

CAPITAL AREA HEALTHY START COALITION
Health Education Concept Paper
Prepared for Leon County Healthcare Advisory Board
March 2008

Background

With advice from the Leon County Healthcare Advisory Board, the Leon County Commission held the *Year of the Healthy Infant Workshop* at Tallahassee Memorial Hospital on March 15, 2008. Five break-out sessions were held around the topics of Premature Delivery and Low Birth Weight, Racial Disparity, Maternal Infection, Pre-Pregnancy Health and Unsafe Infant Sleep. All five of the break-out sessions reported that increased public health education and health promotion were critical to breaking the cycle of infant death.

Capital Area Healthy Start Coalition originally received a grant from the local Chapter of the March of Dimes to hire a part-time Health Educator in 2001. The local Chapter was so pleased that they continued the grant for three years (2003). In 2003, Healthy Start's Health Education Program was honored by inclusion in the national report, "*Review of Leading Practices in Chapter Grants Serving the African-American Community: Findings from 15 projects funded by the March of Dimes in 2003*". When the local Chapter grant concluded, Healthy Start applied for and received a 3-year statewide March of Dimes grant to hire a full-time Health Educator. The funding for the statewide grant will be exhausted in March 2009.

The March of Dimes (MOD) has been extremely generous by funding 6 years of a local project for our area. The MOD, as a matter of policy, will not continue funding after the 6th year. They want to see some indication of strong local support for the efforts March of Dimes has expended in our community. It is possible that March of Dimes support might be available again in the future, but only if local support can be documented for a period of time.

Statement of Need

The Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Project (FIMR) of Capital Area Healthy Start Coalition operates in six counties (Leon, Wakulla, Gadsden, Jefferson, Madison and Taylor). Ideally, at least one Health Educator should be assigned to each county. Healthy Start has only one full-time Health Educator, who operates almost entirely in Leon County. In order to provide services to the neighboring counties, Healthy Start developed a "train the trainer" curriculum around the women's health education issues relating to the five topics listed above. Trainings are provided to care givers and case managers across the six counties in the most cost effective way to reach the largest number of women of childbearing years. Loss of our Leon County based Health Educator will be devastating not only to Leon County, but throughout the area.

Five of the five break-out groups at the *Year of the Healthy Infant Workshop* noted that health education in the schools and greater involvement of the Leon County School District was important for the lifelong health of our children, both boys and girls. Due to

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the minimal staff at Healthy Start, we have not been able to devote the attention needed to develop a strong working relationship with Leon County Schools. If the Health Educator position is continued, the developing partnership with Leon County Schools will be emphasized. This is especially important given recent research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showing that nationally one in four teenage girls have contracted a sexually transmitted infection. We must do a better job of educating our children about how to stay healthy.

Proposal

The funds remaining in the MSTU account that must be spent on health care (approximately \$60,000) are designated to fund the full-time health educator position at Healthy Start after the March of Dimes funding is exhausted in March 2009. To fund one full-time position, travel and training materials from March 1, 2009 until June 30, 2010 will require \$62,468. Healthy Start will cover the additional \$2,468.