



## Commission Meeting

### A G E N D A

**Monday, August 12, 2024, 6:00 pm**

**First 5 Contra Costa, Conference Center**

4005 Port Chicago Hwy., Suite 120, Concord CA 94520

3001 Advantage Way, Sacramento, CA 95834

The Commission meeting will be accessible in-person and via virtual webinar to all members of the public. Persons who wish to address the Commission during public comment or with respect to an item on the agenda may call in during the meeting by dialing 669-444-9171 or 669-900-6833 or use the “raise your hand” feature in the Zoom app. The Commission Chair may reduce or eliminate the amount of time allotted to read comments at the beginning of each item or public comment period depending on the number of comments and the business of the day. Your patience is appreciated.

#### **Virtual Webinar Information:**

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89192239770>

**Webinar ID: 891 9223 9770**

#### **1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call**

#### **2.0 Public Comment**

*The public may comment on any item of public interest within the jurisdiction of the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission. In accordance with the Brown Act, if a member of the public addresses an item not on the posted agenda, no response, discussion, or action on the item may occur.*

#### **3.0 Approve the Minutes of the Commission Meetings on:**

3.1 Commission Meeting on June 10, 2024

#### **4.0 Approval of Consent Calendar**

**Action**

*A Commissioner or member of the public may ask that any of the following consent items be removed from the consent calendar for consideration under Item 4.*

##### **4.1 Approve the Contracts Docket.**

- 4.1.1 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to execute a contract with JFM Development, LLC to lease 760 First Street, Brentwood, CA as a Delta First 5 Center from August 1, 2024 to July 31, 2025, in an amount not to exceed \$94,500. FY 2024-25 budget line: Strengthening Families Focus Area: First 5 Centers (\$3,451,710). Funded 100% Prop 10 funds.
- 4.1.2 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to execute a contract with Contra Costa County to lease 355 E. Leland Road, Suite B, Pittsburg, CA to the Health Service Department for the Black Infant Health Program from October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2026, in an amount not to exceed \$91,200. FY 2024-25 budget line: Other Revenue (\$200,000). Funded 100% Contra Costa County Health Services.
- 4.1.3 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to execute a contract with ASPIRANET to operate the Antioch First 5 Center located at 300 H Street, Antioch, CA, from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, in an amount not to exceed \$546,750.00; and TERMINATE the existing contract. FY 2024-25 budget line:



Strengthening Families Focus Area: First 5 Centers (\$3,451,710). Funded 100% Prop 10 funds.

- 4.1.4 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to execute a contract with ASPIRANET to operate the Delta First 5 Center located at 760 1st Street, Brentwood, CA, from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, in an amount not to exceed \$546,750.00; and TERMINATE the existing contract. FY 2024-25 budget line: Strengthening Families Focus Area: First 5 Centers (\$3,451,710). Funded 100% Prop 10 funds.
- 4.1.5 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to execute a contract with Bay Area Community Resources to operate the Monument First 5 Center located at 1736 Clayton Road, Concord, CA, from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, in an amount not to exceed \$546,750.00; and TERMINATE the existing contract. FY 2024-25 budget line: Strengthening Families Focus Area: First 5 Centers (\$3,451,710). Funded 100% Prop 10 funds.
- 4.1.6 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to execute a contract with Bay Area Community Resources to operate the West County First 5 Center located at 2707 Dover Ave, San Pablo, CA, from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, in an amount not to exceed \$732,348.00; and TERMINATE the existing contract. FY 2024-25 budget line: Strengthening Families Focus Area: First 5 Centers (\$3,451,710). Funded 100% Prop 10 funds.
- 4.1.7 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to execute a contract with Lincoln to operate the East County First 5 Center located at 355 E. Leland Road, Pittsburg, CA, from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, in an amount not to exceed \$732,348; and TERMINATE the existing contract. FY 2024-25 budget line: Strengthening Families Focus Area: First 5 Centers (\$3,451,710). Funded 100% Prop 10 funds.
- 4.1.8 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to execute a contract with EarlyChildhood, LLC (DBA as Discount School Supply) an online educational catalog and retailer to offer specialized selected items for ECE providers who have participated in one of our Measure X Inclusion practices, in an amount not to exceed \$116,300, for term July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025. FY 2024-25 budget line: Early Intervention Focus Area: Inclusive Early Care & Education Environments (\$770,689). Funded \$50,000 Prop 10 funds and \$66,300 Measure X funds.
- 4.1.9 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to execute a contract with the Contra Costa County Health Services Division, in an amount not to exceed \$94,784 to support the work of the Triple P Parenting program for the period July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025. FY2024-25 budget line: Early Intervention Focus Area: Mental Health Services & Positive Parenting Support (\$396,567). Funded 100% Contra Costa County Health Services.
- 4.1.10 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to execute a contract amendment with Counseling Options & Parent Education Support Center, Inc. to increase the payment limit by \$94,784 (from \$94,784 to \$189,568) to support the work of the Triple P Parenting program. FY2024-25 budget line: Early Intervention Focus Area: Mental Health Services & Positive Parenting Support (\$396,567). Funded 100% Contra Costa County Health Services.



**4.2 Approve the Grants Docket.**

4.2.1 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to apply for and, if awarded, execute a grant agreement with Start Early for an in-kind grant in an amount up to \$85,000 for consulting services for Community Systems Mapping, for term January 1, 2025 to June 30, 2025. Funded 100% Start Early.

4.2.2 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to apply for and, if awarded, execute a grant agreement with Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation in an amount up to \$995,000 for Womb to Classroom project, expanding Ready Kids East County village and expanding bridges to ensure the efforts of this initiative will create a lasting, strong, vibrant inclusive foundation of sustained support for young Black children in East County, for term January 1, 2025 to June 30, 2029. FY2024-25 budget line: Early Childhood Education Focus Area: Ready Kids East County School Readiness Initiative (\$165,565). Funded 100% Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation.

4.2.3 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to apply for and, if awarded, execute a grant agreement with Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation in an amount up to \$15,000 for a retreat and summit for staff and Commissioner's, for term August 30, 2024 to June 30, 2025. FY2024-25 budget line: Philanthropic Grants (\$100,000). Funded 100% Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation.

**4.3 Accept the Minutes from the Executive Committee Meeting on May 28, 2024.**

**4.4 Accept the Executive Director's July/August Report.**

**5.0 CONSIDER for discussion any items removed from the Consent Calendar.**

**Discussion**

**6.0 RECEIVE Staff Presentation on Ready Kids East County Project (RKEC).**

**Discussion**

**7.0 Executive Director's Report**

**8.0 Communications**

- **Medi-Cal Sign-on Letter re: HAB45 June 2024**
- **Stabilization Fund Update – ED Call (7.11.2024)**
- **Stabilization Fund Q&A (Responses to F5CA Staff Questions - 7.16.2024)**

**9.0 Commissioner F.Y.I. Updates**

**10.0 Adjourn**



The First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities planning to participate in Commission meetings who contact the Commission's offices, at least 48 hours before the meeting, at (925) 771-7300.

Any disclosable public records related to an open session item on a regular meeting agenda and distributed by the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission to a majority of members of the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission less than 96 hours prior to that meeting are available for public inspection at 4005 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 120, Concord, CA 94520 during normal business hours.

In consideration of those who may suffer from chemical sensitivities or who may have allergic reactions to heavy scents, First 5 Contra Costa requests that staff and visitors refrain from wearing perfume, cologne, or the use of strongly scented products in the work place. We thank you for your consideration of others.



## Commission Meeting

### MINUTES

Monday, June 10, 2024, 6:00 pm

Location: First 5 Contra Costa, Conference Center  
4005 Port Chicago Hwy., Suite 120, Concord CA 94520  
1516 Kamole Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96821

#### 1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair John Jones called the meeting to order at 6:13 PM.

##### Commissioners present during roll call were:

District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández, Vice-Chair  
District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 3: Alternate Bella Merrill  
District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley  
District 5: John Jones, Chair  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Candace Andersen (Remote Just Cause)  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli (Remote)  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart

##### Commissioners not present during roll call were:

District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey  
District 4: Matt Regan, Treasurer / Secretary  
District 5: Alternate LaTrena Robinson  
Board of Supervisors: Alternate Supervisor Ken Carlson  
Health Department: Alternate Dr. Sefanit Mekuria  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Roslyn Gentry

#### 2.0 Public Comment

No comment from the public.

#### 3.0 Approve the Minutes of the Commission Meetings on:

##### 3.1 Commission Meeting on April 8, 2024

The Chair asked if there were any questions regarding item 3.1. There were none.

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes from April 8, 2024.

Commissioner Marla Stuart made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Dr. Rocio Hernandez.

##### Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández  
District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha



District 5: John Jones, Chair  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Candace Andersen  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart, Vice-Chair

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli

**Absent:** District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey  
District 4: Matt Regan, Treasurer / Secretary  
Children & Families Services: Roslyn Gentry

The motion was **APPROVED**.

### **3.2 Special Commission Meeting on May 6, 2024**

The Chair asked if there were any questions regarding item 3.2. There were none.

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes from May 6, 2024.

Commissioner Mary Rocha made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Dr. Rocio Hernandez.

#### Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández  
District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley  
District 5: John Jones, Chair  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Candace Andersen  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart, Vice-Chair

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey  
District 4: Matt Regan, Treasurer / Secretary  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Roslyn Gentry

The motion was **APPROVED**.

#### **4.0 Approval of Consent Calendar.** *A Commissioner or member of the public may ask that any of the following consent items be removed from the consent calendar for consideration under item 5.0.*



Item 4.1.1 was removed by the Chair from the Consent Calendar for consideration in Item 5.0 and voting on the remaining items proceeded.

The Chair called for a motion to approve the Consent Calendar with the removal of item 4.1.1.

Commissioner Marla Stuart made a motion to approve the Consent Calendar, seconded by Commissioner Gareth Ashley.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández  
District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley  
District 5: John Jones, Chair  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Candace Andersen  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart, Vice-Chair

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey  
District 4: Matt Regan, Treasurer / Secretary  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Roslyn Gentry

The motion was **APPROVED**.

Before moving to item 5.0 Chair Jones read a recusal statement, turned the meeting to Vice Chair Marla Stuart, and left the room.

**5.0 CONSIDER for discussion any items removed from the Consent Calendar.**

Vice Chair Marla Stuart opened the discussion of item 4.1.1. There were no questions.

The Vice Chair asked for a motion to approve item 4.1.1.

Commissioner Gareth Ashley made a motion to accept item 4.1.1, seconded by Commissioner Vidya Iyengar.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández  
District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Candace Andersen  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart, Vice-Chair

**NOs:** None



**ABSTAIN:** District 5: John Jones, Chair

**Absent:** District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey  
District 4: Matt Regan, Treasurer / Secretary  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Roslyn Gentry

The motion was **APPROVED**.

Chair Jones returned the room and resumed chairing the meeting.

**6.0 RECEIVE Presentations from the First 5 Centers' Community Advisory Councils (CAC) recommendations resulting from their annual Community Assessment.**

Parents representing the Community Advisory Councils (CAC) for the five First 5 Centers across the county presented the findings from their annual Community Assessments. Some of the consistent themes across the five Centers included social anxiety, parental resilience, and mental health.

**7.0 Recognize Kim Stadlander for her retirement after 9 years of service as First 5 Contra Costa Quality Improvement Coaching Coordinator.**

Executive Director Ruth Fernández recognized Quality Improvement Coaching Coordinator Kim Stadlander for her 9 years of service to First 5 Contra Costa. Kim was unable to attend the meeting, in her absence Dr. Fernández noted many of her accomplishments and impact on the early childhood workforce in her role of Coaching Coordinator. Ruth sent Kim well wishes going forward and thanked her for her 9 years of service to First 5 Contra Costa.

**8.0 Public Hearing on the Progress Report on the First 5 Contra Costa Strategic Plan for FY24/25 to FY25/26 and Long-Term Fiscal Plan.**

The Chair opened the Public Hearing at 7:28pm and turned it over to Sandra Naughton, Deputy Director to present. Sandra Naughton, Mackenzie Whipps, Sarah Burke and Liliana Gonzalez provided a progress report on programmatic goals in our First 5's three focus areas. Executive Director Ruth Fernández shared updates on our Organizational Strategies and reviewed long term fiscal projections through FY 26-27. She highlighted plans for the upcoming year and requested any suggestions for county partners.

The Chair asked if there were any questions or comments from the Commissioners and the public, hearing none, he closed the Public Hearing at 8:03pm.

The Chair called for a motion to accept the Progress Report on the First 5 Contra Costa Strategic Plan for FY24/25 to FY25/26 and Long-Term Fiscal Plan.

Commissioner Vidya Iyengar made a motion to accept the report, seconded by Commissioner Dr. Rocio Hernandez.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández  
District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley



District 5: John Jones, Chair  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Candace Andersen  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart, Vice-Chair

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey  
District 4: Matt Regan, Treasurer / Secretary  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Roslyn Gentry

The motion was **APPROVED**.

**9.0 CONSIDER approval of revised Commission Purchasing and Contracting Policies.**

Executive Director Ruth Fernández and Grants and Contracts Manager, Lisa Johnson, reported on the updates made to current Commission Procurement, Purchasing and Contracting Policies to streamline procedures and increase efficiencies to internal processes. Marla Stuart noted the county is working to support diverse businesses and shared ways they are tracking and reporting to ensure there are no barriers to entry. Ruth and Lisa shared other ways First 5 is attempting to lower barriers to entry such as offering virtual informational seminars.

The Chair called for a motion to approve the revised Commission Purchasing and Contracting Policies.

Commissioner Gareth Ashley made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Vidya Iyengar.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández  
District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley  
District 5: John Jones, Chair  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Candace Andersen  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart, Vice-Chair

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey  
District 4: Matt Regan, Treasurer / Secretary  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Roslyn Gentry

The motion was **APPROVED**.



#### **10.0 Executive Director's Report**

Ruth Fernández highlighted staffing announcements with Liliana Gonzalez becoming the new Early Childhood Program Officer and Sandra Naughton officially becoming Deputy Director after serving as interim Deputy Director for the last five months. She also noted that we are currently in recruitment for a Finance and Operations Director.

#### **11.0 Communications**

- **(May 14, 2024) First 5 Network Responds to State Budget Cut Proposals Impacting California's Youngest Children**
- **(May 22, 2024) May Revision: Multi-Year Continuous Medi-Cal Coverage for Young Children Not Funded Tens of Thousands of CA Children's Medi-Cal Coverage Not Preserved**
- **(June 4, 2024) Letter re: CalWORKs Home Visiting Program May Revision \$47.1 Million Ongoing Cut**

#### **12.0 Commissioner F.Y.I. Updates**

#### **13.0 Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 PM.

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**Executive Committee Meeting  
MINUTES**

**Tuesday, May 28, 2024, 5:00-6:30pm**

**4005 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 120, Concord, CA 94520**

**1.0 Convene and call to order.**

Chair John Jones called the meeting to order at 5:18 p.m.

In attendance: John Jones, Dr. Marla Stuart, Vidya Iyengar, Matt Regan

Absent: None

Staff present: Executive Director, Dr. Ruth Fernández; Deputy Director, Sandra Naughton; Human Resources Manager, Tammy Henry; Executive Assistant, Mikele Nelson.

**2.0 Public Comment.**

No public comment.

**3.0 Approve the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting of April 8, 2024.**

Matt Regan motioned to approve the minutes of the April 8 Executive Committee meeting and Marla Stuart seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The minutes were approved.

**4.0 CONSIDER accepting the report on significant program, financial or contracts matters, and on any personnel matters relating to Commission staff.**

**4.1 Receive highlights for the Procurement Policy Updates**

Ruth Fernández presented the updates made to current Commission Procurement, Purchasing and Contracting Policies to streamline procedures and increase efficiencies to internal processes.

**4.2 Receive updates from the Deputy Director**

Sandra Naughton provided an update on policy advocacy, the community input and planning process for making early learning spaces more inclusive, ECE Enhanced Compensation pilot project, and other strategic projects for the upcoming months.

