



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2013 September 19

SMART START FOR BABIES: THREE YEAR FUNDING RENEWAL APPLICATION

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Middlesex-London Board of Health endorse the application form for the “Smart Start for Babies: Three Year Funding Renewal”.

Key Points

- The Smart Start for Babies Program provides prenatal and nutrition education for vulnerable pregnant women and teens in London and Middlesex County.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada is accepting applications with Board endorsement for a three year extension of funding at the current annual level (\$152,430)

Background

Smart Start for Babies (SSFB) is a Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) designed for pregnant women who are at risk for poor birth outcomes due to multiple factors including poor lifestyle habits, abuse, poverty, recent arrival in Canada, and teen pregnancies. SSFB is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada with in-kind staffing support from the Health Unit and partnering agencies. As the sponsoring agency for the past eight years, the Health Unit has provided experienced public health nurses and registered dietitians to facilitate the program. SSFB also receives in-kind personnel support for program delivery from the London Health Sciences Centre, the Children’s Aid Society London & Middlesex, and the Health Zone Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics.

The program provides pregnant women and their support persons with access to healthy foods, nutritional counseling and education, prenatal education, opportunities to learn life skills, referrals to community supports and resources, and promotes social connectivity with the goal of achieving healthy birth outcomes. In the past twelve months over 200 participants and their support persons have attended weekly SSFB sessions at seven sites in London and Strathroy (223 sessions). In the next three year funding period (2014-2017) it is anticipated that the number of participants will increase to 300 per year because our partner sites are now established and all sites are being well attended.

A Board Report submitted in May 2013 ([Report No. 070-13](#)) provides further information about the SSFB program and the changes that have taken place in 2012 and 2013.

Funding Extension for the Next Three Years

The Public Health Agency of Canada is accepting applications for the extension of funding for the next three fiscal years at the current level of annual funding (\$152,430). Attached as [Appendix A](#) is the completed Application Form. In January 2012, the Health Unit committed to increasing its in-kind contribution to the program as well as to partnering with a number of service agencies to establish working relationships and formal agreements for personnel and in-kind support. As a result the number of clients participating in the SSFB program has increased by 47% in 2013.

Our partner agencies provide free space for our East and South sites. As well, two partner agencies provide in-kind personnel of approximately 0.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) for Nurse support and 0.1 FTE for Registered Dietitian support. The Health unit provides in-kind support including a 0.1 FTE Manager, 0.5 FTE Public Health Nurse Program Coordinator, and 0.5 FTE for Public Health Nursing and Registered Dietitian facilitators. Our leadership in this program assists us to meet the requirements of the Reproductive Health Program as outlined in the Ontario Public Health Standards.

Conclusion

Smart Start for Babies has a long history in London and Middlesex County. It has been sponsored by the Health Unit for the past eight years and has well-established partnerships with CAS, Health Zone Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics, South London Community Centre, and three Ontario Early Years Centres. The Health Unit and partnering agencies enhance the PHAC budget with in-kind staffing support and space for the sessions. In addition partnering agencies hire site-coordinators for the sessions that are paid through the SSFB budget. The Public Health Agency of Canada is accepting applications, with Board endorsement, for the extension of the Smart Start for Babies Program funding at the current annual level of \$152,430 for the three year period of April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2017.

This report was prepared by Ms. Kathy Dowsett, Manager, Family Health Services, and Ms. Nancy Del Maestro, Public Health Nurse and Smart Start for Babies Program Coordinator.

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Medical Officer of Health

This report addresses the following requirements of the Ontario Public Health Standards: Reproductive Health Program, to support healthy pregnancies. It also addresses the strategic direction of the Middlesex-London Health Unit to reduce health inequities for vulnerable populations.