



## Commission Meeting

### A G E N D A

**Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 pm**

**First 5 Contra Costa, Conference Center**

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

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 Closed Session**

**Public Employee Performance Evaluation (Gov. Code § 54957.6)**

*Title: Executive Director*

#### **3.0 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.*

#### **4.0 Approve the Minutes of the Special Commission Meeting on:**

**Action**

3.1 Special Commission Meeting on October 27, 2025

#### **5.0 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.*

##### **5.1 Approve the Contracts Docket.**

5.1.1 RATIFY the Executive Director’s execution of a 5-year lease agreement with One Concord Towers, LLC, with one 5-year renewal option, for a 7,048 square foot space located at 2300 Clayton Road, Suite 300, Concord, CA, with a base monthly rent of \$16,562.80 following a five-month free rent period, plus a 1.91% share of increases in Taxes and Operating Expenses over the 2026 Base Year, with controllable operating expenses capped at 5% annually. The base monthly rent will increase by 3% annually as outlined in the lease. FY 2025–26 budget line: Administrative Expense and Overhead: Allocated Across Function Areas. Funded 100% Prop 10 funds.

5.1.2 RATIFY the Executive Director’s execution of a lease termination agreement with SEECOM COMMERCIAL LLC., for approximately 15,470 square feet of office space located at 4005 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 120, Concord, CA, effective

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December 31, 2025, including payment of a termination fee not to exceed \$10,000, plus any rent and operating expenses due through the termination date. FY 2025–26 budget line: Administrative Expense and Overhead – Allocated Across Function Areas. Funded 100% Prop 10 funds.

**5.2 Approve the Grants Docket.**

- 5.2.1 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to apply for, and if awarded, execute a grant agreement with Concord/Pleasant Hill Healthcare District a subsidiary of the City of Concord in an amount not to exceed \$45,000 to support operating developmental playgroups for children who have identified concerns from a developmental screening, for the term July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2028, FY 2026–27 budget line: Early Intervention Focus Area: EI Support Services.
- 5.2.2 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director, or her designee, to apply for, and if awarded, execute a grant agreement with the California Office of Traffic Safety in an amount not to exceed \$300,000 to support car seat education and distribution activities for the term October 1, 2026 to Sept 30, 2027. FY 2026–27 budget line: Strengthening Families Focus Area: First 5 Centers.

**5.3 Accept the FY 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Report.**

**5.4 Accept the Minutes from the Special Executive Committee Meeting on October 27, 2025.**

**5.5 Adopt the 2026 Calendar of Commission standing meetings.**

**5.6 Accept the final revised First 5 Contra Costa 5 Year Sustainability Plan.**

**5.7 Accept the Executive Director’s December Report.**

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

**Action**

**7.0 Recognize First 5 staff who have surpassed service milestones and appreciate the entire staff for their continuing dedication and accomplishments.**

- Five Years: Jamela Tandincio & Deanna Carmona
- Fifteen Years: Sarah Burke & Elida Treanor
- 25 Years: Lisa Johnson

**8.0 CONSIDER approving the Slate of Officers of the Commission for 2026:**

**Action**

- Chair: John Jones
- Vice-Chair: Marla Stuart
- Secretary / Treasurer: Mary Rocha
- Additional Non-Voting Member: Gareth Ashley

**9.0 CONSIDER approval to extend First 5 Contra Costa’s Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2023-2026 through FY 2026-27.**

**Action**

- Presented by Dr. Ruth Fernández, First 5 Executive Director



- 10.0 RECEIVE Staff Presentation of 2025 Year in Review: Community Impact Report.** **Discussion**
- Presented by Sarah Burke, Data & Policy Analyst and Sandra Naughton, First 5 Deputy Director
- 11.0 RECEIVE Presentation on the First 5 CA Association Priorities and the Choose Children 2026 Campaign.** **Discussion**
- Presented by Avo Makdessian, Executive Director, First 5 Association of California
- 12.0 RECEIVE Staff Presentation of Contra Costa County Early Childhood System Map.** **Discussion**
- Presented by Mackenzie Whipps, Data & Policy Manager
- 13.0 RECEIVE Staff Presentation of Key Learnings from First 5 Contra Costa Listening Tour Report.** **Discussion**
- Presented by Mackenzie Whipps, Data & Policy Manager
- 14.0 Executive Director's Report**
- 15.0 Commissioner F.Y.I. Updates**
- 16.0 Communications**
- 17.0 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.



