

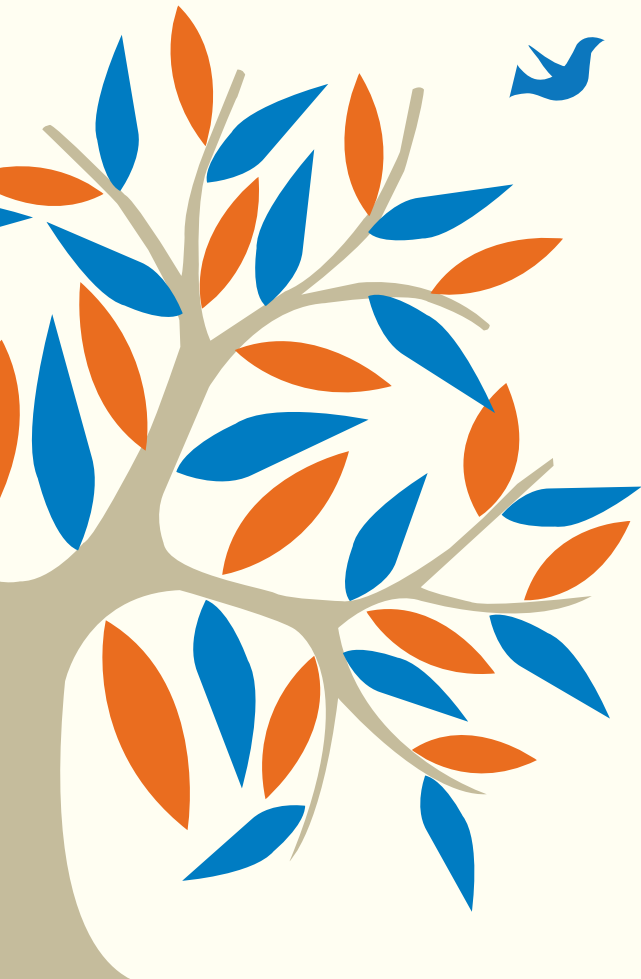
Annual Report 2008
celebrating 25 years

BRIGHTER



BEGINNINGS

Every Family Matters





Branching Out in Response to Growing Needs

Did you know that poverty is not color-blind? Research shows that where you live is the most significant indicator of a person's health and even life expectancy.¹

In Alameda County, one in three African-American children and one in four Latino children lives in poverty, compared to one in 16 Caucasian children.¹

Our neighborhoods shape the balance of our "health equity,"¹ – the leveraging of challenges against the opportunities available to address our needs. Many of the families we serve face multiple challenges every day, such as crime and violence, low-quality housing and schools, unemployment, poor nutrition – and lack the resources and support systems to make changes for the better.

Compounding these existing difficulties is today's turbulent economic environment. Fortunately, Brighter Beginnings is growing and able to offer increased services at a time when more families in our community may need them. Through research-based programs and model development, we continue to influence best practices that help families raise healthy children and achieve self-sufficiency.

As we enter our 25th year, fiscally sound, with a talented and dedicated staff and a terrific community-based board of directors, we are looking ahead to developing even deeper relationships in communities of high need.

Since adopting a new strategic plan in 2007, Brighter Beginnings has significantly increased our commitment to serving the whole family. Not only are we expanding our fatherhood, child development, and health education and promotion services, we are engaged in several strategic initiatives to coordinate more comprehensive services through collaborative partnerships.

We also successfully launched Friends of Brighter Beginnings, considerably strengthened our Adopt-A-Family program and partnered with multiple school districts and the County Offices of Education to support pregnant and parenting teens working to graduate high school. To serve the broader Richmond community, we secured federal funding that will be used to renovate our Richmond center to expand our family support and economic self-sufficiency activities.

Brighter Beginnings is dedicated to empowering families to help themselves. But we know it takes the commitment of a community – starting with each one of us – to make lasting changes. We are indebted to our donors and volunteers and invite others to get involved – because truly, every family matters and every child deserves a happy, healthy future.