**4.3 Receive updates from the HR Manager**

Tammy Henry reported recruitment efforts for various open positions are underway.

**4.4 Receive updates from the Executive Director**

Ruth Fernández highlighted staffing announcements with Liliana Gonzalez becoming the new Early Childhood Program Officer and Sandra Naughton officially becoming Deputy Director after serving as interim Deputy Director for the last five months. She also noted that we are currently in recruitment for a Finance and Operations Director. She provided a fiscal update on projected revenue and expenditures through FY 26-27. She concluded by providing an overview on the revised Organization Chart with updated titles and fewer FTE's noted.

**5.0 DISCUSS matters regarding the operation of the Commission**

Ruth Fernández highlighted the attendance expectations for Commissioners and shared the current attendance record as well as noted the Brown Act and Teleconferencing Guidelines for attendance.

**6.0 Communications**



- **Bay Area First 5s Executive Directors Letter - CalAIM Section 1115 Continuous Coverage for Children**
- **AB 2982 (Reyes) - Bright Beginnings Act – Fact Sheet**
- **Assemblymember Pellerin Request Letter - First 5 Funding**

**7.0 Adjourn** – Meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

July/August 2024



## Internal Updates

*Internal updates are non-programmatic and highlight operational activities and internal efforts.*

### **Recruitment for First 5 Contra Costa Job Opportunities**

#### **Finance and Operations Director**

Recruitment efforts continue for the Finance and Operations Director role. The first round of interviews of qualified candidates were conducted in late July and second-round interviews are scheduled in August. Applications for the Finance and Operations Director will not close until the position is filled.

#### **Data and Policy Manager**

In late July, First 5 Contra Costa released the job announcement for the Data and Policy Manager. The position will be responsible for overseeing our research core strategy, which includes evaluation of programs and efforts, analyzing data and research to inform our efforts, and enhancing our agency's overall approach to be a learning organization, and our advocacy core strategy, which includes policy and budget advocacy at the local, state and federal level for early childhood issues related to our mission and focus areas.

To learn more about the positions, please visit our website at: <https://www.first5coco.org/job-opportunities>

### **Facilities**

First 5 Contra Costa will be leasing space to the County's Black Infant Health (BIH) Program at the East Leland Road building where the East County First 5 Center is located. The building space that BIH will be occupying was formerly used by the Welcome Home Baby Home Visiting program and does not impact First 5 Center operations as it has been independently used for other First 5 Contra Costa programming. We are excited about this partnership and the benefits that will be gained by the proximity of the BIH program and First 5 Center activities—an ideal 'next door' model to direct expecting mothers to connect to the comprehensive services offered by the First 5 Center. First 5 Contra Costa and the County Health Services are working to finalize execution of the Lease Agreement with the Board of Supervisors.



### **Save the Date for January Commission Meeting**

Please mark your calendar for a January Commission meeting. First 5 Contra Costa staff is looking to proactively put a place holder on Commissioner calendars in anticipation for a January meeting. Historically, the Commission has not met in January, but staff anticipates the need for Commission approval of critical programming contract early in 2025.

### **Staff Retreat and Commission Summit this Fall**

The executive team will be planning a staff retreat in late fall of 2024. First 5 Contra Costa submitted a \$15,000 Care grant application to the Leshner Foundation to finance the costs of a two-day staff retreat. Application awards will be announced by the end of August. The staff retreat would be an opportunity to support organizational resilience, staff cohesion and renewal, and reflective thinking about our strategic goals and priorities. Additionally, the intent is to follow the staff retreat with a one-day summit for staff and Commissioners. We will keep the Commission updated as planning continues to unfold.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

July/August 2024



## Early Childhood Education

*Our **Early Childhood Education (ECE)** initiative aims to ensure that all children have access to high-quality, affordable child care and early learning.*

### **Launch of New Quality Matters Program Year**

The County-wide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) program called Quality Matters has officially launched. This year, changes to the program have been made to focus more intentionally on including providers in a meaningful way no matter where they are in their quality improvement journey, all with an eye toward long term program sustainability and achieving the maximum impact for as many children as possible.



### **Hosted Stakeholder Listening Sessions on ECE Compensation Enhancement**

Along with our partners at Clarity Social Research Group, the First 5 Contra Costa team hosted 3 listening sessions with educators to hear their feedback and gather their important input on a draft design for a future ECE Compensation Enhancement Pilot Program. We heard from 50+ community voices from a diverse group of child care providers on their needs and hopes for ECE wages, and how a pilot program to enhance wages can be most supportive of those diverse needs.

### **Coming Up Next**

Together with our partners at UC Berkeley's Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, and relying on the insights gained from stakeholder listening sessions, a robust Advisory Group of system partners, and a groundbreaking study on early education wages in this county conducted in 2023, First 5 Contra Costa will be developing and releasing a proposed plan for piloting a wage enhancement program this fall.

## Early Intervention

*Our **Early Intervention (EI)** initiative aims to ensure that families have access to prevention and early intervention supports and services that foster the optimal development of all children.*

### **Developmental Playgroup Pilot**

In collaboration with Pittsburg Unified School District—to better understand the social emotional development and incoming needs of newly enrolled children—we supported the implementation of online developmental screening by imbedding the screening process into their registration process. This allowed district staff to quickly and easily identify children who would benefit from additional support and consider classroom assignments. To support children before coming into the classroom, all children identified with a need were referred to the Help Me Grow phone line funded by First 5 Contra Costa for additional support and care coordination. In addition, First 5 Contra Costa funded a summer Developmental Playgroup to support families in helping their children practice and strengthen their social emotional skills. The pilot playgroup supported 10 PUSD families identified through the screening process and we are eager to review the pilot data and consider next steps in partnership with the school district.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

July/August 2024



## ***Inclusion in Early Learning Convening***

In partnership with Cardea Services, First 5 Contra Costa is leading a community planning process that will inform our efforts to make early care and education services in our county more inclusive for all children birth to age 5. This process culminates with our Inclusion in Early Learning convenings on August 7 and 15. More than 200 community members are registered for the events, which are intended to offer stakeholders (families and service providers) an opportunity to review key highlights from the focus groups and landscape scan interviews. In addition, Cardea will present a series of recommendations identified through this community planning process.



## ***Coming Up Next***

- On August 13, we are hosting our second in-person Help Me Grow networking café. The guest speaker will be Pasia Gadson, director of CalAIM programs, to provide an overview of Enhance Case Management and how the medical benefits supports families and young children.

## **Strengthening Families**

*Our **Strengthening Families (SF)** initiative helps families build healthy relationships, strengthen support systems, and nurture their children's development.*

## ***One year anniversary of Lincoln Families operating East County First 5 Center***

In early June, Contra Costa County leaders and families gathered to celebrate the one-year anniversary of [Lincoln Families](#) operating the [East County First 5 Center](#). The day was filled with celebration, joy, and activities for families and children including art workshops, face painting, toy giveaways. "It fills our hearts with joy and this is a proud moment for us to be celebrating with our partners, Lincoln Families," says Ruth Fernandez, Ed.D., Executive Director at First 5 Contra Costa. "Together, we bring the best of our resources and staff to meet the needs of families in East County. We are excited and appreciative of the work being done to create a space where families feel like they belong. This work is not done alone, it is done in collaboration through community partnerships as well as our deep relationships with families and we are thankful for the ongoing commitment to help all children thrive." The East County First Center, run in partnership with Lincoln Families—a local non-profit with roots in Contra Costa and Alameda County, continues to make a difference in the lives of families with young children at a critical age. The free services for the community include group classes, playgroups, school readiness activities, support groups, and one-on-one assistance connecting to community services. [Click here to see more photos from the event, learn about the East County First 5 Center, and share in our appreciation for the staff and families that helped make this celebration possible.](#)

## ***Coming Up Next***

- First 5 Butte County is planning to visit several of our First 5 Centers in late September. They are hoping to learn more our model and use their visit to inform their own efforts.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

July/August 2024



## County Updates

### ***MHSA Draft of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Three-Year Program and Expenditure Plan Annual Update for Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025***

First 5 Contra Costa staff provided public comment to the Mental Health Commission on August 7 during the public hearing held to present the proposed updates to the MHSA Expenditure Plan for FY24/25. Comments provided highlighted the importance of investing in the prenatal to 5 population and the need for 'dedicated investments' for 0-5 early childhood mental health services and supports. The recommendation was made to consider increasing current 2% Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) MHSA funding for early childhood mental health services to 6% of PEI funding to align with the 6% 0-5 population in Contra Costa County. Staff continue to monitor the rollout of Prop 1 and the impact on core community-based mental health services.

## State Updates

### ***Stabilization Fund Proposal to First 5 California***

Proposition 10 revenue declines are exacerbated by state and local county budget cuts impacting many of these same families. As a strategy to help stabilize continuity of critical supports for children and their families, a proposal has been developed asking First 5 California (F5CA) Commission to consider approving a \$25 million stabilization fund for First 5 County Commissions that need immediate support to maintain critical local services.

The purpose of the Stabilization Fund is to ensure critical local services provided by First 5 County Commissions and their community partners are maintained to the extent possible and cuts to these services are minimized, and to help First 5 County Commissions maintain a stable infrastructure that allows them to leverage additional funding, meet long-term obligations, and provide time, space, and resources to plan for long-term sustainability.

The Proposal will be on the agenda of the August 22 First 5 CA Commission Meeting in San Diego. Local County Commission staff and Commissioners are encouraged to make public comment to speak about the impact of revenue reductions at the local level and to highlight the collective benefits of co-investing in the sustainability of the statewide First 5 Network.

### ***Senate Votes Against Federal Child Tax Credit Expansion***

In late July, the Senate voted against a bipartisan effort to expand the Federal Child Tax Credit. While the issue will be discussed again next year, it is sad to know that this legislation could have lifted 400,000 children out of poverty. Learn more here: <https://19thnews.org/2024/08/child-tax-credit-2024-senate-votes-against-bill/>.

### ***First 5 Statewide Network Map—Bookmark this Resource***

The First 5 Association of California recently unveiled an updated County Map accessible to the public. It has updated links to County specific First 5 landing pages—definitely a great bookmark. We encourage all Commissioners to peruse the map to learn about other First 5 Commissions. View the First 5 County map: <https://first5association.org/county-first-5s/>



# Ready Kids East County Initiative

A look back at the first five years of the effort and a peak ahead of what's to come

August 12, 2024

**Jessica Keener**  
Program Coordinator

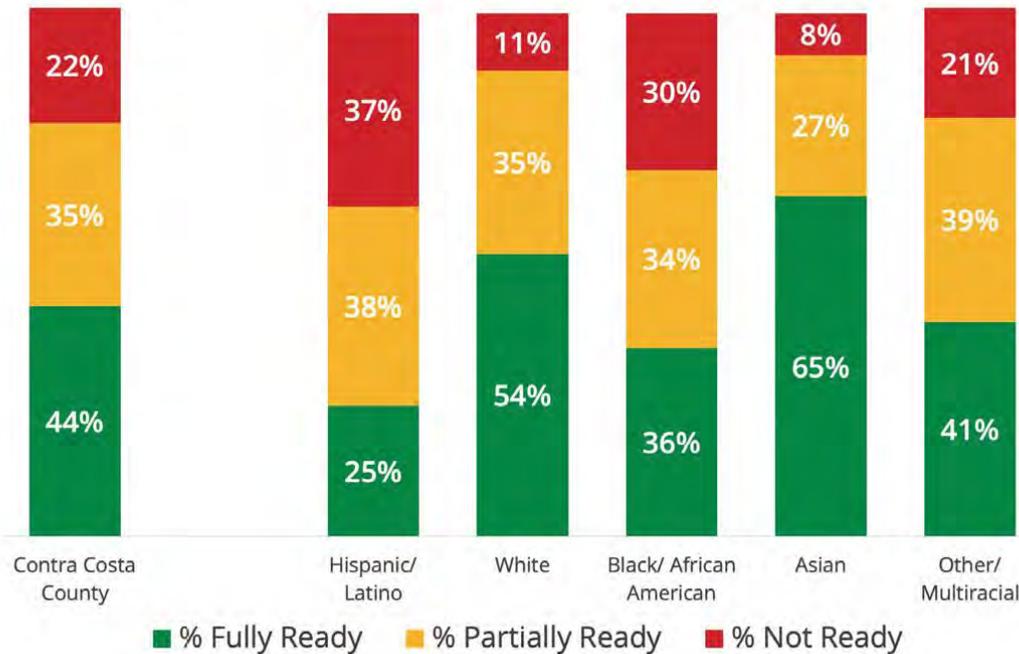


# Background

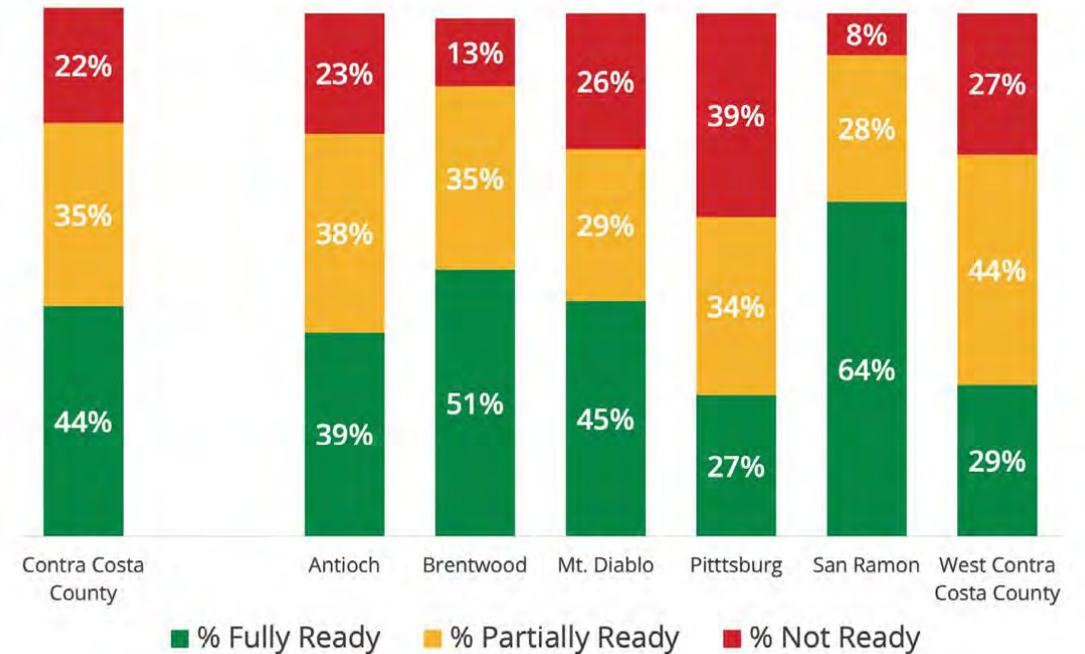
## Why we focus on Black and African American children in East County:

To understand the needs of children in Contra Costa, First 5 Contra Costa contracted with Applied Survey Research to conduct a county-wide assessment of kindergarten readiness (*Ready or Not, Here We Come: an assessment of Kindergarten Readiness in Contra Costa, 2017*<sup>1</sup>). A total of 1,154 students from 10 elementary school districts participated in this study.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS COUNTYWIDE BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2017



KINDERGARTEN READINESS BY SCHOOL DISTRICT, 2017



<sup>1</sup>Ready or Not, Here We Come: an assessment of Kindergarten Readiness in Contra Costa, 2017: <https://www.first5coco.org/our-impact/kindergarten-readiness-assessment/>

# What is the RKEC Initiative?



## Ready Families

Black families have knowledge, tools, resources, and relationships to advocate for learning environments where their young children will thrive.



## Ready Schools

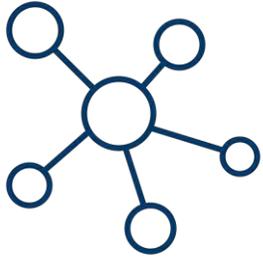
Community organizations and schools shift their practices, environments, and cultures to serve, center, and celebrate Black children and their families.