**Special Commission Meeting  
MINUTES**

**Monday, October 27, 2025 6:00 pm**

**Location: First 5 Contra Costa, Conference Center**  
4005 Port Chicago Hwy., Suite 120, Concord CA 94520

**1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair John Jones called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM.

Commissioners present during roll call were:

District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 3: Alternate Bella Merrill  
District 5: John Jones, Chair  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

Commissioners not present during roll call were:

District 1: Dr. Rocio Hernández  
District 2: Marilyn Cachola Lucey  
District 4: Alex Khalfin  
District 4: Alternate Gareth Ashley  
District 5: Alternate LaTrena Robinson  
Board of Supervisors: Alternate Supervisor Candace Andersen  
Health Department: Alternate Dr. Sefanit Mekuria  
EHSD: Alternate Scott Thompson  
Children & Families Services: Roslyn Gentry

**2.0 Public Comment**

No public comment.

**3.0 Approve the Minutes from the June 9, 2025 Commission Meeting.**

The Chair asked if there were any questions regarding item 3.0.

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes from June. Commissioner Rocha made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Marshland.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Vidya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston





EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

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.*

Dr. Ruth Fernández notified the Commission that there were materials added to the packet after the posting deadline and requested the Commission to formally accept the amended packet for the October 27 Commission meeting. Commissioner Scales-Preston motioned to accept the updated packet and Commissioner Iyengar seconded.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

The motion was **APPROVED**.

Several items (4.1.1, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4 and 4.2.7) were removed from consent by Chair Jones to be voted under item 5.0 after Commissioners from District V, Health Services, EHSD, and the Board of Supervisors read recusal statements due to a conflict of interest. The Chair asked if there were any questions regarding all of the other items. There were no questions.

The Chair then called for a motion to approve the Consent Calendar with the exception of items (4.1.1, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4 and 4.2.7).

Commissioner Dr. Marla Stuart made a motion to approve the Consent Calendar, seconded by Commissioner Scales-Preston.



Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

The motion was **APPROVED**.

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

Several Commissioners (Health Department, EHSD, Children & Family Services and the Board of Supervisors) were required to recuse themselves as noted in each vote below.

Commissioner Jones then called for a motion to approve item 4.1.1. Commissioner Jones made a motion to approve the item, seconded by Commissioner Iyengar.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston

**RECUSED:** Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli (left the room)  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart (left the room)  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye (left the room)

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

The motion was **APPROVED**.



Commissioner Jones then called for a motion to approve item 4.1.3. Commissioner Jones made a motion to approve the item, seconded by Commissioner Iyengar.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**RECUSED:** Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli (left the room)

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart

The motion was **APPROVED**.

Commissioner Dr. Marla Stuart then called for a motion to approve item 4.1.4. Commissioner Iyengar made a motion to approve the item, seconded by Commissioner Marshland.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**RECUSED:** District 5: John Jones (left the room)

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

The motion was **APPROVED**.

Commissioner Jones then called for a motion to approve item 4.2.2. Commissioner Dr. Marla Stuart made a motion to approve the item, seconded by Commissioner Marshland.



Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**RECUSED:** Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli (left the room)

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

The motion was **APPROVED**.

Commissioner Jones then called for a motion to approve items 4.2.3 and 4.2.4. Commissioner Iyengar made a motion to approve the item, seconded by Commissioner Dr. Marla Stuart.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**RECUSED:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland (left the room)

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

The motion was **APPROVED**.

Commissioner Jones then called for a motion to approve item 4.2.7. Commissioner Dr. Marla Stuart made a motion to approve the item, seconded by Commissioner Rocha.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar



District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**RECUSED:** None

**NOS:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

The motion was **APPROVED**.

All Commissioners returned to the room.

