

CYFD noted the appropriation in the proposed legislation is not part of the department's budget request or the Executive budget recommendation for fiscal year 2010.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

CYFD reported Avance Inc. is a non-profit organization serving low-income at-risk communities, primarily Hispanic, through a parent-child education program. The Avance program model provides culturally relevant training for parents in the areas of health and wellness, job skills and employment, as well as child development; and English as a second language and GED classes for participating parents.

DOH reported Avance program is a community-based, bilingual and culturally sensitive parent-child education program designed to improve the knowledge, attitudes, and skills parents need to serve as the principal educators of their children, and to prepare their children for school during the critical first three years of life. The program was established in San Antonio in 1973 and has expanded throughout Texas and has been implemented in 100 program sites serving 3,400 families. Early childhood research supports the critical need for parents to begin teaching their children from infancy. The social, emotional and behavioral advances made by a child during these pre-school years are fundamental pre-requisites for learning readiness. Additionally, evaluations of the Avance program over the last 35 years have shown that 90 percent of participating mothers completed their high school education or obtained their GED (www.avance.org). Avance is recognized a culturally-appropriate and effective parent education method for Hispanic communities.

DOH noted through combined funding from CYFD, the Paso del Norte Foundation, the Avance program hub in El Paso initiated the nine-month parent-child education module with 81 families in the communities of Chaparral and Vado in southern Doña Ana County. Retention of program participants has been 90 percent and based on the success of this pilot, Doña Ana County Health and Human Services Department is promoting expansion to other colonia communities in the county. The health and well-being of children who participate in the program is positively impacted, as well as their future school readiness. At the same time, parents begin to read more to their children, use less physical discipline, and volunteer in the schools and community.

DOH stated the proposed legislation would provide additional resources to expand the Avance program to an increasing number of colonia communities in Doña Ana County. The proposed appropriation would be matched under grants in development with regional and national foundations. The combined funding is also intended to facilitate establishment of an Avance program hub for New Mexico as a basis for expanding the model to similar at-risk communities in other counties statewide.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

CYFD reported the Office of Child Development currently manages the existing Doña Ana County Avance parent-child education program, which is funded at \$96,000. Implementation and monitoring of any expansion of this program would have to be absorbed by existing resources.

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