Barbara McCullough, Ph.D.
Executive Director



Help Us Build a Healthier Community

Every child that is born into this world should have the opportunity to make it in life. As responsible adults, we all need to make those opportunities possible.

From my point of view as a public health professional, Brighter Beginnings plays a critical role in supporting the development of stronger families and stronger communities. While government programs are somewhat limited and slower to change, **Brighter Beginnings can be at the forefront of blazing new trails and implementing more effective strategies based on leading research.**

Focusing on the family in addition to the individual is what makes Brighter Beginnings an effective organization. How do you make a family healthy? How do we help children thrive? **There are factors outside the medical world that affect how infants and families survive.** Supporting an individual means addressing the underlying conditions, such as interpersonal relationships, economic situations, education and neighborhood environment.

Brighter Beginnings is a vital community partner because the organization embraces this philosophy and is putting it into practice.

The Brighter Beginnings Board of Directors is committed to helping Brighter Beginnings grow thoughtfully and build upon research-based services. To that end, over the last few years we have recruited more diverse Board members to include different voices, opinions, expertise and points of view. We also are working to expand fundraising efforts and diversify funding sources so that we can make even more of a positive impact in our community.

I have made a personal commitment to understanding and working to change these social inequalities where I live and work. I hope that more people in our community will join me by becoming part of the Brighter Beginnings family.

Anita Leticia Siegel, RN, MPH
Board President
Deputy Director, Alameda County Public Health Department

¹ *Life and Death from Unnatural Causes*



*“There are two lasting bequests
we can give our children. One is
roots. The other is wings.”*

~HODDING CARTER, JR.

Brighter Beginnings served
4,605
family members*

1,083
teen parents

2,300
families

2,293
children

** For 2007, 7% growth over 2006*

OUR ROOTS:

The Brighter Beginnings Family

Every person is part of a larger network of family, friends and community. At Brighter Beginnings, we know that in order for children to have a healthy, happy start, the whole network has to be involved. We help build and nurture that network so that families can stand on their own two feet, set new directions and see a brighter future.

Certain life events, such as the birth of a child, make us all more open to change. Over the past 25 years, we have found that through the catalyst of a new baby, we can connect to parents and help them choose a better future for themselves and their children.

Research over the last 20 years consistently shows that fostering early emotional and cognitive childhood development is essential to set the stage for success and health later in life. Not all parents realize what a profound difference is made by daily doses of play, reading and interaction. Many children who do not get this head start never catch up, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and hopelessness.

To break this cycle of disadvantage, we need to focus on children.

That's why Brighter Beginnings, in its mission to strengthen families, provides resources and education for the whole family so that parents and other caregivers have a better understanding of a baby or child's needs and how to meet them. We also help each family take care of the basics such as food, shelter and clothing, to relieve some of the stresses that prevent parents from building a healthy family, graduating from school, or finding a job and making a new start.

Why?

Because every family matters and every child deserves a happy healthy future.



Let's Break the Cycle

Compared with a White child in the Oakland hills, an African-American child born in West Oakland is:

7 times likely to be born into poverty

5.6 times more likely to drop out of high school as a teen

4 times less likely to read at grade level by fourth grade

2.5 times more likely to be behind in vaccinations as a toddler

1.5 times more likely to be born premature or with low birth weight



Source: *Life & Death from Unnatural Causes*

OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Help Families Build a Brighter Future



Brighter Beginnings offers many programs and services that build stronger communities by promoting healthy births, successful child development and more stable families.

Family Support Centers

- Child development and parent education
- Health education
- Family and early childhood counseling
- Literacy programs
- Culturally based peer support groups
- Family asset building and career planning

Black Infant Health

Outreach and home-based support for pregnant African-American women and mothers to improve infant health

Fatherhood Programs

Parenting skills for fathers facing barriers to responsible fatherhood

Teen Family Support

Home visits and case management for pregnant and parenting teens

Family Support Centers

Our center-based programs help parents learn about parenting, child development, the importance of promoting early literacy and how choices, such as smoking, risky health behaviors, and violence, can negatively affect children's health. Brighter Beginnings' Antioch First 5 Center, funded by the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission, offers fun, educational classes and activities for families with children ages 0-5.