## Ready Communities

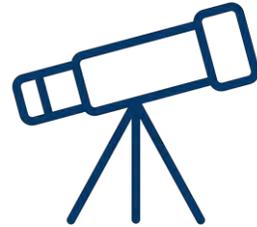
A coalition of fierce advocates for Black children in East County forms and propels family-centered and culturally relevant policies, funding, and service provision.

# Initiative Strategies



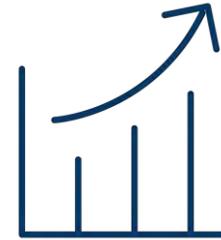
## Build Relationships

Create bridging spaces for parents, school leaders, county leaders, teachers, and service providers to learn from one another.



## Build Collective Vision

Engage with community partners and leaders to create and strengthen relationships and build networks that create pathways to success for Black children.



## Build Capacity

Share promising paths for providing programs and services that center Black children's experiences and identities with early childhood education providers.



## Build Power & Resources

Support and empower parents in advocating for children, building competencies to thrive in the school readiness system, and connecting them to resources

# RKEC Partners

**We have had many key contributors in this effort, here are just some of the community partners that we have worked with:**

- Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation
- C.O.P.E. (Counseling Options and Parent Education)
- Tandem, Partners in Early Learning
- First 5 Centers in Pittsburg, Antioch, and Brentwood
- Aspiranet
- Lincoln Families
- The Black Women in Early Childhood Collective (BWECC)
- Shawn Bryant, trainer
- Pittsburg Unified School District
- Contra Costa County Library
- The City of Pittsburg

# Highlights from the First Five Years

## Stakeholder Engagement

- Parent Cafes
- Ready Kids East County Parent Group

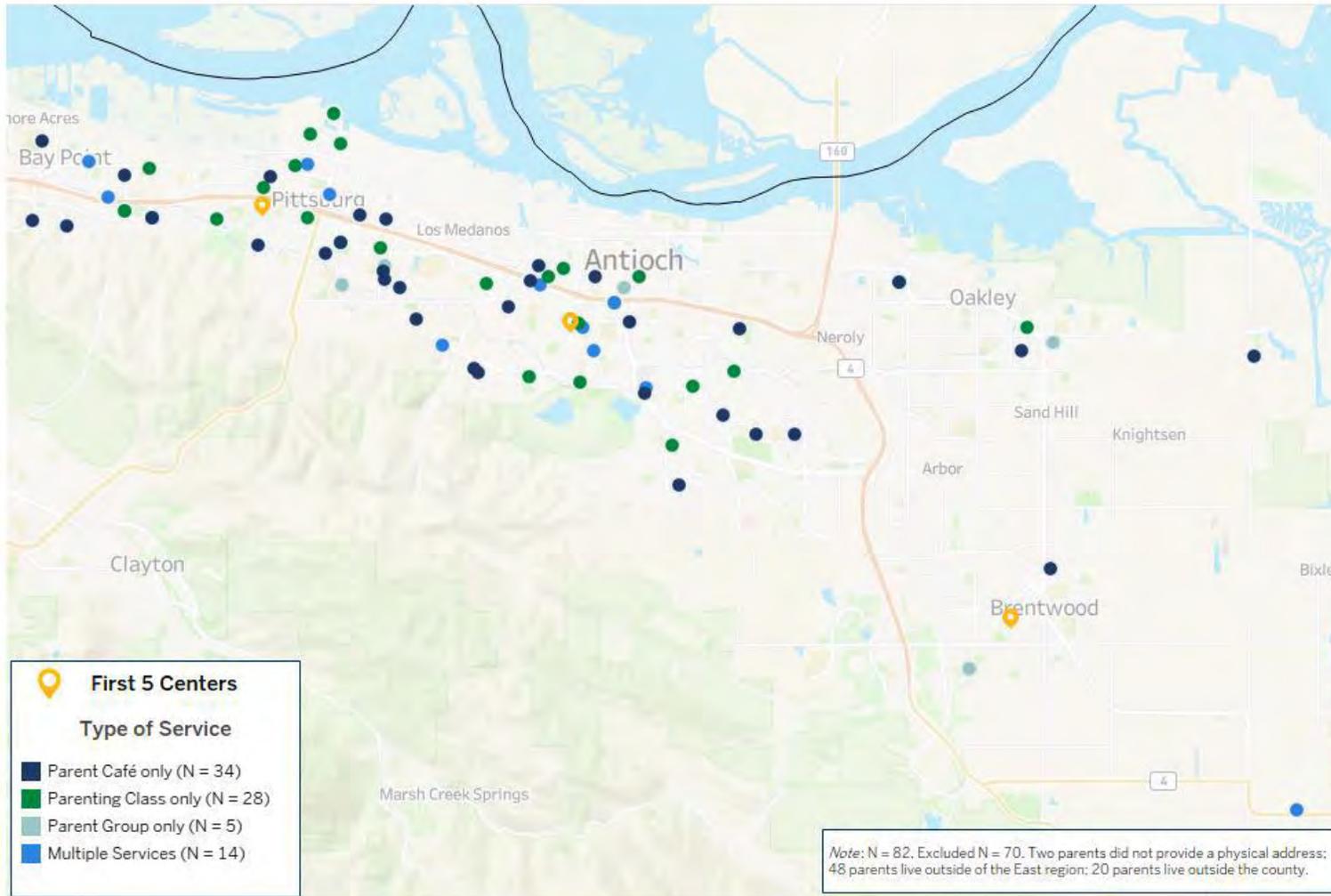
## Tailored Programming

- Tandem - Give Me 5 Math and Lil' Libraries Around Town
- C.O.P.E. (Counseling Options and Parent Education) - seminars for Black and African American parents and caregivers

## Capacity Building

- Anti-bias, anti-racist principles for working with young children
- Enhancing outreach to African American families

## Contra Costa County Parents Served by Ready Kids East County

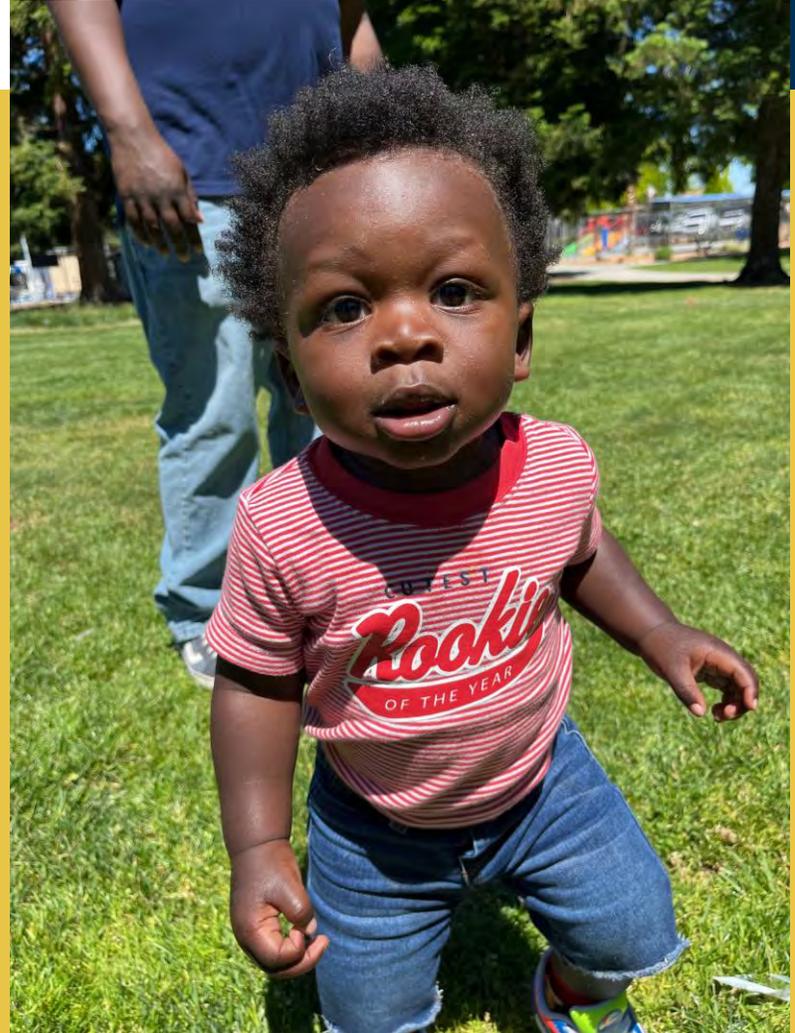


Developed by Applied Survey Research

## RKEC's Black and African American Parent/Caregiver Engagement:

- **319** Black and African American families participated in program offered by the First 5 Centers Located in East County (Pittsburg, Antioch, and Brentwood)
- **190** Black and African American adults participated in C.O.P.E.'s Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) one-time seminars and multi-week classes
- **30** Black and African American parents and caregivers regularly participated in the Ready Kids East County Parent Group meetings and meetups

# What's next?



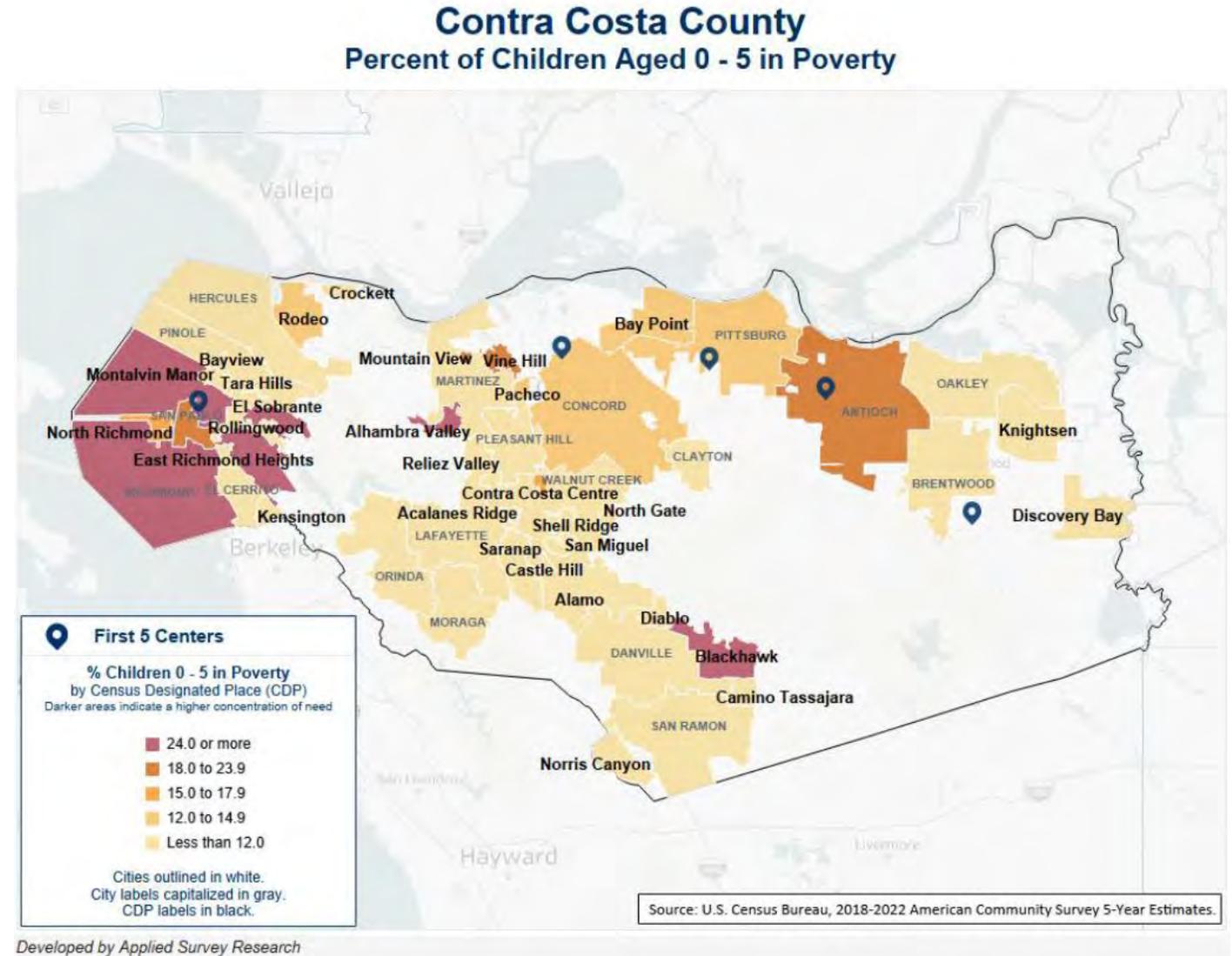
## Ready Kids East County Phase 2

# Womb to Classroom: Continuing our Ready Kids East County Partnership



# The Need Remains

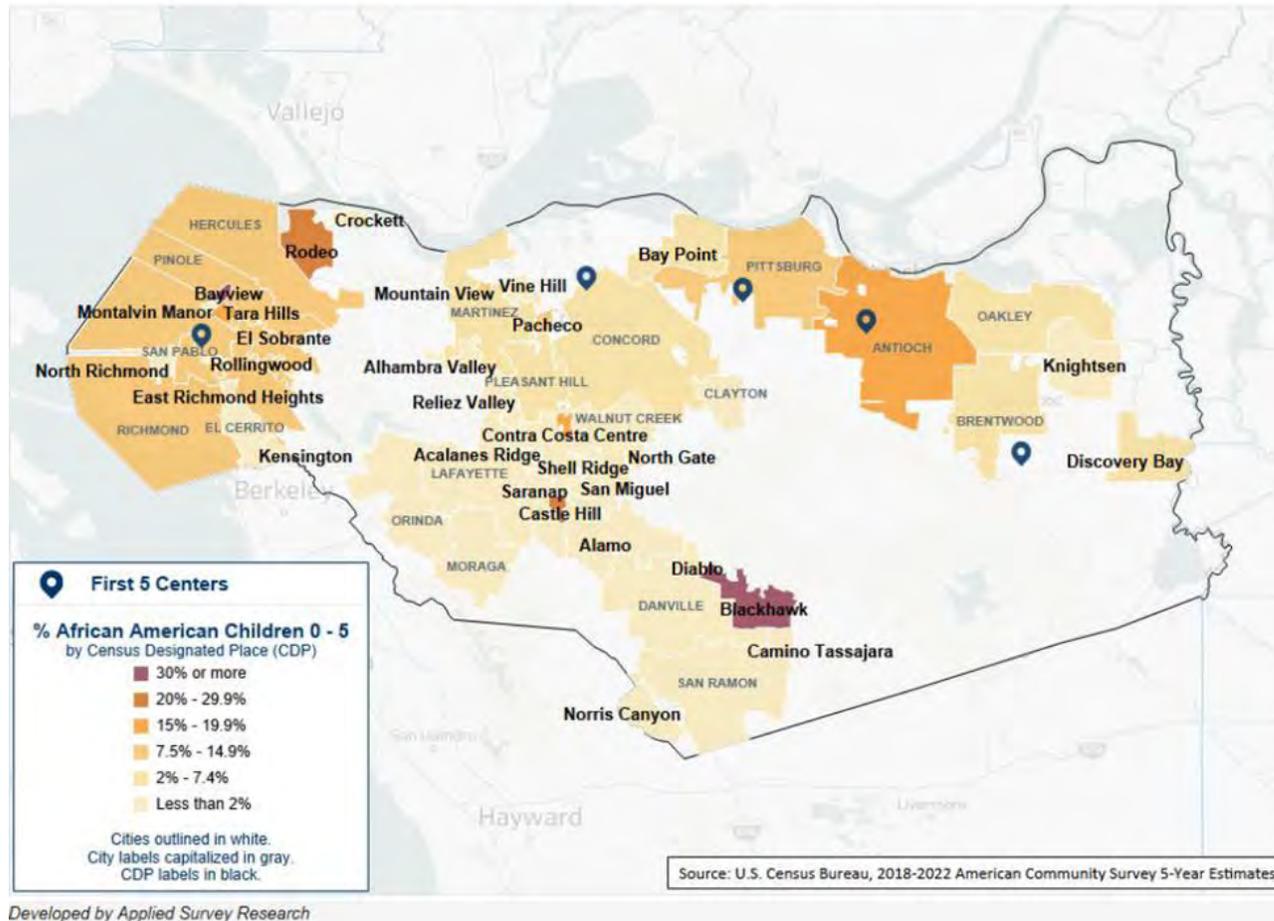
- “Suburbanization of Poverty”<sup>2</sup>
- Philanthropic investment is much lower per capita in “outer” suburban regions of the Bay Area, compared to urban areas.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup>Mattiuzzi, L. (2023). Is nonprofit spending keeping up with the suburbanization of poverty in the Bay Area? Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.

