



The Policy Toolbox

The Policy Toolbox consists of tools to make systems work better (*carrot, stick, knowledge or leadership*). One must determine an arena of action (*federal, state, local, or private/nonprofit*), in which to use the tool and then apply practical criteria for moving ahead (*impact, opportunity and partners*).

MOST EFFORTS TO IMPROVE POLICIES AND ACHIEVE A GOAL USE FOUR BASIC TOOLS:

CARROTS: Provide services, benefits and supports.

- Grant programs and funding from government or the private sector; or
- Premiums or rewards employers that adopt and implement improved practices affecting pregnant women, children and families.

STICKS: Prohibit actions, set standards, regulate products or actions, and enforce laws. “Sticks” do not provide funding. Rather, they impose requirements or enforce standards or prohibitions on institutions, individuals or products.

- A law or mandate that requires that health insurance plans cover certain important conditions;
- Standards set by accrediting and licensing agencies.

KNOWLEDGE: Sharing information with the people who need it; basic research; good statistics; evaluations of programs; and practical and clinical knowledge. Knowledge can also include *sharing* information with the people who need it

- High-quality studies funded by public or private agencies;
- The collective experience and wisdom in communities;

- Training parents, teachers and healthcare providers;
- Data gathered by public and private statistical agencies; and
- Documented clinical or classroom experiences.

LEADERSHIP: Builds political will and galvanizes action.

- Executive Orders and proclamations;
- The bully pulpit;
- Supporting campaigns to build public awareness and political will;
- Creating awards and rewarding achievements; and
- “Personal” actions by public figures, such as leading by example

Effective strategies often use several tools in combination. For example: softening a mandate (a “stick”) with grant funding (a “carrot”), or providing employees with training (“knowledge”) or special recognition for positive actions (“leadership”) while also embedding those actions into the auditing and performance appraisal systems (“sticks”). Also, some tools are hybrids. For example, a local rule requiring that a building be smoke-free might be seen as a “carrot” by a pregnant woman and a “stick” by a smoker who feels inconvenienced.

ARENAS OF POLICY ACTION

In addition, any of tools or strategies can be used at the federal, state or local governmental level, and by the private and nonprofit sectors. The table below illustrates sixteen possible strategies and arenas of action and provides a conceptual checklist to identify the tools and

* This policy framework builds on a framework developed by Margaret Dunkle of the Center for Health Services Research and Policy at George Washington University, adapting it to the needs and priorities of LA Best Babies Network.



ARENAS OF ACTION	POLICY TOOLS			
	CARROTS	STICKS	KNOWLEDGE	LEADERSHIP
FEDERAL & NATIONAL	Federal Carrots	Federal Sticks	Federal Knowledge	Federal Leadership
STATE	State Carrots	State Sticks	State Knowledge	State Leadership
LOCAL, CITY & COUNTY, & COMMUNITY & NEIGHBORHOOD	Local ... Neighborhood Carrots	Local ... Neighborhood Sticks	Local ... Neighborhood Knowledge	Local ... Neighborhood Leadership
PRIVATE & NONPROFIT	Carrots from Private/Nonprofit	Sticks from Private/Nonprofit	Knowledge from Private/Nonprofit	Leadership from the Private or Nonprofit Sectors

arenas of action that will produce positive policy results.

For example:

- A **Federal Carrot** might be a grant program, such as federal Maternal & Child Health grants.
- A **State Stick** might be a state law making it illegal for employers to discriminate on the basis of pregnancy (much as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits pregnancy discrimination by employers).
- **Local-City-County or Community-Neighborhood Knowledge** might be a local study of the characteristics of mothers who have had a poor birth outcome.
- And **Leadership from the Private or Nonprofit Sector** might be a local foundation convening insurers to discuss ways to structure health insurance plans to assure healthy births and healthy babies.

CRITERIA FOR ACTION

The goal is clear – to improve outcomes for pregnant women, their babies, their families and their communities, especially those who are the most at-risk. Where does one start? How can one use the tools at hand to make the most difference? Three criteria can point the way to an effective course of action:

IMPACT What actions and strategies would make the most difference? What would have the most IMPACT on improving outcomes in L.A. County for pregnant women, their babies, their families and their communities?

OPPORTUNITY Is there a window of opportunity, a related effort already underway, a law about to be revamped by Congress or the state legislature, or an issue where there is already strong public will?

PARTNERS Are there ready allies? Is opposition minimal or, at the very least, manageable?

Policy Toolbox Glossary of Terms

TOOLS FOR POLICY ACTION

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SPHERES OF POLICY ACTION - Any arena in which policy change can occur

FEDERAL: The Federal Government which includes: Congress, President, Administration, U.S. Department of Health Services, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Centers for Disease Control, National Institutes of Health.

STATE: The State Government which includes: State Legislature, Governor, State Agencies Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Health, Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board.

LOCAL: Includes local entities: City Council, County Board of Supervisors, City or County Departments i.e. Department of Health Services, City or County Commissions i.e. First 5 LA, LA Unified School District.

COMMUNITY: Community based organizations, Health Birth Learning Collaboratives, Schools, Churches

PRIVATE: Businesses and Corporations, Foundations, Private Hospitals, Health Insurance Plans