers) with a trusted partner during the most challenging stretch of parenting.
- Connect families to other resources throughout the program period and then transitions the family to other programs (Head Start, community programs) as needed.
- Engagement is always conducted in the family’s home language.
- Recognizes that parents and children must experience transformation together.
- Parents report feeling heard and valued – heart, mind and body.
Family Strengthening Interventions

Home Visiting
• Healthy Families America
• Nurse Family Partnership
• Early Head Start
• Parents as Teachers

Parenting Education
• Positive Parenting Program
• Nurturing Parenting Program
• Incredible Years
• Parent-Child Groups
• Primarily Local Models
Family Strengthening Impacts

Federal review to determine which programs are “evidence-based.”

• Impacts on Parents
  • Increased Employment
  • Delayed childbearing (subsequent children)
  • Lower stress
  • Increased utilization of other benefits (MediCal, WIC, CalFresh, Preschool)

• Impacts on Children
  • Fewer injuries and better discipline approaches
  • Better academic achievement

• Impacts on Public Expenditures
  • Fewer emergency room visits
  • Lower utilization of child protective services
  • Increased tax revenue as a result of higher parental earnings
  • Lower welfare usage
Focus: Economic Impacts

- Evidence-based home visiting programs yield returns of $2.73 to $5.70 for each dollar invested.
- California-specific analysis of Nurse-Family Partnership calculated net public savings of as much as $39,129 per family, in the form of fewer infant deaths, reduced child maltreatment, and fewer youth crimes in the long term.
- Mothers who received home visits during pregnancy were nearly half as likely to deliver low birth weight babies – saving up to $40,000 for birth.
- Children Now estimates statewide savings from reducing low birth weight births could save the state as much as $673 million.
The Family Strengthening Landscape in CA

Assets:
• First 5 Local Commissions ($106M)
• California Home Visiting Program ($10M)
• Office of Child Abuse Prevention / Promoting Safe and Stable Families ($28M)
• Mental Health Services Act

Challenges:
• First 5 funding is relatively temporary, and doesn’t ensure program spread and scale
• CHVP relatively modest, and not statewide
• Not all programs using evidence-based models
First 5 Funding for Parent Interventions

- Intensive Family Support: $53 million, 58,000 Caregivers
- Maternal/Child Programs: $35 million, 78,000 Caregivers
- Parenting Education: $28 million, 84,000 Caregivers

Legend:
- **Funding (Millions)**
- **Caregivers (Thousands)**
We Can Do Better:

At least half of California’s children live in families coping with enormous stressors:

• Half of our state’s 0 to 5 year-old-children live in poverty
• Nearly 30,000 young children experienced homelessness in 2014
• 34% of children live without secure parental employment
• 26% of children live in food insecure households

Family strengthening helps families and children, and connects families to the supports and services they need.
A Policy Agenda for Family Strengthening:

• Expand access to evidence-based family strengthening programs, including voluntary home visiting, which optimize child development and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect.

• Increase and improve child and parental mental health and substance abuse awareness, diagnosis and treatment.

• Aim for greater coordination across funding streams – at both the state and county level.

• Identify common outcomes and indicators to drive investments and inter-agency coordination

• Work with advocates for child welfare and family economic success to build a shared agenda for family strengthening