#### **6.0 CONSIDER accepting the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Financial Audit.**

- (a) Public Hearing on the First 5 Contra Costa's Annual Financial Audit for FY2024-25
- (b) Adopt the Annual Financial Audit for Fiscal Year 2024-25

The Chair opened the public hearing at 6:21 p.m.

James W. Ramsey, Partner at Eide Bailly LLP presented the report. Highlights of the report as follows:

- Independent Auditor's Opinion: The auditors issued an unmodified (clean) opinion on the Commission's financial statements, noting that they represent the financial position of First 5 Contra Costa in all material respects.
- Internal Controls: No material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were identified. The auditors noted that internal controls related to procurement, contracting, grant monitoring, payroll, and financial reporting were functioning effectively, with no instances of noncompliance that required reporting.
- New GASB Implementation: FY 2024–25 included the implementation of updated GASB guidance on compensated absences, requiring additional disclosures and refined calculation methods. Staff successfully incorporated these updates, and the auditors noted that the transition was handled properly and in accordance with state and national standards.
- Compliance With State Requirements: The State Compliance portion of the audit, which evaluates adherence to First 5 California and California Department of Education requirements, resulted in no findings. Required reporting (AR1, AR2) and contract files met all documentation and eligibility standards.
- Significant Accounting Estimates: The auditors reviewed key areas requiring judgment, including revenue accruals, pension liabilities, and compensated absences. All estimates were found reasonable and based on verifiable data.



- Audit Adjustments: No material audit adjustments were required, and the auditors commended staff for maintaining accurate, timely financial records throughout the fiscal year.

The Chair asked for comments. Commissioner Stuart congratulated staff on a clean audit. The hearing was closed at 6:31 PM.

The Chair called for a motion to adopt the Annual Financial Audit for Fiscal Year 2024-25.

Commissioner Rocha made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Iyengar.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

The motion was **APPROVED**.

**7.0 CONSIDER accepting the Annual Report to First 5 California for Fiscal Year 2024-25.**

- (a) Public Hearing on the First 5 Contra Costa's Annual Report for FY 2024-25  
(b) Adopt the Annual Report to First 5 California for FY 2024-25

The Chair opened the public hearing at 6:33 p.m.

The purpose of the Annual Report is to provide a statewide summary of County Commission revenues, expenditures and population served as required by the California Children and Families Act.

Sarah Burke, First 5 Data & Policy Analyst gave an overview and PowerPoint presentation introducing the Annual Report sections summarizing key service, demographic, and outcome data across First 5 Contra Costa's investments. The report highlighted that thousands of children ages 0–5 and their families accessed services across family support, early learning, early intervention, and community programs. Staff noted that family support programs continued to serve the largest share of participants, reflecting ongoing needs in parent education, resource navigation, and basic supports. Demographic data showed strong participation among families with a majority of children served identifying as Latino or multiracial, and a continued trend of higher participation among lower-income households.



The presentation also emphasized outcomes from First 5-funded initiatives. Early learning programs reported high satisfaction rates and strong gains in school-readiness indicators, including improved pre-literacy and social-emotional development. Developmental screenings increased again this year, with a significant proportion of screened children connected to follow-up services. Staff noted improvements in ASQ completion rates and collaboration with health partners.

The Chair asked for comments. Commissioners asked about emerging trends in demographics and the potential for deeper analysis across multiple years of reporting. Staff stated that year-over-year consistency shows strong engagement across core programs, and that future reporting may include expanded dashboards, mapping, and trend lines to support strategic planning and sustainability work. There was a question from Commissioner Iyengar about whether we know the overall population intended to be served and whether that's something we currently track as a measure of impact. Sarah mentioned that more demographic and population data about our target audiences will be included in the Annual Community Impact Report presentation scheduled for the month of December.

The hearing was closed at 6:53 p.m. The Chair opened the item for public comment. There were none.

The Chair called for a motion to adopt the Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2024-25.

Commissioner Scales-Preston made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Tzvieli.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**NOS:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

The motion was **APPROVED**.

**8.0 CONSIDER accepting the 2026 health and dental employer-paid premium contribution rates for active employees; and accept the 2026 premium contribution rates for intermittent employees, COBRA participants, retirees, and survivors at the same levels as the County.**

Human Resources Manager Tammy Henry gave a report on the item, noting an overall increase in



health rates and no change in dental benefit rates for employees. A Staff Report was included in the packet with the summary of the impact on benefit rates. She asked for approval of the rate change to move forward with open enrollment for staff.