All of our centers offer programs that promote parent/child bonding and improve confidence and parenting skills. The centers also host social events so that families can connect with other families and learn about community resources. Family story times, art, music, and dance classes, school readiness workshops, tobacco education, child development classes, support groups, and monthly family nights are just a few of the programs offered. Parents can get parenting and early literacy kits, check out books, and receive referrals to the services they need.



267 families served

273 children helped

94% of participants felt more confident as a parent after parenting classes*

78% felt the program helped them understand their child**

* From our Parenting Partnership Satisfaction Survey

** Out of 388 Antioch First 5 respondents to Client Satisfaction Survey

"Our classes make sure kids are 'playing with a purpose' to encourage cognitive development. Parents gain a better understanding of their child's needs at each stage and feel more confident that they are doing the right things."

TONI'S STORY:

Helping Parents Be the Best They Can Be



Young parents at a loss, without their own mom or dad to turn to for advice. A 3-year-old boy so out of control that his mom felt she was failing as a parent. A mother struggling to distinguish between what was normal behavior for her son's age and where he was behind, due to his special needs. A dad stretched too thin caring for his 4-year-old and a baby, feeling like he couldn't give each the attention they deserved.

Every parent has a different story and every child has distinct needs. Brighter Beginnings' Family Support Centers provide a variety of resources to help parents be the best they can be. One such resource is our parent-child play classes.

Music, arts and crafts, parachute time, table activities – sometimes it's hard to tell who's having more fun, the kids or the parents! "Our classes make sure kids are 'playing with a purpose' to encourage cognitive development," says Toni, a child development specialist at Brighter Beginnings' Antioch First 5 Center. Parents gain a better understanding of their child's needs at each stage and feel more confident that they are doing the right things."

Toni loves it when she sees the 'light bulb' go off in parents' heads. "When a parent realizes that it's 'normal' for their 2-year-old to have a tantrum and that it's happening because the child doesn't know how else to communicate – it's sharing these insights with parents that's so rewarding for me," explains Toni.

Parents also support each other. Instant bonds can be formed when experiences are shared and parents feel a sense of total acceptance. "I see the anxiety just melt away," says Toni. "Our classes are a constant learning experience for everyone – parents keep coming back for more information as their children develop new skills, and the kids just love it because it's fun."



Black Infant Health Program

The birth of a baby into the world is one of the most rewarding events in life. Tragically, many babies in California don't live past their first year. Although many advances have been made in reducing infant mortality, African-American babies continue to die at twice the rate of other babies. Contributing to this is that black infants are more likely to be born premature and have a low birth weight (under 5.5 pounds).

Research now shows that stress and institutional racism may play a role in poorer birth outcomes for black babies. Therefore, increasing the social supports for African-American families is a key objective of the Brighter Beginnings Black Infant Health Program. Additionally, BIH Family Advocates provide personalized outreach to help African-American women access pregnancy care, child healthcare and other social services. This program has been so effective that today it is used as a model for other organizations providing similar services.

The result? Healthier babies and children.



“Brighter Beginnings changed my life drastically in that it provided me with emotional support during a really trying time – figuring out how I would survive and thrive as a single mother.”

0 infant deaths

285 new African-American moms served 2007-2008

510 moms served 2007-2008

78% clients who were single parents

85.6% babies born with normal birth weight

TIMESHA'S STORY:

A Single Mom Pays it Forward



Timesha was 24 years old and pregnant for the first time and, although she had two college degrees, she was out of work during her last few months of pregnancy and on her own. Not sure where to turn, a sorority sister told her about Brighter Beginnings. Today you'll find her hard at work as a passionate Brighter Beginnings' Family Advocate, giving back to others what Brighter Beginnings gave her – a chance at a fresh start.

