



Los Angeles Best Babies Collaborative
Building Blocks for Better Babies
A Program of First 5 LA

Los Angeles Best Babies Collaborative

First 5 LA: Healthy Births Initiative

Approach 4

Social Support



Approach (4)

Social Support

Goal: To promote healthy births by ensuring that there is adequate social support for pregnant and parenting women and families.

Objectives:

To protect women and families against psychosocial stress during pregnancy and/or the interconception period by strengthening:

- The capacity of partners and families to provide psychosocial support at the interpersonal level
 - Community support and social capital at the community level
 - Case management and service coordination at the systems level
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Rationale

Society has long understood that social relationships are important for the health and well-being of pregnant women. A growing body of literature now links the concepts of so-called “psychosocial support” to improved health and several studies show improved pregnancy outcomes (267,268). Social support can take the form of emotional and informational support, and direct material support through provision of resources (61). Interventions aimed at providing social support to pregnant women include one-on-one “case management” or “care coordination,” outreach to access resources, support groups, adolescent mentoring programs, and doulas. Of these, one-on-one home visitation or case management programs have been the most widely studied and successful. While the most successful one-on-one interventions are those that provide comprehensive services and address multiple concerns simultaneously, they may not be the most effective means by which to address all the chronic stressors that pregnant women experience on a daily basis. The aim of this strategy is not only to involve healthcare providers and home visitors, but also the woman’s partners, families, and the community in providing social support to pregnant women.

Implementation

Partner and Family Support

As discussed earlier, partners can be an important source of psychosocial support for the pregnant woman, yet many partners may not have the skills or resources to provide adequate or effective support. Included in the Social Support Brief in Appendix H are implementation strategies for *male involvement programs* that aim to enhance the knowledge, attitudes, skills and self-efficacy of partners in providing psychosocial support for their pregnant spouse. These programs are considered promising strategies for improving pregnancy outcomes.

Families (including grandparents, siblings, and extended families) can also be an important source of social support for pregnant women, but many families in Los Angeles find it difficult to provide adequate support to each other because of the multiple challenges they face. Based on several successful local models, implementation strategies can be employed within *family resource centers* to provide this support through peer group and grandparents as parents meetings for pregnant women.

Social Support through Community

There is little information about how to best provide community support around pregnant and parenting women and families. Given the growing body of literature linking community support to health disparities, the LABBC recommends that innovative programs in this area be explored even though no rigorously evaluated interventions exist. One notable example is the *One Hundred Intentional Acts of Kindness toward Pregnant Women* project described previously in Section V.