The Chair called for a motion to adopt the 2026 health and dental employer-paid premium contribution rates for active employees; and accept the 2026 premium contribution rates for intermittent employees, COBRA participants, retirees, and survivors at the same levels as the County.

Commissioner Scales-Preston made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Iyengar.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

The motion was **APPROVED**.

**9.0 CONSIDER approving early termination of lease with Sierra Pacific Properties, Inc. for First 5 office located at 4005 Port Chicago Highway; and authorize the Executive Director or her designee to identify and secure new office space for First 5 Contra Costa's administrative offices.**

Executive Director Dr. Ruth Fernández provided an update on First 5 Contra Costa administrative office space needs and summarized negotiations with current landlord resulting in an early termination agreement with Sierra Pacific Properties Inc., effective December 31, 2025. She described the agency's space-optimization efforts, significant cost savings resulting from early termination, and coordination with a potential tenant to take over the space. She also described contingency plans should the new office location not be ready by January, including temporary remote operations and short-term shared space arrangements. She requested authorization from the Commission to continue to advance these efforts to ensure the lease termination was executed and secure a new lease. Commissioners discussed logistical considerations, transition timelines, and potential operational impacts.

The Chair called for a motion to approve early termination of First 5's lease with Sierra Pacific Properties Inc. and authorize the Executive Director or her designee to identify and secure new office space and to bring back to the Commission a new lease for approval/ratification.





Commissioner Marshland made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Rocha.

Roll call of vote:

**YES:** District 1: Alternate Susanna Marshland  
District 2: Alternate Srividya Iyengar  
District 3: Mary Helen Rocha  
District 5: John Jones  
Board of Supervisors: Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston  
Health Department: Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
EHSD: Dr. Marla Stuart  
Children & Families Services: Alternate Ana Kaye

**NOs:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**Absent:** District 4: Alex Khalfin

The motion was **APPROVED**.

**10.0 CONSIDER adoption of the First 5 Contra Costa 5-Year Sustainability Plan.**

Dr. Ruth Fernández and consultant Catherine Senderling-McDonald presented the final Five-Year Sustainability Plan, explaining that the goal of the plan is to help First 5 Contra Costa remain strong and financially stable as Proposition 10 revenue continues to decline. The plan focuses on four main areas: maintaining fiscal health, strengthening internal operations, prioritizing the programs that make the greatest impact, and building partnerships that can bring in new resources and support.

The presentation provided long-term budget projections showing how decreasing revenues could affect services over the next five years. The plan outlines short-term, medium-term, and long-term sustainability strategy recommendations for First 5 Contra Costa in the next five years. Recommendations include ways to diversify funding, including exploring interagency partnerships, and better aligning with county and community initiatives that support early childhood. Staff also described improvements underway in staffing structure, internal processes, and data systems to help the agency work more efficiently.

The plan highlights the importance of strong relationships with county departments, local organizations, and statewide partners—both to support families with young children and to expand investments for young children long-term. The Commission had a discussion and decided to add adoption and approval of the plan to the December agenda and made the recommendation to revise language on page 29 of the draft plan to add clarity regarding the recommended strategy for interagency agreements.

**11.0 RECEIVE the appointed Ad Hoc Nominating Committee members for 2026 Officers' Election.**

Commissioners were notified of the members of this year's Ad Hoc Nominating Committee for the 2026 Officers' Election as chosen by the Executive Committee. Members are Srividya Iyengar (Chair), Roslyn Gentry, and Dr. Sefanit Mekuria.

**12.0 Executive Director's Report**



Executive Director Dr. Ruth Fernández referred Commissioners to the written report included in their meeting packets and provided several brief verbal highlights. She began by acknowledging and welcoming Stephanie Shieh, First 5 Contra Costa's newly hired Early Childhood Program Officer. Dr. Fernández shared that Ms. Shieh had recently joined the agency and would be formally introduced at the upcoming December staff appreciation event, where Commissioners would have the opportunity to meet her.