Timesha was able to access resources through our Black Infant Health program that provided her with healthcare services and the basic material things she needed to take care of her new son, like diapers, clothes, a stroller and a car seat. She also received critical long-term emotional support from one of our Family Advocates, who checked on Timesha regularly at her home. Timesha, humbled and inspired by those who reached out to help her, was soon back on her feet.

"The support network provided by Brighter Beginnings helped me realize that many women have overcome the same difficulties and raised productive sons in similar circumstances," she says. "I knew I could do it too."



Fatherhood Programs

Fatherhood program services were expanded at all three of our centers in 2008. Many of the men and boys we serve come to Brighter Beginnings because they have made the decision to be actively involved in their children's lives. When they are not sure about what being a responsible dad entails or how to bond with their children, other dads assist them through education, support groups and parent-child activities, encouraging these new dads to promote their children's cognitive and emotional development, to bond, and to form healthy family relationships.



135

dads served
2005-2007

38

dads
enrolled
2006-2007

97

dads
enrolled
2007-2008

79%

of participants said
they spent a lot more
time with their children
after the program*

90%

of participants said they
played a lot more with their
children after the program*

97%

indicated that they felt
a lot more confident as
parents*

**Out of 29 respondents to client satisfaction survey*

DAVID'S STORY:

A Family on the Mend



"I am most proud that Brighter Beginnings helped David and his daughter get back together after having his family torn apart."



Just a few years ago, David* thought he was going to lose custody of his 10-year-old daughter, Vanessa, for good. With little education, he relied on shady business dealings to make a living and had allowed Vanessa's mother (who David describes as "unfit to be a mom") to visit their daughter – as a result, Vanessa was placed in a foster home.

At 45, David made a decision to turn his life around and regain custody of his daughter. Brighter Beginnings helped him to do that.

Today, both David and his daughter are excelling at school, with Vanessa in the 4th grade and David studying business management at community college. Both received straight A's their first semester.

Brighter Beginnings classes, support groups, mentoring and father-child activities helped David become a more responsible parent and understand that education was key to his and his daughter's success. He learned how to use everyday experiences to teach Vanessa – from counting and colors to spelling and reading – and how to provide a safe home environment.

"Brighter Beginnings really made a difference because their parenting program was geared specifically to dads," he says. "Because of this program, I know now that I can change to be a great example for my daughter and continue to improve our lives."

**Names have been changed*



Teen Family Support Program

There are so many challenges in the way of teens becoming successful parents. One of the most critical is the difficulty of completing the education they need for a job to support themselves and their children.

Our program helps pregnant and parenting teens learn to care for themselves and their babies. We provide positive role models and teach them about child development and appropriate parenting behavior, and how to create a positive, nurturing home life. Simultaneously, we also help them access the services they need to finish school and plan for employment and a healthy future.



99% of Teen Family Support children have health insurance

96% of Teen Family Support children have their immunizations up to date

94% of parents reported they felt more confident as a parent after parenting classes

10% or less of Brighter Beginnings teen moms have repeat births, compared to 25% nationally

“With the help of Brighter Beginnings, Jeannine was able to graduate from high school with honors, win three scholarships, and enroll at U.C. Davis to pursue a major in pre-med.”

JEANNINE'S STORY:

Reaching for Her Dreams



Jeannine's* story is proof of the incredible strength of the human spirit. When she was 18, Jeannine fled her war-torn country in West Africa and arrived in California with limited education, little knowledge of English, and a baby on the way.

Her situation then looked bleak, but today Jeannine is on her way to achieving a long-held dream of becoming a doctor. With the help of Brighter Beginnings, Jeannine was able to graduate from high school with honors, win three scholarships, and enroll at U.C. Davis to pursue a major in pre-med.

Jeannine's Brighter Beginnings Family Advocate was key to helping set Jeannine up for success. When her son Andre was born, our Family Advocate visited her often and helped her find the services and benefits she needed so that she could continue her high school education and continue down a road towards self-sufficiency.

When asked what she recommends to other families who are struggling, Jeannine is quick to respond. "Go talk to someone if you need help," she says. "It is so important to find the help you need."

