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Parenting Education in Cambridge Preliminary Draft Proposal

The proposal below responds to interest in the Harlem Children's Zone Baby College with an outline for a parenting program in Cambridge that meets the specific needs and objectives of our community.

What do we want to do?

Ensure that Cambridge parents and caregivers have the necessary skills and resources to care for their children in ways that foster their positive growth and development.

How do we want to do it?

Coordinate, deepen and enhance Cambridge's parenting education programs by developing an extended parent education model that builds on and supports existing messages and programs.

Who will be involved?

Potential key partners include: Agenda for Children Literacy Initiative, Cambridge Department of Public Health, Cambridge Health Alliance, Cambridge Housing Authority, Cambridge Public Schools (Home-Based Program, Title I & Special Start), Cambridge Public Library, Center for Families, Child Care Resource Center, Community Engagement Team, Guidance Center, Inc. (Early Intervention & Healthy Families) and Families First.

Where will it be held?

We propose facilitating at least 2 pilot sessions, beginning in Fall 2009 in Area IV and continuing in Spring 2010 in North Cambridge. In Area IV, the focus would be on families who live in the Washington Elms / Newtowne Court housing development, and/or in surrounding apartments with Section 8 vouchers. In North Cambridge, the focus would be on families who live in Jefferson Park and/or in the Towers at 364, 366, and 402 Rindge Avenue.

Who will participate and how will we recruit them?

This program is designed for families who are pregnant, or who have at least one child between the ages of 0-3. Each session will be divided into at least 2 cohort groups based on the ages of the children, with one for children 0-18 months, and one for children ages 18-36 months. (Additional cohorts may be added based on linguistic groups as well).

Through our partners at the Cambridge Housing Authority, the Community Learning Center, the Community Engagement Team's Outreach Workers, the Men's Health League, the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House, and others, families with a child in this 0-3 age group will be informed about the program and provided with the opportunity and incentive to participate.

What are the specific program elements?

(1) *Workshops*: Families participate in a series of 8-10 workshops that are led by community partners and contracting agencies. The workshops will focus on the following topics:

- Brain Development: Understanding children's brain development (may include 2 workshops)
- Let's Talk: Increasing the quantity and quality of conversation between children and adults

- Reading Parties: Practicing dialogic / interactive reading at home
- 5-2-1: Improving children's nutrition, increasing their physical activity, and limiting the amount of screen time they watch
- Healthy Living: Immunizations, lead education, sleep, stress reduction, etc.
- Positive Discipline: Practicing effective means of discipline (may include 2 workshops)
- Socio-Emotional Health: Supporting children's socio-emotional health and development
- Ages and Stages: Helping parents understand child development

(2) *Home Visits*: During their participation in the program, families receive a total of up to 10 home visits provided through a collaborative model that includes the Agenda for Children, the Center for Families, the Guidance Center, the Cambridge Public Schools' Home-Based Program and this program's Care Workers (see description below).

(3) *Playgroups*: Each cohort participates in a literacy-focused playgroup that begins after the final workshop. This allows continued interaction among the families and children, and provides them with additional support and entry into other resources and services offered throughout Cambridge.

(4) *Incentives*: Families receive a range of incentives to encourage consistent participation and to promote positive at-home behaviors, including books and developmental games, as well as gift certificates and other materials that meet the needs for families with young children. In order to encourage positive peer support and reward attendance, every parent will also receive a gift certificate at every session in which all parents are in attendance and a "rent bonus" raffle will be held at the end of the session for parents who participated in every workshop.

(5) *Other Supporting Efforts*: Community and city agencies provide interactive literacy and learning activities; Arts in the Park activities; preschool parent groups; and StoryWalk, among other projects.

How will this program be staffed?

A half-time (20-hour/week) coordinator is necessary to ensure the success of the program as it brings many agencies, programs, and families together. In addition, the program needs 2 part-time, multi-lingual (15-hour/week) Care Workers to provide some of the home visits, attend the weekly workshop sessions, and help parents to advocate for themselves, navigate multiple systems, and connect with strength-based resources.

What are the intended short and intermediate term outcomes?

- Parents & caregivers increase their awareness of the importance of talking & reading
- Parents & caregivers change how they talk & read with children in positive, measurable ways
- Parents increase understanding and use of positive discipline
- Children limit the amount of time spent in front of a screen
- Families increase their connection to and participation in community resources, including WIC, Cambridge Public Library and out-of-school time programs

What is the intended impact of the program?

- Children enter school on grade level, ready to learn how to read and write
- Parents increase their involvement in their children's education, both at school and at home