Dr. Fernández concluded her report by highlighting a major event occurring later that week—the Ready Kids East County community engagement event taking place on Wednesday, October 29, at the Antioch Community Center. She explained that the purpose of the event is to support reflection, data collection, and collaborative dialogue among community partners and parents in East Contra Costa County. Ready Kids brings together organizations committed to improving health outcomes and school readiness for Black and African American young children. She invited Commissioners to attend, describing it as a meaningful to engage with and to hear directly from the community.

**13.0 Communications**

None.

**14.0 Commissioner F.Y.I. Updates**

None.

**15.0 Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

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**Staff Report  
December 15, 2025**

**ACTION:**       X    
**DISCUSSION:**     \_\_\_\_\_

**TITLE:**         **Ratify Lease for New First 5 Administrative Offices at One Concord Center**

**Background:**

First 5 Contra Costa has maintained its administrative offices at 4005 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 120, Concord, California 94520 since February 2022. The agency leases this space from Sierra Pacific Properties, Inc. (SPPI) at a monthly cost of \$38,035, inclusive of the rent and operating fee; the annual cost of the lease totaled \$456,420. With an initial term of 64 months, the lease was set to expire in June 2027. Following the introduction of the Sustainability Plan, First 5 staff determined it prudent to leave the 15,470 square foot space early—if possible—and move to a smaller space to save on lease cost. In September of this year, a tenant was identified who could occupy the space beginning on January 1, 2026 and take over the lease on terms favorable to all involved, including the landlord, SPPI.

At the October 27, 2025 meeting, the First 5 Contra Costa Commission approved a lease termination agreement with SPPI, ending the lease at 4005 Port Chicago Highway, Concord on December 31, 2025 per certain terms and conditions, which have all been met. Additionally, the Commission authorized the Executive Director to secure new office space that more fully meets the needs of First 5 Contra Costa and once new office space was identified, staff would execute new lease documents to secure the space and bring the new lease back to Commission for formal approval/ratification.

With a short timeline to exit the 4005 Port Chicago property by December 31, 2025, the Executive Director signed a lease agreement entitled “One Concord Towers Commercial Office Space Lease” with One Concord Towers, LLC (Landlord) on November 27, 2025 to occupy space at One Concord Center, a fifteen-story structure located at 2300 Clayton Road, Suite 300, Concord. This report outlines the major terms of the lease agreement and seeks Commission ratification of the Executive Director’s actions to secure the space, as previously authorized by the Commission.



The action authorized by the Commission at its October 27, 2025 meeting included a desire to meet certain goals that were outlined in the staff report. Staff believe the One Concord Center property fully meets those goals as follows:

- The property is located centrally to the County in Concord's downtown core
- The space is ready for occupancy beginning on January 1, 2026 (however, because of certain delays associated with obtaining the final lease termination agreement, and construction and IT connection to the County network, staff will likely work remotely for approximately the first two weeks of January)
- Rentable floor space is 7,048 square feet, less than half the current floor space of 15,470
- Lease rates in the new contract are as follows:

Month	Full- Service Monthly Rental Rate	Monthly Rent
1 – 5	\$0 per sq. ft.	\$0
6 – 12	\$2.35 per sq. ft.	\$16,562.80
13 – 24	\$2.42 per sq. ft.	\$17,056.16
25 – 36	\$2.49 per sq. ft.	\$17,549.52
37 – 48	\$2.57 per sq. ft.	\$18,113.36
49 – 60	\$2.64 per sq. ft.	\$18,606.72
61 - 65	\$2.72 per sq. ft.	\$19,170.56

Moreover, lease rates of the new contract will be less than half of current monthly rates. Indeed, from January 2026 to the end of the current Port Chicago Highway lease in June 2027, First 5 Contra Costa would have spent \$1,182,534 in lease expense. Instead, the agency will spend only \$320,613 on rent, a savings of \$861,921. By the end of the new 5-year lease at One Concord Center, rent will have totaled \$1,067,708, as opposed to the scheduled rent of \$2,951,161 at Port Chicago Highway, a total savings of \$1,883,453