**Names have been changed*



Bright Futures Program

Growing up without role models or in an unstable or unpredictable home environment makes parenting – a difficult enough job already – even more challenging for many of our clients when they have their own children.

We offer family counseling and skills development for building healthy relationships with children and partners, infant-mother bonding, parenting, problem-solving, and dealing with anger and stress. Bright Futures helps teen and young adult parents and their families, supports early childhood development in families with addiction problems, and works with unemployed families that are temporarily disabled due to mental health problems.



113 pregnant and parenting teens served to date

33 teen families received counseling 2007-2008

33 families received counseling to help them go back to work

“Brighter Beginnings helped Dana cope emotionally and find the resources she needed to raise a healthy child, including a safe place to live.”

DANA'S STORY:

Building Healthy Relationships and a New Life



Realizing that she was solely responsible for her daughter was a turning point in 18-year-old Dana's* life. As a child of abusive parents and the foster care system, she didn't have many role models, except for a few years she remembers living with an aunt and uncle.

"I remember family life, regular meals and someone who talked to my teachers," says Dana. "I know what is right and I want that for my daughter."

Overwhelmed with no place to live, pregnant and working to graduate from high school, Brighter Beginnings helped Dana cope emotionally and find the resources she needed to raise a healthy child, including a safe place to live. Through her first stable living situation in years, Dana was able to focus on the well-being of her baby, find a job and consider the possibility of higher education.

Although she still has many challenges to overcome on her way to self-sufficiency, Dana is determined to also change her younger sister's life for the better – by eventually becoming her legal guardian and taking her out of the foster care system, welcoming her into a loving, stable family.

**Names have been changed*





Be Part of Our Family

How to Get Involved

Provide Financial Support

Brighter Beginnings' success depends upon the generosity of caring supporters like you to **create brighter lives** for more than 4,600 East Bay families each year. We keep our overhead costs low so that your contributions can truly make an impact. Your commitment ensures that the critically needed services provided by Brighter Beginnings are available year-round to provide the support and encouragement that families in our community need to succeed. **Please join us today in helping local families thrive.**

- Make a one-time donation.
- Pledge a monthly donation to help sustain Brighter Beginnings' work year-round.
- Make a one-time pledge. Join the Babies Matter Society with your pledge of \$1,000 or more.
- Matching Gifts. Double or triple your impact with a company match. Contact your human resources office to find out if your employer offers a matching gift program.
- Planned Giving. Leave a legacy for future generations by including Brighter Beginnings in your estate plans. Consult your personal financial advisor about making a planned gift.

Donations can be made online or directed to:

Brighter Beginnings
Attn: Development Director
2648 International Blvd
Oakland, CA 94601
www.brighter-beginnings.org

For more information about making a gift, please contact Jody Parsons, Development Director, (510) 903-7533 or development@brighter-beginnings.org.

Thank you for your support.


Join Friends of Brighter Beginnings

Friends of Brighter Beginnings brings together dedicated volunteers and community members to support fund-raising events and activities, assist the Adopt-A-Family holiday gifts program, and coordinate donations of diapers, baby clothes and other in-kind items. Friends facilitate supportive connections to organizations such as scout troops and school leadership groups. For more information, please visit www.brighter-beginnings.org or e-mail friends@brighter-beginnings.org.

Volunteer

Volunteers typically provide a specific skill for a need within a Brighter Beginnings program at one of our Family Support Centers in Antioch, Richmond or Oakland. Each volunteer has a supervisor who is responsible for the direct management of the volunteer. Please contact Julie Cosenza, (510) 903-7529 or volunteers@brighter-beginnings.org.





“The future which we hold in trust for our own children will be shaped by our fairness to other people’s children.”

~MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

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BRIGHTER



BEGINNINGS

Every Family Matters

*Because every family matters
and every child deserves a happy
healthy future.*

*Brighter Beginnings supports
healthy births and children's
successful development by
partnering with parents,
strengthening families, and
helping to build strong
communities.*

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