# The Need Remains

## Contra Costa County Percent of African American Children Under 5

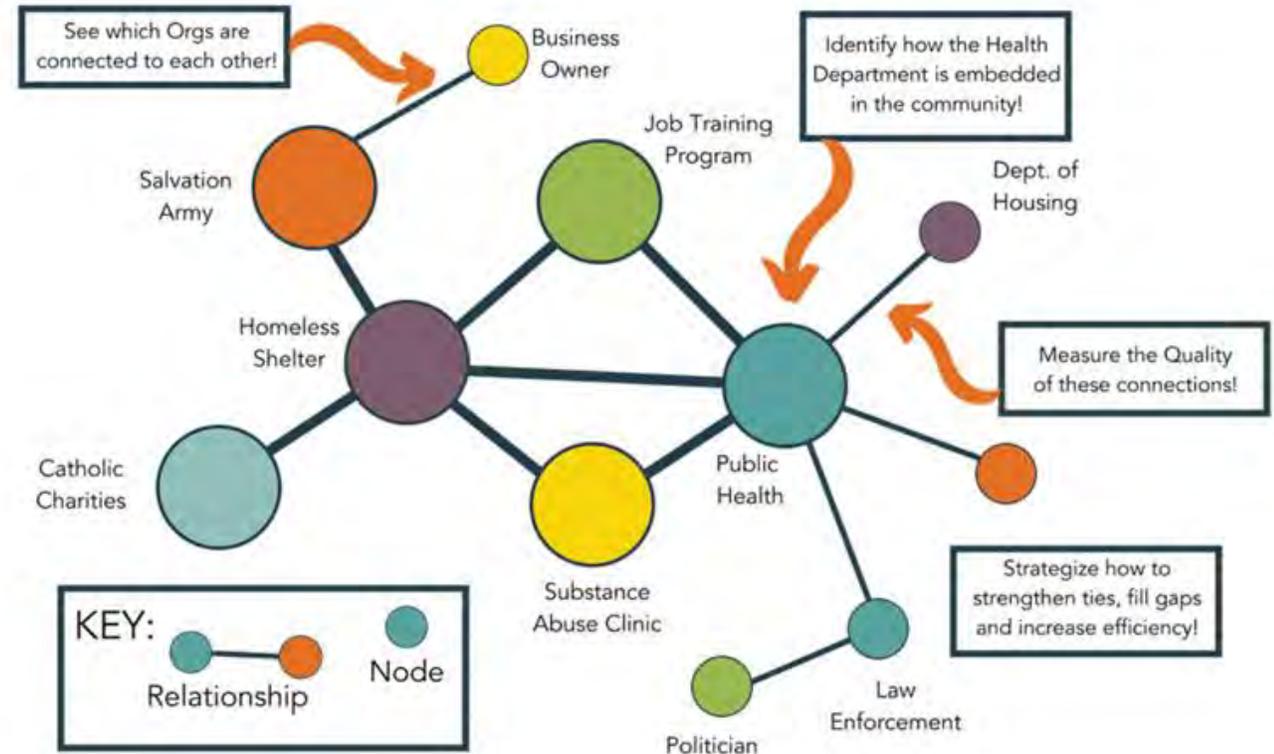


- **Black families are more likely to live in East Contra Costa County areas than other regions.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>US Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

# Seeing the System

Year	Evaluation Activity
Year 1	Conduct pre- network analysis and identify five organizations to follow as case studies
Year 2	Conduct interviews with case studies organizations
Year 3	Conduct interviews with case study organizations
Year 4	Conduct interviews with case study organizations
Year 5	Conduct post- network analysis and exit interviews with case study organizations



# Constructing Bridges



Parents and caregivers experience a plethora of transitions during the first five years of a child’s life. As they travel along this journey, parents navigate over or around potential pitfalls, or “cliffs”, experiencing adversity and encountering obstacles as they encounter these transitions.

If properly constructed and built in a timely manner, the village and its members can act as “bridges” to aid families in successfully traversing the landscape and avoid falling into these adversity cliffs.

# Build System Relationships and Capacity

## Birthing System

- Move further upstream to catch families earlier

## Early Literacy in the Community

- Tandem – explore direct programming opportunities that target Black families in East County
- Contra Costa County Library - curate and create 100 expecting parent bags

## Early Learning Settings and School Districts

- Continue anti-bias, anti-racist workshops with early childhood education providers
- Extend the ongoing developmental screening and playgroup partnership with Pittsburg USD
- Establish a relationship with Antioch USD

# Build System Relationships and Capacity

## East Contra Costa County First 5 Centers

- Serve as a hub/connection point
- Roadmap to Kindergarten© class
  - implements a two-generation approach: parents learn how to navigate the enrollment process, while their children practice developmentally appropriate skill-building for a smooth transition into kindergarten.

## Big Table Convenings

- Annual opportunities to center Black parent and caregiver voice in a space with other community leaders and stakeholders

## Parent Engagement

- Intentionally and meaningfully incorporating parent voice
- Parent leadership and advocacy development opportunities; mental health peer-to-peer parent model
- Womb to Classroom interactive event

# Our “Why?”

**Our goal for expanding the Ready Kids East County village and building bridges is to ensure the efforts of this initiative will create a lasting, strong, vibrant, and inclusive foundation of sustained support for young Black children in East County.**



# Thank you

**Jessica Keener**

Program Coordinator

[jkeener@first5coco.org](mailto:jkeener@first5coco.org)



[first5coco.org](http://first5coco.org)

# READY KIDS EAST COUNTY

THE START OF A MOVEMENT TO  
CHANGE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS

2019-2023



A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP OF FIRST 5 CONTRA COSTA & THE DEAN AND MARGARET LESHER FOUNDATION

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# THE NEED

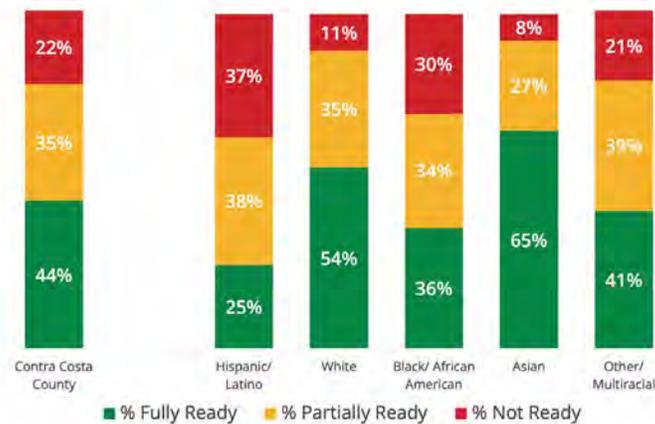
Despite decades passing since researchers first shared the news that high-quality early learning experiences are among those with the highest return on investment, many young children in the Bay Area lag behind peers when it comes to school readiness. In an effort to sound the alarm locally about this issue, First 5 Contra Costa commissioned the first county-wide kindergarten readiness assessment, with participation from 10 school districts. The assessment was completed in 2017 by Applied Survey Research, a pioneer in the field, and resulted in a report called [Ready or Not, Here We Come!](https://www.first5coco.org/our-impact/child-development/child-readiness/ready-or-not-here-we-come/) which estimated that 30% of the African American children assessed countywide were not ready for kindergarten, compared to only 22% of all children assessed. The study also examined differences across school districts, and Pittsburg Unified School District had the largest proportion of students not ready for kindergarten (39% not ready compared to only 8% in San Ramon Unified School District). The report also underscored the importance of a child's well-being impacting their readiness for kindergarten, and the significant role social determinants of health, such as housing, food security, and economic security, play in school readiness.

*"I definitely see some changes in curriculum; however, I think there is more to be done. Black history and contributions of folks from the African diaspora should be included in the curriculum for the entire school year rather than just in February."*

Parent focus group participant

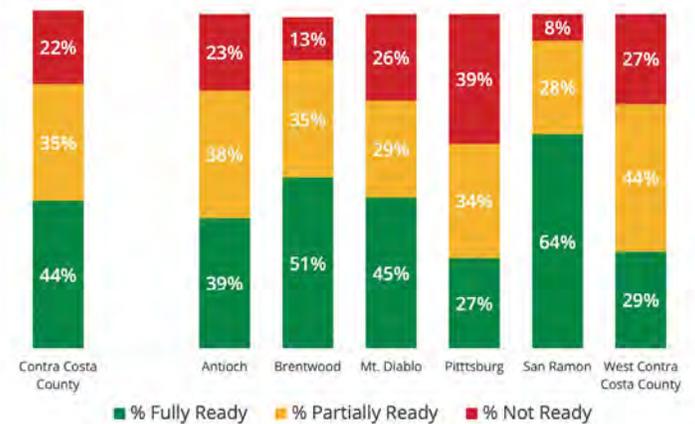
These kindergarten readiness findings echoed other data reports that showed children in portions of East County fall behind their peers in academic achievement, and those disparities are even wider for African American children in East County. At the same time, state-level research confirmed that a major factor reducing the impact of California's education reforms was the lack of readiness among kindergarten students.

**KINDERGARTEN READINESS COUNTYWIDE BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2017**



Source: *Ready or Not, Here We Come!*, Applied Survey Research, 2017. <https://www.first5coco.org/our-impact/child-development/child-readiness/ready-or-not-here-we-come/>

**KINDERGARTEN READINESS BY SCHOOL DISTRICT, 2017**



Source: *Ready or Not, Here We Come!*, Applied Survey Research, 2017. <https://www.first5coco.org/our-impact/child-development/child-readiness/ready-or-not-here-we-come/>



## THE NEED

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Around the same time of the rollout of the *Ready or Not, Here we Come! Kindergarten Readiness Assessment*, First 5 Contra Costa was interested in continuing to analyze and reflect upon its own engagement of Black and African American children and families. In 2017, First 5 Contra Costa hired a consultant to conduct a needs assessment of African American families with young children, and to identify best practices on how to effectively serve and support Black and African American families on their school readiness journeys.

The consultant conducted key stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and surveys to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of First 5 Costa Contra's service delivery approach to Black and African American children and families. The results of the needs assessment revealed general misperceptions about First 5 Contra Costa's programs, a lack of community awareness of First 5 Centers, and a need for culturally sensitive and diverse environments. The recommendations generated from the report served as a guide and framework for First 5 Contra Costa to restructure some of its program and service delivery models. Greater emphasis was placed on marketing directly to Black and African American families, hiring Black and African American staff, and training staff, volunteers, and contractors in cultural humility.



*"There have been programs in existence for all of these years. Those programs have been doing a great job, but not to the level to change the data. [By adopting a collective action approach we have been able to] shift the way some of our partners do their work. It is not that their work isn't excellent, but it didn't create systemic change."*

Participant from one of the community efforts researched to inform the development of the Ready Kids East County effort

# THE CALL TO ACTION

With this new data, in 2019, First 5 Contra Costa was eager to determine the best path forward to address these racial inequities. By forging a strategic partnership with the Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation, the Ready Kids East County effort was launched to improve the trajectories of young children in the region. The effort centered the experiences of African American and Black families in East County, particularly in the city of Pittsburg, and aimed to tackle these challenges on multiple levels to positively impact families in the immediate term, as well as shift institutions and organizations over the long-term. The intention was to view education through an ecological lens that incorporates all the factors, influences, and variables that impact a child's development in their first few years of life. Instead of asking whether a child is ready for kindergarten, we are asking: Are schools, communities and families ready for kindergarten? This allows us to begin reimagining a system that prepares all children.

In its first year of the effort, First 5 Contra Costa hired a consulting firm to conduct key informant interviews with local and regional leaders of community-driven initiatives focused on education, health, and equity. Based on that work and emerging research on how partnerships can tackle complex problems, First 5 Contra Costa adopted a collective action model for the Ready Kids East County effort. Collective action efforts are typically led by a "backbone" organization that facilitates partners through strategies aimed to generate long-term changes to systems, structures, and institutions. Collective action efforts also typically aim to tackle complex challenges through multiple strategies that over time result in significant changes for intended populations.

# THE CALL TO ACTION

## Multi-pronged Strategy

First 5 Contra Costa developed a logic model to guide the multi-pronged effort. The logic model crystallized the problem, assumptions, stakeholders, and strategies to reach short and long-term outcomes. Its ultimate goal is to ensure that organizations have the information, resources and culture to prioritize and celebrate Black children, while also ensuring that Black children and their families have the support they need to be ready for kindergarten. The logic model, included below, identified several outcomes at the following levels:

### Ready Families:

Black families have tools, resources, and relationships to advocate for learning environments where their younger children will thrive.

### Ready Schools:

Community organizations and schools shift their practices, environments, and cultures to serve, center and celebrate Black children and their families.

### Ready Communities:

A coalition of fierce advocates for Black children in East County forms and propels family-centered and culturally relevant policies, funding, and service provision.

## READY KIDS EAST COUNTY LOGIC MODEL

Problem & Possibility			
<p><b>Problem:</b> Disparities in school readiness by race persist because we're approaching school readiness with a frame that Black children and families are solely responsible for being ready for school.</p> <p><b>Possibility:</b> What would it look like if we instead put the burden of change on the entire schools and community ecology to be ready for Black children and families, rather than the other way around?</p>			
Strategies	Short-term Outcomes (1-2 years)	Long-term Outcomes (2-3 years)	Assumptions
<p><b>BUILD RELATIONSHIPS:</b> Create bridging spaces for <b>parents, school leaders, county leaders, teachers, and service providers</b> to learn from one another</p> <p><b>BUILD COLLECTIVE VISION:</b> Engage with community partners and leaders to create and strengthen relationships and build networks that create pathways to success for Black children</p> <p><b>BUILD CAPACITY:</b> Share promising paths for providing <b>programs and services</b> that center Black children's experiences and identities with early childhood education providers</p> <p><b>BUILD POWER AND RESOURCES:</b> Support and empower parents in advocating for children, building competencies to thrive in the school readiness system, and connecting them to resources</p>	<p>Stakeholders 1) learn from one another 2) clarify their role in the school readiness ecology for Black children and 3) begin to adjust practices to be more culturally relevant</p> <p><b>Players/Stakeholders</b></p> <p>Parents, caregivers of Black children Black children Tandem, Partners in Early Learning Counseling Options and Parenting Education (C.O.P.E.) First 5 funded partners First 5 Commissioners First 5 Centers: leadership and staff ECE Providers Design Team members Pittsburg Unified School District school staff, board County, local government + law enforcement Faith-based organizations Other CBOs + social clubs/groups</p>	<p><b>READY FAMILIES:</b> Black families have tools, resources, and relationships to advocate for learning environments where their young children will thrive.</p> <p><b>READY SCHOOLS:</b> Community organizations and schools shift their practices, environments, and cultures to serve, center, and celebrate Black children and their families.</p> <p><b>READY COMMUNITIES:</b> A coalition of fierce advocates for Black children in East County forms and propels family-centered and culturally relevant policies, funding, and service provision.</p>	<p><b>BECAUSE</b> whole ecosystems (families, schools, communities) shape children's development of school readiness and families' ability to support development of school readiness</p> <p><b>BECAUSE</b> when you're in relationship with somebody, you listen, exchange information, and are accountable with one another.</p> <p><b>BECAUSE</b> With relationships, knowledge, and power combined, parents are better equipped to advocate for themselves and their children.</p> <p><b>BECAUSE</b> families' beliefs and expectations are central to a culturally relevant, whole-family approach to school readiness.</p>
Ultimate Impact			
<p>Among schools and community organizations, there are resources, information, and a culture that center and celebrate Black children in East County and equip them and their families with everything they need to be ready for kindergarten.</p>			



## THE CALL TO ACTION

First 5 Contra Costa also developed the following statement about core beliefs and values that would guide the work moving forward:

### **Core Beliefs and Values**

#### **Individual and systemic racism is the root cause of school readiness disparities.**

The burden of change is on us, not on parents and families of Black children. We must do our part in acknowledging, reckoning with, and repairing the harms of racist policies, structures, and culture.

#### **We redistribute power to families of Black children.**

We work in service to them. Black families lead the way, and their voices drive everything we do.

#### **We're humble—no one of us has all the answers.**

#### **We have to listen, learn, and work together.**

We create brave spaces for mutual learning and open communication, where all of us in the school readiness system can come together and create change.

#### **We value the unique expertise of everyone who touches a Black child's life.**

Parents, caregivers, educators, and researchers all contribute knowledge and wisdom to our growing understanding of school readiness.

#### **We advocate for equity.**

All families should have access to the resources they need to get their children ready for school.

# CENTERING FAMILIES' EXPERIENCE

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From its inception, the Ready Kids East County effort focused on engaging community members in the development and direction of efforts. In several ways, the initiative aimed to center the needs and voices of parents of African American and Black children living in East County, as well as the perspectives of various community members and leaders.

## Design Team

Committed to engaging a diverse group of individuals from various segments of the Pittsburg community, First 5 Contra Costa invited parents, educators, city officials, local clergy, staff from social service agencies, Pittsburg Unified School District Board members and staff to join a design team. The design team came together multiple times to provide input and guidance to the emerging initiative.

## Design Team Members

Phelicia Lang  
*Antioch School District*

La Krisha Dillard  
*Lynn Center*

Pastor Quentisha Davis  
*Pittsburg United Methodist Church*

Shalila Melvin  
Marika Hinds  
*Aspiranet*

Willie Mims  
*National Association for the  
Advancement of Colored People*

De'Shawn Woolridge  
*Pittsburg Unified School District  
School Board*

Shanelle Scales-Preston  
*Congressman Mark DeSaulnier's Office*

Jenay Clayton  
*Parent*

Savitha Moorthy  
Laura Rodriguez  
Kaitlin Young  
*Tandem, Partners in Early Learning*

Antoinette Edwards  
*First Baptist Head Start*

Ousha Reed  
*Parent*

Taylor Sims  
*Lift Up Contra Costa*

Candy Duperroir  
*Parent Voices*

## Parent Advisory Group

In addition to having parent seats on the Design Team, First 5 Contra Costa created a Parent Advisory Group composed of seven Pittsburg parents to provide feedback and guidance to the effort in its early stages. The advisory group provided input to the Design Team and contributed to the development of another parent-centered strategy: parent cafés.

# CENTERING FAMILIES' EXPERIENCES

## Parent Cafés

Based on input from the Design Team, First 5 Contra Costa hosted a series of parent cafés, or small meetings with opportunities for parent input, sharing and networking. The intent of these parent cafés was to hear the stories of parents of African American and Black children living in Pittsburg, and use their experiences to shape the focus of the initiative. Simultaneously, the parent cafés provided participating parents with opportunities to expand their social networks, learn about community resources, and develop supportive relationships for their child's development. Each café had a guest speaker and small-facilitated breakout sessions where parents responded to questions based on the session's theme and had the opportunity to share with one another and begin building a sense of community. Each café theme progressed to focus on each area of the eco-system that supports a child in their school readiness journey.

First 5 Contra Costa intentionally recruited African American and Black parents of young children living in Pittsburg. Each session explored a different topic or theme that allowed participants to reflect on their own experiences with the education system.



**By the Numbers: Parent Cafés**  
Number of Cafés: **10**  
Unduplicated number of adult participants: **61**

## First Series of Parent Cafés



November 16, 2020

### **Put Your Mask On Boo! Self-Care & Wellness:**

the importance of self-care and well-being of parents in order to foster the well-being of their children.

10 attendees



November 30, 2020

**I Am My Ancestors' Wildest Dreams!:** the importance of fostering ways both parents and children can dream and create their own vision for their future.

8 attendees



December 14, 2020

**Building Power with Knowledge!:** exploring how systemic racism shows up in early childhood education systems and providing resources to identify ways parents can support their children and advocate for them and systems change.

22 attendees



January 4, 2021

**The "Readiness" Game:** a panel of speakers from the school settings offered their perspectives on school readiness and strategies that parents can use to support their child's learning experience in a group/classroom.

16 attendees



January 18, 2021

**The "Readiness" Playbook:** weaving the concepts together in the context of Black Joy, this café took a celebratory and hopeful approach by asking parents to reflect on the gift of their children and concrete examples of how parents can celebrate their child while supporting their development.

26 attendees

*"I know black children are held to a higher standard."*

Parent at Parent Café

# CENTERING FAMILIES' EXPERIENCES

*"I see the teachers recognize certain children but other children are not recognized when they are doing the right thing."*

Parent at Parent Café

After the initial series of five parent cafés, First 5 Contra Costa held a debrief session with its Parent Advisory Group to review the results from the evaluations completed after each café and discuss continual improvement. The major themes emerging from the parent cafés were:

- Parents expressed challenges related to systemic racism, biased treatment of Black children and a lack of educational supports in the region.
- Parents wanted schools and learning environments to create just spaces that reflect Black children's needs and interests.
- The parent café model was empowering to participants and helped generate direction and guidance for First 5 Contra Costa and its partners.

Once these themes were validated by parent café participants, First 5 Contra Costa presented them to various audiences to expand awareness of the initiative and the experiences of parents of African American and Black children in East County. The findings were shared with the First 5 Contra Costa Commission, First 5 Center Staff, Design Team, Pittsburg Unified School District leadership, and several Rotary Clubs in East County. A key message was underscoring the community's role as a critical element of a child's ecosystem, alongside family and school, in ensuring children are ready for success in school and in life.

Based on the learnings from the parent café series, the Parent Advisory Group and Design Team recommended First 5 Contra Costa hold a second series of parent cafés the following winter. The second series focused more on connecting families to local resources and encouraging parents to be advocates for their children. Across both series of cafés, 61 parents or caregivers participated.

## Second Series of Parent Cafés



January 11, 2022

**Rooted: Defining Our Own Excellence and The Joy of Learning:** What Does It Mean To Be Young, Gifted, and Black? How do we create educational excellence so that Black and African American children, parents, and caregivers can see themselves, and others can also see them in their best light.

6 attendees



January 25, 2022

**Cultivating Our Voice—Parents and The Village:** How can Black and African American parents and caregivers use their voice to advocate for themselves and their children, build partnerships with educators, and help their children thrive in the education system.

7 attendees



February 8, 2022

**Powerful beyond Measure—Strengthening Resilience through Social Emotional Learning:** What is adversity and how can Black and African American parents and caregivers use self-love and healthy coping mechanisms to build resiliency.

10 attendees



February 22, 2022

**I AM because WE are—Stronger Together:** Using relationship building to create a social safety net and enhance educational experiences for Black and African American families.

14 attendees



March 8, 2022

**We Are Our Ancestors' WILDEST Dreams!:** Re-envisioning school as the space for a broader effort for equity in education, cultivating connections to school instructional services and community resources, as well as exploring school readiness.

19 attendees



# READY FAMILIES

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First 5 Contra Costa partnered with several service providers to adapt or develop culturally relevant programming specifically aimed at supporting the school readiness of African American and Black children and their families.

## **By the Numbers: Story Cycles Literacy Program**

Number of classrooms served: **319**

Number of classrooms in East County served: **111**

Estimated number of children served in East County: **1,722**

## **Literacy Programming**

We continued our partnership with Tandem, Partners in Early Learning, to enhance children's access to books and adult-child literacy development services through the Story Cycles literacy program at Pittsburg Unified School District preschools and child care providers in East County. For years, First 5 Contra Costa has partnered with Tandem to provide bring-home book bags, professional development workshops on literacy for early care and education providers and parents, and other literacy resources. In 2019, First 5 Contra Costa expanded its support for Tandem's Story Cycles program with 6

additional classrooms in East County. When the pandemic closed most in-person services, Tandem was able to quickly shift into a virtual space, offering virtual story times and workshops for families. Tandem continued to work with existing classrooms and additional classrooms throughout the five-year initiative, serving approximately 319 classrooms countywide, 111 of which were in East County, reaching about 1,722 children over the 5 years.

Tandem also led 90 interactive read aloud demonstrations to promote early literacy practices in the home, collaborating with various organizations, including the county libraries, the Ambrose Community Center, Housing Authority, De Anza Gardens Housing Center in Bay Point, and El Pueblo Housing Center in Pittsburg.

In the fourth year of the initiative, First 5 Contra Costa worked with Tandem to develop math literacy curricula that centered Black and African American experiences.

*"It is critical for children to be able to see themselves reflected authentically, and in a positive light, in the messages they receive from their communities and from society at large. Books are one place where those messages can occur."*

Tandem, Partners in Early Learning Staff

## READY FAMILIES

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Drawing from their experiences working with families and service providers in East County, and on promising practices, Tandem developed the Give Me 5 Math Playgroups, and piloted them in East County. The design for this series of five sessions for parent/caregivers and children participating together, was informed by a Parent Advisory Committee formed by Tandem and First 5 Contra Costa staff. The playgroups aim to support children’s foundational math concepts while simultaneously building parents’ skills in embedding math in daily life. The children’s books used as part of the curriculum featured diverse representation. In the first year, 2022, the playgroups were offered once at the Antioch Library and served 25 families. Based on this pilot, Tandem adjusted the model and its outreach strategies and offered an updated version of the program in 2023. In 2023, Tandem led three in-person playgroups and one asynchronous online playgroup. The in-person playgroups were hosted by the East County First 5 Center in April and October 2023, and at the Delta First 5 Center in December 2023.

In an effort to further increase families’ access to literacy materials in East County, First 5 Contra Costa partnered with Tandem to develop a pilot program called “Lil’ Libraries Around Town.” Based on the Barbershop Books program model developed in New York, the program equips ten small businesses in East County with children’s libraries containing age-appropriate and culturally responsive books. Tandem works with the businesses to explore ways to embed the libraries into their operations, and educates the business owners about the importance of early literacy and exposure to literacy-rich environments. To date, approximately 60% of the participating business owners identify as African American or Black, and all of the businesses are located in Pittsburg or Antioch. Although the pilot is still in its initial phase, it is estimated that at least 215 children have enjoyed using the libraries, with many also taking home free books.

### Locations of Lil’ Libraries Around Town

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#### **Coats Barbershop**

601 Railroad Ave., Pittsburg

*Owner identifies as African American or Black*



#### **KPs Barbershop**

15 E 5th St., Pittsburg

*Owner identifies as African American or Black*



#### **Stay Faded Barber Shop (Brentwood)**

50 Sand Creek Rd., Brentwood



#### **Dad’s Barbershop**

1900 A St., Antioch

*Owner identifies as African American or Black*



#### **Lions Den Boxing Gym**

640 Cumberland St., Pittsburg

*Owner identifies as African American or Black*



#### **Stay Faded Barber Shop (Pittsburg)**

3724 Railroad Ave., Pittsburg



#### **HIMC Barbershop (Antioch)**

3136 Contra Loma Blvd., Antioch



#### **Nunley Karate Dojo**

284 East 10th St., Pittsburg

*Owner identifies as African American or Black*



#### **Studio Blendz**

510 Black Diamond St., Pittsburg



#### **HIMC Barbershop (Oakley)**

2565a Main St., Oakley

## READY FAMILIES

### First 5 Centers

Our five First 5 Centers throughout the county help families access the information and services needed to help their children thrive. Research underscores the critical role positive caregiver-child relationships and healthy family dynamics have on children, particularly in their early years. Increasing parents' and caregivers' understanding of child development and parenting can lead to better child and family outcomes. Additionally, many families face challenges accessing health, education, and social services. First 5 Centers help connect families to the resources they need and to programs that focus on strengthening families' abilities to foster children's development, health, and school readiness. Given these critical roles First 5 Centers can play in families' trajectories, First 5 Contra Costa engaged its three centers located in East County in the Ready Kids East County effort.

The First 5 Centers in East County include the centers in Pittsburg, Antioch, and Brentwood. Each center follows the program model that First 5 Contra Costa has co-developed with the community over the last 25 years, and operates through a non-profit organization contracted by First 5 Contra Costa. The services offered on-site and virtually at each center include: parent education, school readiness classes, literacy and arts-based classes, developmental screenings, developmental playgroups, parent leadership opportunities, giveaways of concrete supports such as diapers, wipes, car seats and other items, and connection to community resources (ranging from legal aid to health services to education programs). Despite many centers closing their in-person offerings due to health orders during the beginning of the COVID pandemic, the centers quickly transferred services to a virtual mode to continue to meet families' needs.

Two years before the Ready Kids East County effort began, First 5 Contra Costa began a multi-year effort to examine how responsive its First 5 Centers were to African American and Black families. The process began by holding a focus group of Black and African American parents and caregivers with children under age 6 to ask them about their experiences with the First 5 Centers. Many of the focus group participants did not see themselves or their families reflected in the staffing, programming, and planning of the Centers.

Based on this 2017 exploration and First 5 Contra Costa's learning from the early stages of the Ready Kids East County effort, staff worked with the nonprofits operating the First 5 centers to adapt and develop new program offerings that were culturally relevant to African American and Black families and emphasized



#### **By the Numbers: First 5 Centers in East County**

*The data below reflects activity at the centers in Antioch, Brentwood and Pittsburg across the five years of the Ready Kids East County effort.*

Number of classes offered: **1,342**

Developmental screenings of children ages 0 to 5: **2,481**

Consultation with staff for referral to services: **1,609**

Car seats provided and installed: **83**

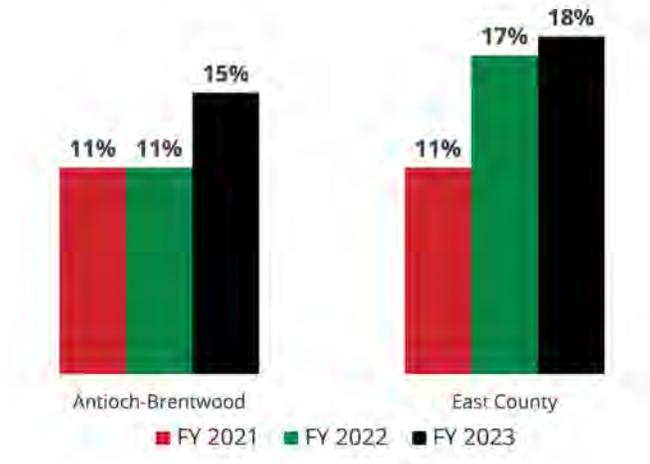
Hours of programming designed specifically for African American/Black families: **350**

Number of African American families participating\*: **319**

\*Note: Only includes those who identified as African American or Black, and does not include any participants who selected two or more races

## READY FAMILIES

### INCREASE IN PERCENTAGE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN & BLACK FAMILIES BY CENTER, FY 2021-FY 2023



Source: Administrative data reported by First 5 Center contractors analyzed by First 5 Contra Costa. Note: Data for the centers in Antioch and Brentwood are combined because they operated under one contract during those years. An African American & Black family is counted if they participated in any services.

school readiness. In 2021, several of the centers in East County began offering parent support groups as well as other programming specifically for those who identify as African American or Black. In addition, each of the centers in East County began working with partners to offer classes and activities that centered the needs and interests of African American or Black families. For example, both the Antioch and Delta First 5 Centers began offering a class called Afro Moms, designed for caregivers to bond and feel supported by other participants while exploring relevant topics. The East County First 5 Center offered a parent support group of its own called Sisters in Parenting as well as Represent Me class which explored the impact African American heroes have made on society. The class used songs and stories to showcase Black creativity and culture.

The Black Women Early Childhood Collective consulted with staff at the East County, Antioch and Delta centers to analyze practices and revamp their outreach strategies to effectively engage Black and African American families in center activities.

As a result of intentionally focusing on the needs of African American and Black families, each First 5

Center increased the proportion of participation of these families. The chart below shows the increase at both the Antioch-Delta centers and the East County First 5 Center in Pittsburg.

### Parenting Education

First 5 Contra Costa partnered with Counseling Options and Parent Education Family Support Center, Inc. (C.O.P.E.) to tailor one-time seminars from the Positive Parenting Program, to ensure they were culturally relevant to African American and Black parents. The Positive Parenting Program is an evidence-based model of parent education. First 5 Contra Costa, in partnership with the county health department, has funded C.O.P.E. to deliver the program countywide to support families.

Based on the planning phase for the initiative, First 5 Contra Costa identified the need to adapt the program offerings to be more relevant and appealing to the parents of African American and Black children. Part of this approach required C.O.P.E. to recruit and hire



#### By the Numbers: Positive Parenting Program

Number of one-time seminars: **52**

Number of multi-week classes: **65**

Number of African American adult participants\*: **190**

\*Note: Only includes those who identified as African American or Black, and does not include any participants who selected two or more races



*“Parent groups give me an opportunity to socialize with other Black women and give my grandson a chance to be around people like him.”*

Parent Group participant

## READY FAMILIES

more African American/Black facilitators to lead the seminars, and to develop targeted marketing materials and outreach strategies specifically designed to entice African American and Black families in East County to participate. First 5 Contra Costa staff worked with C.O.P.E. to document lessons learned for their outreach and adjustments to the curriculum.

Despite the pandemic, C.O.P.E. was able to develop an aggressive recruitment plan to engage families, collaborating with non-traditional partners such as Black Chambers of Commerce and faith based organizations in East County. This effort resulted in an increase in participation by parents of Black and African American children.

### Parent Group

Building on the momentum generated from the parent cafés and based on parent feedback, First 5 Contra Costa formed a Parent Group. This group met virtually on a weekday evening each month to foster community among parents of African American or Black children, share community resources and child development information, and to develop parents’ skills in advocating for their children. The Parent Group started in April 2022 with 9 parents and expanded to include 30 parents by the end of 2023. Based on input from participants, the Parent Group expanded to also include the following components:

- Informative evening Zoom sessions each month primarily for parents, featuring guest speakers.
- Opportunities for parents and their children to connect with each other through enjoyable and interactive weekend activities.
- A Facebook Group to allow for parents to share resources, solicit and offer advice, and stay in contact in between activities.

#### By the Numbers: Parent Group

Number of meetings and weekend meetups: **17**

Unduplicated number of regular parent participants: **30**

Estimated number of children 0-5 impacted: **35**

## READY FAMILIES

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*"I really enjoy it when they bring speakers. I can learn new strategies to handle development challenges through my daughter's growth. We can share experiences and learn with peers."*

Parent group participant

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During virtual monthly meetings, parents had the chance to engage with one another, acquire valuable information, and obtain resources that they could apply in their daily lives. Below are examples of what the monthly sessions included:

- In May 2022, parents had the opportunity to learn valuable early literacy strategies to apply with their young children through a Modeled Read Aloud with Mr. Ty. After the read aloud, 78% of participants said they felt well informed about early literacy after the session, and 78% of participants were interested in receiving more resources for one of the literacy strategies shared.
- In February 2023, Cheresse LeBlanc from the Care Parent Network, and Marika Hinds, director at the East County First 5 Center, co-hosted a session about the types of support and resources available to families of children with special needs. A post-session survey found that 54% of participants felt more confident in finding local resources to support their child's development, and 91% expressed their desire for more information regarding parent education.
- In March 2023, Jylani Ma'at led a session on meditation and mindfulness, including tips for managing stress. A post-session survey found that 64% of participants felt more confident in addressing their feelings of stress in positive and healthy ways. All participants provided positive feedback and a majority said they found the breathing exercises to be particularly beneficial and something they intend to incorporate into their lives going forward.



### PARENT VIGNETTE

Kristalia, a parent of a one year-old and a four year-old who lives in Antioch, participated in the Ready Kids East County effort from its inception with the very earliest parent cafés and also joined the Parent Group once it started. She and her children have attended classes at the Antioch and Pittsburg First 5 Centers and she's stepped up to act as a parent leader on the Antioch Center's Community Advisory Council. She has tried other parent groups, but found the Ready Kids East County efforts to be the best fit for her. *"The impact is that you meet other parents, you make new mom friends, it's a safe space where you can connect with other moms and learn the resources in your community as well as be able to exchange ideas... kind of like a peer mentorship."* What sets the Ready Kids East County parent group apart, she explained is *"...that it's a safe space for Black moms to be able to talk to one another and not have to deal with or codeswitch, you know the stresses of being in other spaces."*

For the weekend events for the entire family, First 5 Contra Costa identified family-friendly field trips that would provide opportunities for families to learn and have fun together. Below are some examples:

- In May 2023, families enjoyed a visit to the Lindsay Wildlife Experience, a museum and wildlife rehabilitation center in Walnut Creek. A post-event survey found that 75% of participants said their child(ren) engaged in conversation and interacted with other children at the event, and 100% enjoyed the opportunity to connect with other families and were interested in attending future events.

## READY FAMILIES

- One of the weekend events was held at the Small World amusement park in Pittsburg in June 2022. A post-event survey found that 50% of participants said they connected with other parents/caregivers and 100% said they would want to attend future events.

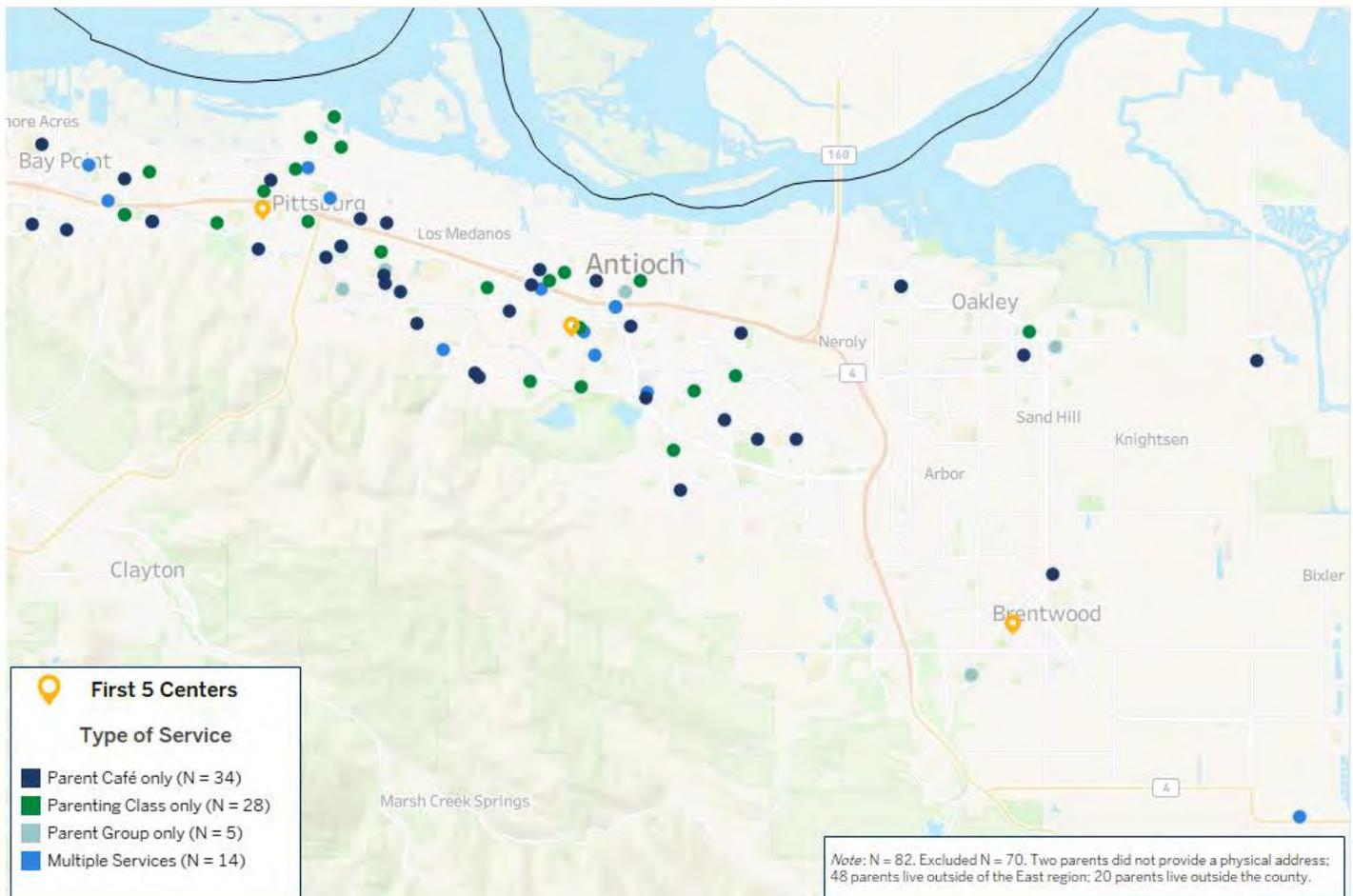
### Community Events

In addition to supporting programming tailored to the needs of African American and Black families, First 5 Contra Costa also helped build families' awareness of the effort and related resources at several community events. Whether hosting an information table or networking with families, these community events provided a way for First 5 Contra Costa staff to build a collective vision of what's possible for African American

and Black families, and to connect them to available resources. Some examples of these events included:

- Contra Costa County African American Community Baby Shower hosted by A More Excellent Way Health Organization (2022)
- Literacy Rally hosted by the Souljahs (2022)
- Week of the Young Child Kickoff Event at East County First 5 Center (2023)
- Restoring Hope & Community Resource Fair hosted by the Contra Costa Reentry Network in Pittsburg (2023)
- Pittsburg Unified School District's Community Resource Fair (2023)

## PARENTS SERVED BY READY KIDS EAST COUNTY



Developed by Applied Survey Research



*"I think it just would be nice to see a program that's tailored to address some of the cultural pieces and cultural concerns of the Black/African American community."*

Service provider participating in Ready Kids East County

# READY SCHOOLS

First 5 Contra Costa partnered with school districts, early educators, social service agencies and other organizations that work directly with families to help them shift their practices, environments, and cultures to serve, center and celebrate African American and Black children and their families. Many of these efforts focused on providing professional development, or capacity building opportunities for interested practitioners, to help create and expand culturally responsive classrooms and learning environments for African American and Black children.

## **Working with School Districts**

Since the inception of this effort, First 5 Contra Costa aimed to work with school districts in a variety of ways to elevate the needs of African American and Black families in East County. Following the county kindergarten readiness assessment report, First 5 Contra Costa commissioned VIVA Social Impact Partners to conduct four case studies of district operated preschool programs in Contra Costa County. The report intended to highlight how school districts were supporting school readiness and meeting families' needs by operating preschool programs. The report included a preschool "planning checklist" and a companion list of resources with links to important data sources.

Also early in the initiative, First 5 Contra Costa sponsored a delegation of 15 individuals from East County school districts to attend a "Pre K to 3" conference in San Mateo County with the goal of engaging in collective learning and generating ideas for future work across districts. During a debrief meeting with conference attendees, First 5 Contra Costa captured learnings and ideas on how to partner in ongoing ways.

After some of these foundational activities, First 5 Contra Costa established a working relationship with Pittsburg Unified School District. In quarterly meetings with the Superintendent and leaders in the early learning and family support divisions, First 5 Contra Costa shared new insights and information gathered from parents in East County, updates on programs and services that may interest district families, and possible ways for the agency and district to partner in supporting African American or Black children. For example, district staff were invited to attend anti-bias, anti-racist trainings funded by First 5 Contra Costa, and discussed the possibility of conducting a more holistic kindergarten readiness assessment in the future. First 5 Contra Costa and the school district are also exploring ways to integrate developmental screenings for incoming Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten students into their enrollment process.

## Titles of 2023 Training Series for Early Educators

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### **A Love Letter to African American Children:**

An Anti-Bias & Anti-Racism Approach



### **A Love Letter to African American Children:**

An Anti-Bias & Anti-Racism Approach—Exclusionary Discipline



### **Culturally Responsive Learning Environments:**

Creating Spaces Where All Are Welcomed



### **Reimagining Family Engagement:**

From Power Struggles to Powerful Family Partnerships

*“One of the challenges in involving [African American families] in programs is that there is no reflection of their culture and beliefs in the program.”*

Service provider participating in Ready Kids East County

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*“The training made me realize how important the [anti-bias, anti-racist] work is and how it should be integrated across all of the work we do in early childhood.”*

Early Childhood Education provider participating in an Anti-Bias & Anti-Racism training

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*“We NEED MORE conversations like this*

Early Childhood Education provider participating in an Anti-Bias & Anti-Racism training

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## READY SCHOOLS

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This would enhance the school district’s ability to know more about the needs of incoming students, and help connect families to resources through the Help Me Grow network First 5 Contra Costa has built over the past two decades. The local Help Me Grow network promotes regular developmental screenings of children to help identify developmental, behavioral, and social-emotional concerns that, if left untreated, can result in poor academic and health outcomes. Help Me Grow also helps connect families with the services they and their families need.

### **Anti-Bias, Anti- Racist Trainings for Service Providers**

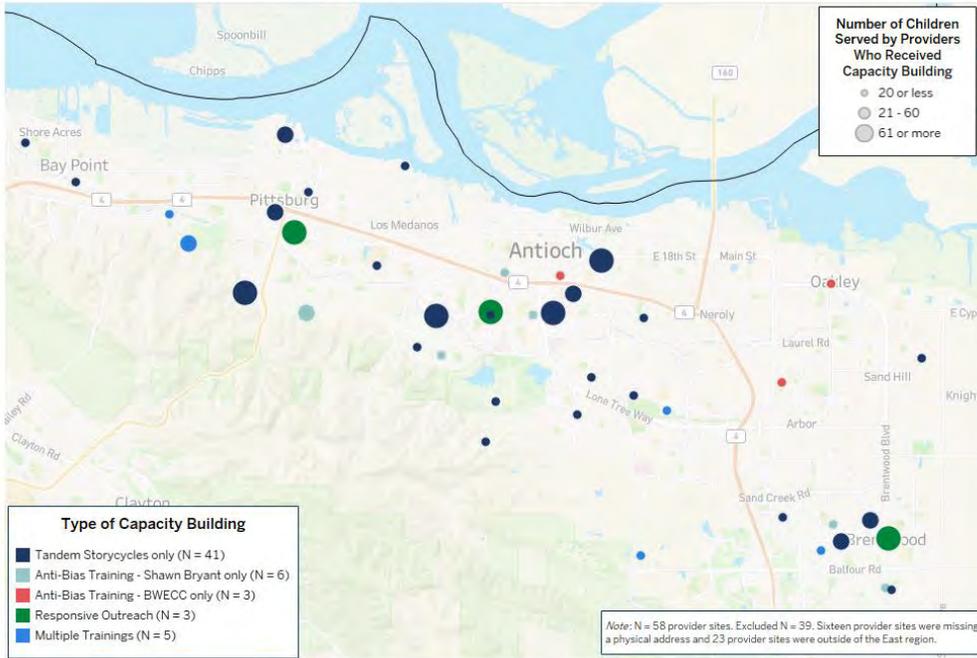
After consulting with service providers and assessing available trainings, First 5 Contra Costa partnered with two trainers to lead capacity building focused on anti-racist approaches for service providers serving East County families.

The first trainer, Shawn Bryant, led five trainings for early childhood educators in 2022. Cumulatively, the sessions engaged 75 providers who collectively serve more than 1,280 children. The early childhood educators learned how to facilitate difficult conversations with children, use tools to implement anti-bias anti-racist (ABAR) approaches, and design equitable math experiences in the classroom.

Building on that work, First 5 Contra Costa partnered with a new emerging local entity called the The Black Women in Early Childhood Collective to offer a four-part training series for providers and educators based in East County. The series explored the development, implementation, and pedagogical framework of ABAR principles in early learning environments. The themes for these trainings were: ABAR Introduction & Exploration, Exclusionary Discipline, Culturally Responsive Learning Environments, and Family Engagement. From August through November 2023, 36 early childhood educators participated in monthly in-person trainings. These providers collectively serve approximately 450 children enrolled in early childhood education programs in Contra Costa County.

The primary objective of the series was to increase competency and comfort in supporting Black and African American children’s school readiness by integrating ABAR principles and exploring various themes and topics related to creating culturally responsive learning environments. After each training, participants completed an evaluation survey. After

## PROVIDER SITES SERVED BY READY KIDS EAST COUNTY



Developed by Applied Survey Research



## READY SCHOOLS

each training, at least 90% reported that they would alter their teaching practices as a result of the training and most stated that the trainings gave them tools, strategies, and resources to better engage their Black and African American students and their families.

Across both sets of trainings, providers reported they were overwhelmingly satisfied with their experience in the training, with about 70% expressing their intention to make changes to their professional practices.

### Convenings for Service Providers

First 5 Contra Costa leveraged existing events and convenings of service providers and others who work directly with young children as opportunities to share what it was learning about the needs of African American and Black families in East County, and the strategies it was testing out through this initiative. Some of these events focused on health providers or early childhood education providers, while others brought together a wide array of providers around a common theme. Here is a partial list of some of these convenings:

### By the Numbers: Trainings for Service Providers

Number of trainings: **9**

Number of service providers in trainings: **111**

- Seminar on Trauma and Hope Through An African American Lens held in Oakley in May 2019
- African American Baby Shower in Pittsburg in August 2022
- Early Childhood Mental Health Community Forum at the Pittsburg Senior Center in November 2019 with more than 150 cross-sector community partners
- 3rd Annual Restoring Hope & Community Resource Fair in February 2023
- Pittsburg Unified School District's Community Resource Fair & Free Clinics in October 2023
- East Contra Costa Community Alliance Members Meeting in November 2023 and January 2024

# READY COMMUNITIES

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*"It would be helpful to have everyone in the same room looking at the goals of this initiative and how everyone plays a part there."*

Community Stakeholder

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In addition to school district and service provider leaders, First 5 Contra Costa developed relationships with city, county and civic leaders—all in an effort to create communities ready to serve African American and Black children.

## Cities

One city that engaged with the Ready Kids East County effort was the City of Pittsburg. First 5 Contra Costa supported the City of Pittsburg's My Brother's Keeper landscape analysis and advocated for prioritization of support for young children. During 2022, following a request from Mayor White, First 5 Contra Costa deepened its collaboration with the City of Pittsburg through the My Brother's Keeper Pittsburg Initiative to address opportunity gaps for boys of color. First 5 staff served as a core partner and advocated to prioritize "Entering School Ready to Learn" and "Reading at Grade Level by 3rd Grade" as key milestones for the effort. Although the City of Pittsburg ultimately chose to focus their effort on teens and young adults, participating in the process yielded some opportunities to connect with new partners such as Souljah's, Pittsburg Youth Development Center, and Lincoln Families. In addition, First 5 staff continue to explore collaboration opportunities with the City of Pittsburg staff.

## Civic Groups

First 5 Contra Costa staff also partnered with the Pittsburg Rotary Club to present to its members about the effort, which then led to partnering with them on a literacy event they sponsored to boost families' access to local literacy resources.

## County Agencies

The Contra Costa County Library was a partner from the start of the effort. After a December 2022 convening of Ready Kids East County partners which focused on sharing key learnings from organizations' work with African American and Black families, Bella Merrill, a librarian in the Early Literacy Outreach Services department for the county library, was inspired by the discussion. After working with her colleagues, the library piloted a new event called, "BeLoved: A Kindergarten Readiness Day for Families of Black Children" in April 2023 at the Hercules Library. The event featured a story hour featuring local author and educator Phelicia Lang, various activity stations focused on building and practicing early literacy skills to support future school success. There was also a Transitional Kindergarten teacher from the West Contra Costa Unified School District on hand to assist families with the district's kindergarten registration process.

*"I think across our systems we could be better at being aligned with what we know and how we communicate with other families in the community."*

Community Stakeholder

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# LESSONS LEARNED & THE ROAD AHEAD

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The journey of the last five years has been full of successes, challenges and learning. While we have highlighted the successes and impact to date on families, schools and the community, we believe it is equally important to highlight some of the key lessons we have learned. No systems change effort makes progress without setbacks, unforeseen challenges, and obstacles. Reflecting on these challenges only helps us adjust and adapt our plans as we continue to forge ahead on this journey to transform East County. Below are a few of the most critical lessons we learned on our journey:

- **To change families' experience of our systems, we must continually keep families at the center.** This effort began with parent cafés, which were designed to gather the input and experiences of families with African American and Black children living in East County. We used the information gathered from those parent cafés to shape the effort's strategies. While we had not initially planned to sustain those parent cafés beyond the initial phase of developing the effort, we pivoted based on feedback from parents. The parents told us the type of space we created through the cafés—where they could connect with other Black families and speak candidly about their fears and struggles—did not exist elsewhere. So, rather than our original plan to support other organizations to offer services responsive to African American families, we launched a monthly parent group specifically for African American or Black parents led by our staff. While meeting the families' immediate needs, this group also provided ongoing guidance to the effort.
- **Offering responsive programming extends beyond the programming itself—it involves how you staff and market the programming.** We worked with nonprofit service providers to ask the African American families they serve what type of additional programming they would be interested in. From that input, service providers created new services that directly addressed the needs and interests of Black families. Yet several of those efforts were not successful until the service providers intentionally recruited staff reflective of the community they were seeking to serve. Additionally, we learned that intentionality was also needed in outreach strategies for flyers, social media and other techniques to effectively result in more participation by African American families.



## LESSONS LEARNED & THE ROAD AHEAD

- **Constant and multiple modes of communication between partners is key.** Our effort began with an emphasis on in-person gatherings for each type of partner—a meeting of service provider partners and one for systems partners. We prioritized coming together in shared physical spaces to build connections, share ideas and updates, and co-create the strategies for this emerging effort. When the pandemic curbed people’s ability to meet in-person, we shifted convenings and even programming to virtual environments. While effective on some fronts, in hindsight we think the effort overall would have been strengthened by using multiple modes of communicating with key partners of all types from the start of the effort to make sure they were all aware of all aspects of the work. As we plan for the future phase of this effort, we envision a combination of communication channels—such as newsletters, video messages, and hybrid celebrations—being employed to keep partners connected and engaged.
- **Systems change is hard and slow, and we should seek multiple paths to the change we seek.** Knowing that systems change is difficult work that takes sustained effort over long periods of time, we see a need to broaden our approach to encompass even more pathways to change. Looking forward, we hope to explore expanding the effort beyond a focus on Pittsburg. By including other communities in the East County, we will expand the potential base of powerful partners engaged in the work, and the possible windows of opportunity to make systemic change.

### JOIN THE MOVEMENT

First 5 Contra Costa is committed to this systems change work and looks forward to strengthening this effort by engaging new partners and testing new strategies based on the lessons learned from the last five years.

**We invite you to join us in this journey to ensure families, schools and communities are ready to support the success of our African American and Black children. We are working to disrupt historic trends and build a better future.**

For more information about our current efforts, visit the [Ready Kids East County](https://www.first5coco.org) page on our website at [first5coco.org](https://www.first5coco.org).

## ■ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to all at the Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation for partnering with us on this bold effort and believing in the power of our families, schools and communities working together to support African American and Black children in one of the areas of highest need in our county.

First 5 Contra Costa would also like to thank all of the individuals, organizations, coalitions, and partners who contributed to our collective learning, inquiry, successes and challenges. From the many parents and caregivers who shared their hopes, struggles and frustrations, to the service providers who leaned in with us on this journey, to the community leaders who engaged with us—we thank you all for your time, dedication, and contributions to making East County more ready for African American and Black children.

Organization/Agency/Company Name or Role	Name	Title
Antioch Unified School District	Phelicia Lang	Educator
Applinet	Tyrell Burks	Father Engagement Specialist
Applinet	DeeAnna Granata	Center Director, Antioch First 5 Center*
Applinet	Marika Hinds	Center Director, East County First 5 Center*
Applinet	Shaila Nelson	Community Resource Specialist/Core Program Supervisor 1*
Applinet	Mark Tiano	Division Director*
Applinet	Laurie Walsh	Chief Operating Officer
Black Women in Early Childhood Collective	La Krisha Dillard	Director, Consultant
Black Women in Early Childhood Collective	Nini Humphrey	Member, Consultant
Black Women in Early Childhood Collective	Crystal McCleendon-Gardline	Director, Consultant
City Official/Politician	Holland Barnett White	Mayor of Pittsburg*
City Official/Politician	Shanelle Scales-Fredon	Pittsburg City Councilmember
Counseling Options and Parent Education Family Support Center, Inc. (C.O.P.E.)	Cathy Botello	Executive Director/Founder*
Counseling Options and Parent Education Family Support Center, Inc. (C.O.P.E.)	Natasha Paddock	Executive Director
Counseling Options and Parent Education Family Support Center, Inc. (C.O.P.E.)	Nain Wilanueva de Lopez	Parent Education Manager*
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors	Federal Glover	County Supervisor
Contra Costa County Library	Bella Merrill	Librarian II - Early Literacy Outreach Librarian at Contra Costa County Library
Contra Costa County Library	Amy Mockoski	Librarian III - Youth Services
Dean & Margaret Leshner Foundation	Deborah Levine	Executive Director
Eileen Piggins Consulting	Eileen Piggins	Consultant
First Baptist Head Start	Antoinette Edwards	Manager, Disabilities, Mental Health*
Innovation Bridge	Brit Irby	Associate Director
Innovation Bridge	bel Reyes	Executive Director
Lift Up Contra Costa	Taylor Sims	Projects Manager*
Lincoln Families	DeeAnna Granata	Center Director, East County First 5 Center
Lincoln Families	Chris Pigeon	Associate Director of Community-Based Grant Funded Programs
Lincoln Families	LeVictoria Thomas	East County First 5 Center Community Resource Specialist
NAAACP	Willie Mims	Educational Chair
Parent	Jeray Clayton	
Parent	Gushe Reed	
Parent Voices/Co-Childs	Candy Dupenoir	Parent Voices Coordinator, Contra Costa Chapter
Pittsburg United Methodist Church	Quentisha Davis	Pastor
Pittsburg Unified School District	Eileen Chen	Executive Director, Educational Services*
Pittsburg Unified School District	Kelly Mercado	Supervisor of Early Childhood Education
Pittsburg Unified School District	Leticia Preclado	District Parent & Family Coordinator
Pittsburg Unified School District	Janet Schultze	Superintendent
Pittsburg Unified School District	Shelley Velasco	Coordinator, Elementary Instruction
Pittsburg Unified School District School Board	DeShawn Woolridge	Member
Soujaha	Gregory Osorio	Co-founder, Community Leader
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Kelsey Gottschalk	Director of Programs*
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Maya Gutierrez	Director of Programs
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Savitha Moorthy	Executive Director
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Laura Rodriguez	Contra Costa Program Supervisor*
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Nain Wilanueva de Lopez	Contra Costa Program Supervisor
Tandem, Partners in Early Learning	Kaitlin Young	Contra Costa Program Supervisor*
Yes!toECE	Shawn Bryant	Principal Early Childhood Education Consultant/Coach

\*no longer with that organization/in that role

## ■ CONTRIBUTIONS

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Layout by: Brian Kelley

## ■ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*Ready or Not, Here We Come!*

<https://www.first5coco.org/our-impact/kindergarten-readiness-assessment/>



[first5coco.org](http://first5coco.org)

June 13, 2024

To: Governor Gavin Newsom, Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire, Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas

CC: Senator Steve Glazer, Senator Nancy Skinner, Senator Bill Dodd, Assemblymember Lori Wilson, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, Assemblymember Tim Grayson, Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan

To our state budget leaders and Contra Costa representatives:

We are writing to you as concerned service providers and advocates for young children's health and development.

Continuous health coverage is critical for families with young children, and allows them to stay on top of regular check-ups and screenings, recommended vaccinations, and life-saving medication. Unfortunately, over 300,000 children in California have lost their Medi-Cal coverage in the past year due to the requirement of confirming their eligibility for Medi-Cal coverage.

Mail errors, confusing paperwork, and long wait times for support mean that even children who are eligible for Medi-Cal have lost their coverage and missed out on vital health care. Here in Contra Costa County, health care providers are seeing patients "disappear" and are concerned that they're not getting the care they need. Early childhood providers are hearing from stressed-out and concerned parents, who don't know how to get the help they need. And community partners who provide enrollment assistance are overburdened, scrambling to provide support without sufficient staff or resources.

We are calling on you to implement a simple, cost-effective solution: In 2022, California made a bold step toward protecting low-income children's health by committing to continuous Medi-Cal enrollment from birth through five years of age. We need our state leaders to include funding to fulfill this commitment and keep hundreds of thousands of children insured. Please fund continuous Medi-Cal coverage this year, and join us in supporting the health and development of California's youngest residents.

Sincerely,

Healthy & Active Before 5  
CocoKids  
First 5 Contra Costa  
Comment Studio  
Contra Costa Crisis Center  
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano  
Healthy Contra Costa

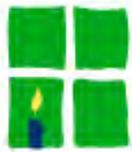
Child Abuse Prevention Council of Contra Costa County



Healthy + Active  
Before 5



**FIRST 5**  
CONTRA COSTA



CONTRA COSTA  
CRISIS CENTER



**FOOD  
BANK**

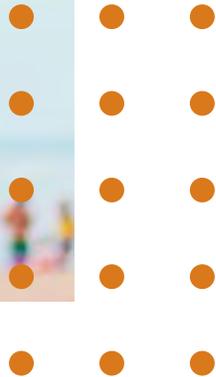
of Contra Costa & Solano

Healthy  
Contra Costa



CHILD ABUSE  
PREVENTION  
COUNCIL *of*  
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

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# First 5 Stabilization Fund Update

First 5 County Commissions Executive Directors Call  
July 11, 2024

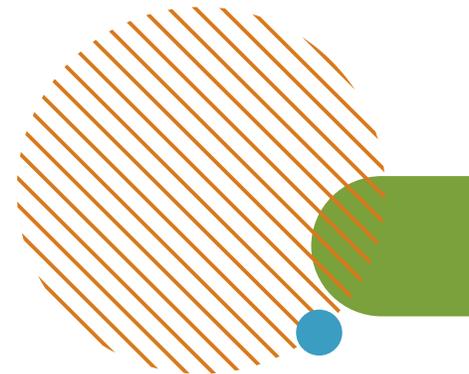


# Background

Since the passage of Proposition 31 - the Flavored Tobacco Ban, the First 5 Network has experienced an unprecedented revenue decline of **24.7% over 2.5 fiscal years**. For the 58 First 5 counties, this means a loss of revenue of \$111 million between FY23 and FY25 alone.

Due to this decline nearly every First 5 county has made, or are planning to make, cuts to services, programs, and staff.

Specific cuts include family resource center closures, reduction in home visiting services, parent supports, opportunities to leverage other state, federal, and local funding, and many more.

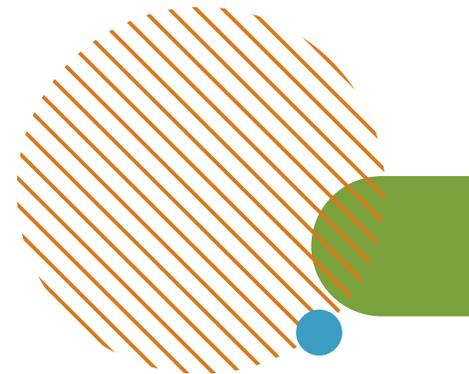


# Fund Purpose

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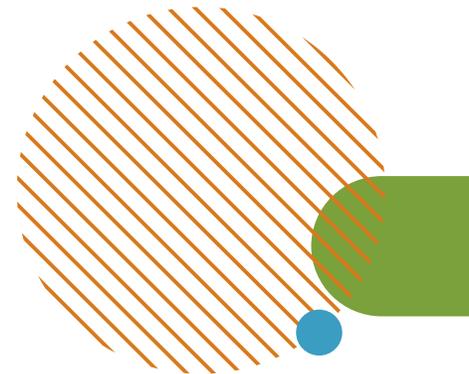
First 5 California is establish a **\$25 million Stabilization Fund** to ensure;

1. Critical local services provided by First 5 County Commissions and their community partners are maintained to the extent possible and cuts to these services are minimized.
2. First 5 County Commissions have a stable infrastructure that allows them to leverage additional funding, meet long-term obligations, and provide time, space, and resources to plan for long-term sustainability.



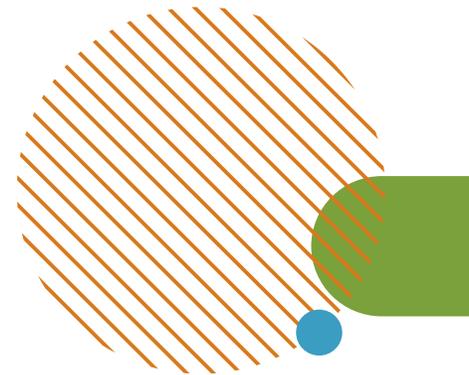
# Timeline

- Proposed Fund to First 5 California Commission on May 22. Confirmation from Jackie Wong that this proposal would be discussed at the 8/22 Commission Meeting.
- Met with First 5 California staff on July 1
- Solicited input from Regional Meetings
- Met with Small Population Counties
- Hosted Four Input Sessions with First 5 Members
- Created and populated shared document
- 7/11: ED Call / share themes



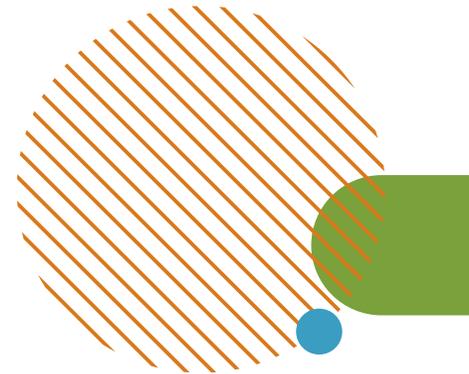
# Fund Development Components

- First 5 Association Principles
- First 5 Counties' Input and Aspirations
- First 5 California Staff Initial Questions
- First 5 Association Board Members' Perspective
- First 5 California Staff Due Diligence
- First 5 California Commission Perspective and Direction



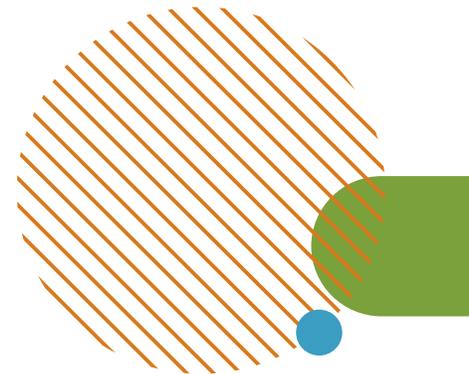
# First 5 Association Principles

- Every First 5 County Commission is eligible but does not have to participate
- This fund should be distributed based on individual county needs (likely up to a cap)
- Every county defines their specific challenge(s) and are funded for their specific requests
- Stabilization should be defined as broadly as possible to address community contexts
- Existing funding to counties should not be impacted by participating in this fund
- Minimal application requirements to reduce burdens on already stretched staff
- Minimal reporting and evaluation requirements to reduce burdens on already stretched staff



# Questions from First 5 California

- Please further define what you mean by emergency stabilization. Please define the terms.
- For the purposes of exact understanding please define in specific detail the emergency (or emergencies, county by county) that necessitates emergency funding.
- Noting the collective First 5 reserve funding, what role will reserve funding play in this emergency funding plan?
- Your proposal requests \$25 million. Is this a one time or ongoing request? What will be the return on investment (ROI), diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) considerations, and impact? How is this supplementing and not supplanting current programming?
- Please help us understand how these emergency funds are not backfill or unfunded liability.
- What other funding sources has the Association explored for this proposal?
- How will the \$25 million be allocated to the counties? Will it be dispersed to all 58? Will it be dispersed based on birth rate like Prop 10?
- Why do you believe First 5 CA is the right funder for this proposal considering we have the same issue of declining revenue and other financial obligations, including to the counties?



# For Continued Discussion with F5CA: Fund Framework

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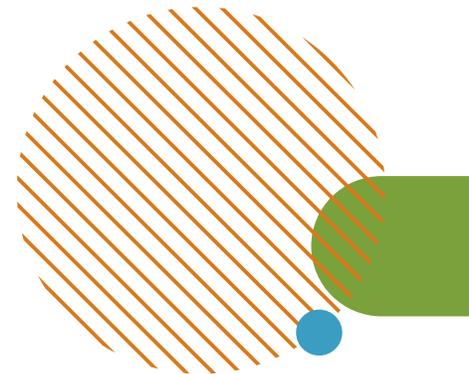
**Definitions** – how do we define stabilization and purpose of the fund?

**Eligibility** – which counties are eligible for funding?

**Distribution** – how will funding be distributed to First 5 counties, and at what levels of funding?

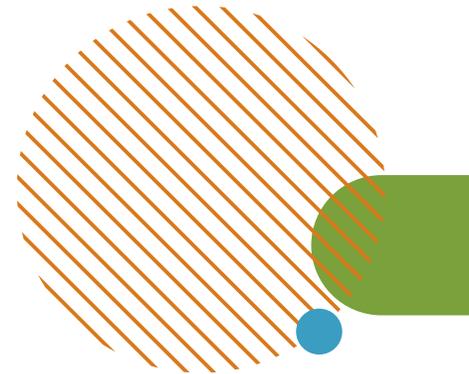
**Application** – what documentation is needed to apply for the fund?

**Reporting** – what reporting requirements will be needed, e.g. financial, program/impact, other evaluation?



# Upcoming Timeline

- 7/15: Executive Committee review of draft fund framework
- 7/16: Submit answers to F5CA questions and share with counties
- 8/2: First 5 Association Board Meeting (use if needed to respond to any F5CA follow up)
- 8/12: Deadline for F5CA staff report to F5CA Commission
- 8/22: F5CA Commission Meeting. Proposal will be an information item where counties can offer perspectives and support.





THANK YOU



**First 5 Stabilization Fund  
Responses to First 5 California Staff Questions  
July 16, 2024**

**Policy / Proposal Questions**

- ***Please further define what you mean by emergency stabilization. Please define the terms.***
  - When the Stabilization Fund proposal was created the word “emergency” was only meant to refer to the *timing urgency* of need to stabilize the 58-county First 5 Network given the well-documented and unprecedented revenue declines in Proposition 10 affecting direct services to children and families and diminished staffing and capacity to coordinate, plan, and leverage other resources.
  - Proposition 10 revenue declines are exacerbated by state and local county budget cuts impacting many of these same families. For example, this year’s state budget deficit has resulted in funding delays to child care slots, continuous Medi-Cal eligibility, Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) grants, Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) grants, and the loss of CalWORKS Home Visiting funding due to underutilization. These examples will all have a negative impact on local communities, the scale of which is unknown at this time.
  - In addition, there is considerable uncertainty at the federal level with the 2024 election on the horizon that may further exacerbate all of these issues.
  - The purpose of the Stabilization Fund could be described as:
    1. *Ensuring critical local services provided by First 5 County Commissions and their community partners are maintained to the extent possible, and cuts to services for young children, their families and providers are minimized.*
    2. *Ensuring First 5 county commissions have a stable infrastructure that allows them to leverage additional funding, continue to meet long-term obligations, and provide time, space, and resources to plan for long-term sustainability. This description is also aligned with work currently being conducted by First 5 California contractor Cathy Senderling.*
  - It should be noted that county commissions also play a key role in supporting community responses to emergencies that may cause imminent danger (e.g. wildfire, high heat advisories, flooding, mass shootings, public health emergencies). County commissions’ ability to help respond to these emergencies is further diminished due to rapidly declining revenue and instability.

- **For the purposes of exact understanding please define in specific detail the emergency (or emergencies, county by county) that necessitates emergency funding.**
  - As described above, the word “emergency” refers to the *timing urgency* of need to stabilize the 58-county First 5 Network given the well-documented and unprecedented revenue declines in Proposition 10 affecting direct services to children and families and diminished staffing and capacity to coordinate, plan, and leverage other resources by First 5 county commissions.
  - Foundational principles of equity recognize that each county has its own unique circumstances, challenges, needs, assets, and opportunities and are entitled to their own definition of self-determination and solutions that are tailored to their local children and families. Proposition 10 statute states that *“the intent of this act to emphasize local decision making, to provide for greater local flexibility in designing delivery systems.”* Therefore, we recommend the opportunity for each First 5 county commission to define their own specific needs for funding directly to First 5 California. This can happen through the Stabilization Fund application process.
  - During input sessions with county commissions there were different categories of funding needs discussed. For example, county commissions can apply to the Stabilization Fund based on one or both of these categories;
    - **Program support:** *this includes programs and services that have recently been cut or will be cut without additional funding. This support recognizes the unique and key role First 5 county commissions play as trusted program funders, direct service providers, and service gap-fillers – that at times, has even included the repairing of aging capital infrastructure.*
    - **Infrastructure support:** *this includes activities that support basic First 5 county commission operations, long-term financial and program planning, system-building and coordination, and leveraging non-Proposition 10 dollars or services. This support recognizes the unique and key role First 5 county commissions play in communities as conveners, connectors, and agents of systems change.*

### **Fiscal Questions**

- **Noting the collective First 5 reserve funding, what role will reserve funding play in this emergency funding plan?**
  - There is no collective *reserve* funding of First 5 county commissions. Following sound financial practices, each county commission has a necessary *fund balance* based on required long-term financial planning to meet contractual obligations, community needs, and predicted declines in Proposition 10 revenue.
  - Larger counties serving more children and families have larger fund balances. For example, 20 percent of county commissions account for 80 percent of statewide aggregate of fund balances, primarily based on the larger number of children and families they represent/serve.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FY22-23 First 5 California Annual Report fund balance data by county

- The First 5 Association is eager to discuss and formulate with First 5 California staff the parameters of the Stabilization Fund requirements for local First 5 counties and what role fund balance may play in those parameters.
- Two things to note: 1) county commission funds have been statutorily distributed based on birth rates – a clear formula that recognizes county by county needs – and not to a collective pot. 2) County fund balances may also include monies from non-Proposition 10 sources, e.g. local sales tax, local philanthropy, or other state and federal grants for that particular community.
- During input sessions with county commissions there was general support around determining Stabilization Fund distribution via several factors (see below). One factor was applying a ratio of fund balance to annual Proposition 10/56 revenue, e.g. a “run rate” to recognize the proximity to depletion of fund balances for county commissions.
- ***Your proposal requests \$25 million. Is this a one time or ongoing request? What will be the return on investment (ROI), diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) considerations, and impact? How is this supplementing and not supplanting current programming?***
  - This is a one-time request for support to provide short-term stability to First 5 county commissions.
  - During input sessions with county commissions it was recommended that counties have flexibility in how long they have to spend any Stabilization Fund grant amounts based on their community needs.
  - The ROI may be different based on individual county needs. The collective ROI could be categorized in distinct categories, e.g. children and families served, systems change support, leveraging other funding, etc.
  - Any REDI principles could be required as part of the application process.
  - County commissions may need to supplant revenue that was recently lost due to Proposition 31 and years of declining revenue creating unstable First 5s programs and infrastructure in communities. That is the core purpose of urgent stabilization funding. However, Proposition 10’s “no supplantation” clause does not apply to the Stabilization Fund as it would not supplant state or local *General Fund* dollars. From Prop 10 Statute: “No moneys in the California Children and Families Trust Fund shall be used to supplant state or local General Fund money for any purpose.”
- ***Please help us understand how these emergency funds are not backfill or unfunded liability.***
  - The Stabilization Fund proposal is addressing an unprecedented reduction in Proposition 10 revenue (accelerated by Proposition 31) and the subsequent impacts to local children, families, nonprofits, the ability to leverage other funding, and the entire First 5 infrastructure across the state of California.
  - The First 5 Association is open to working with First 5 California on the definition of unfunded liability.

- ***What other funding sources has the Association explored for this proposal?***
  - The First 5 Association has engaged state leaders to request a \$100M state general fund allocation to address the community impacts of the unprecedented Proposition 10 revenue decline. Although there was legislative support for the request, the state budget deficit realities prevented this request from moving forward.
  - Additionally, some legislators have inquired about having local First 5s seek funding from First 5 California versus asking for funds from the state general fund.
  
- ***How will the \$25 million be allocated to the counties? Will it be dispersed to all 58? Will it be dispersed based on birth rate like Prop 10?***
  - The First 5 Association would be eager to co-create the disbursement formula, application process, formulas, guidelines, caps, etc. with First 5 California. We understand there will be a need for an application including minimum guidelines, definitions, and a possible cap of funding per county.
  - The First 5 Association proposes that all 58 counties be eligible to apply to this fund (but not required to) and counties can request funding amounts based on their local needs.
  - During input sessions with county commissions regarding allocations and disbursement to counties, several factors were discussed:
    - 1. Applying a ratio of fund balance to annual Proposition 10/56 revenue, e.g. a “run rate.” This factor could recognize the proximity to depletion of fund balances for county commissions.
    - 2. Utilizing existing birth rates per county in combination with a “run rate” factor described above.
    - 3. Utilizing other factors such as a percentage of recent cuts to programs, services, nonprofits, staffing, and internal capacity.
  
- ***Why do you believe First 5 California is the right funder for this proposal considering we have the same issue of declining revenue and other financial obligations, including to the counties?***
  - The stability, impact, and success of First 5 California is directly tied to the stability, impact, and success of First 5 county commissions. The Stabilization Fund demonstrates First 5 California’s leadership and can be viewed as a “win” for the state. With so much economic and political uncertainty, we must strengthen local infrastructure and minimize any further cuts on direct services for young children, families and providers and this support will do that.
  - Stabilization funding can support county commissions to focus on longer term Network development and sustainability strategies inclusive of First 5 California, rather than county commissions dedicating so much time and attention to covering immediate revenue deficits and uncertainty year after year.

- First 5 California has been a key partner and supporter of local First 5s having historically provided funding to county commissions;
  - *Foundational funding to 21 small population counties*
  - *Program focused funding to counties, e.g. IMPACT, Home Visiting Coordination, early literacy programs*
  - *Emergency funding and supplies to counties to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent refugee crisis*
  
- Proposition 10 statute expressly states that First 5 California can “enter into any contracts and allocate funds to *county commissions* as necessary or appropriate to carry out the provisions and purposes of this act.” While First 5 California allocates funding to numerous organizations, no other organizations other than county commissions are specifically mentioned in the statute related to allocation of First 5 California funds.
  
- First 5 California has a \$134M fund balance in FY23-24 and projected fund balance of \$67M in FY 27-28.<sup>2</sup> For scale, First 5 California’s fund balance is more than the *combined* fund balance of 43 county commissions with the lowest fund balances in the state.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cfc.ca.gov/pdf/commission/meetings/handouts/5\\_22\\_2024/Item%20-%20Attachment%20B%20-%20May%202024%20Fund%20Condition%20Summary.pdf](https://www.cfc.ca.gov/pdf/commission/meetings/handouts/5_22_2024/Item%20-%20Attachment%20B%20-%20May%202024%20Fund%20Condition%20Summary.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> FY22-23 First 5 California Annual Report fund balance data by county