- Ample parking will be available free of charge for guests using the underground parking lot while employees will park in a dedicated parking garage adjacent to the facility. Additionally, parking is available free of charge after 3 PM and on weekends in the BART parking lot across the street
- One Concord Center is minutes from Highway 4 and the 680 freeway. Moreover, the facility is adjacent to the downtown Concord BART station, making bus and BART options readily available
- The facility includes a large, shared conference space capable of hosting more than 80 guests for public Commission meetings and other public events



Additionally, the landlord has agreed to provide five months of free rent, construct a large in-suite storage room at no cost to First 5 Contra Costa, and the suite comes fully furnished with near-new contemporary furniture, of which First 5 will take full ownership upon occupancy. Upon ratification, First 5 Contra Costa will present the Landlord with a check to cover the first month's rent payment and a \$10,000 security deposit, for a total payment of \$26,562.80.

**Recommendation:**

Ratify the lease agreement entitled "One Concord Towers Commercial Office Space Lease" with One Concord Towers, LLC (Landlord) which was executed previously by the Executive Director on November 27, 2025 to occupy Suite 300 at One Concord Center with the terms and conditions described above.

FY 2025/26

FIRST QUARTER FINANCIAL REPORT



1	REVENUE <sup>1</sup>
2	State Tobacco Taxes <sup>2</sup>
3	Federal Grants
4	State Grants <sup>3</sup>
5	Subrecipient Awards <sup>3</sup>
6	Philanthropic Grants <sup>3</sup>
7	Other Revenue <sup>4</sup>
8	TOTAL REVENUE
9	Prop 10/56 Fund Balance Drawdown
10	TOTAL REVENUE
11	
12	PROGRAMMATIC FOCUS AREAS EXPENSES
13	Early Childhood Education
14	Workforce Development
15	Quality Early Learning
16	Ready Kids East County School Readiness Initiative
17	Total
18	Strengthening Families
19	First 5 Centers <sup>5</sup>
20	Home Visiting System Coordination
21	Parent Advisory Group
22	Total
23	Early Intervention
24	EI Support Services
25	Capacity Building and Outreach
26	Total
27	Policy Advocacy & Communications Strategies
28	Communications Strategy & Policy Advocacy
29	Total
30	Program Salaries/Benefits and Overhead Expenses
31	Program Salaries & Wages
32	Program Employee Benefits
33	Program Expenses and Overhead <sup>6</sup>
34	Total
35	TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES
36	
37	EVALUATION EXPENSES
38	Evaluation Salaries & Wages
39	Evaluation Employee Benefits
40	Professional Services
41	Purchased Services and Supplies
42	Evaluation Expense and Overhead <sup>6</sup>
43	TOTAL EVALUATION EXPENSES
44	
45	ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES
46	Administrative Salaries & Wages
47	Administrative Employee Benefits
48	Professional Services
49	Purchased Services and Supplies
50	Administrative Expense and Overhead <sup>6</sup>
51	TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES
52	
53	GRAND TOTAL

FY 2025/26 Adopted Budget			
F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Revenue	% of Total
6,353,628	-	6,353,628	53.2%
-	-	-	0.0%
-	672,308	672,308	5.6%
-	747,449	747,449	6.3%
-	230,100	230,100	1.9%
428,294	-	428,294	3.6%
6,781,922	1,649,857	8,431,779	70.5%
-	-	3,520,977	29.5%
6,781,922	1,649,857	11,952,756	100.0%
F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Expense	% of Total
-	134,747	134,747	1.1%
331,950	62,891	394,841	3.3%
-	129,300	129,300	1.1%
331,950	326,938	658,888	5.5%
3,671,326	-	3,671,326	30.7%
31,970	-	31,970	0.3%
15,100	-	15,100	0.1%
3,718,396	0	3,718,396	31.1%
612,454	141,043	753,497	6.3%
25,494	-	25,494	0.2%
637,949	141,043	778,992	6.5%
211,299	35,000	246,299	2.1%
211,299	35,000	246,299	2.1%
1,478,508	600,613	2,079,121	17.4%
868,740	359,373	1,228,113	10.3%
604,619	-	604,619	5.1%
2,951,866	959,986	3,911,852	32.7%
7,851,460	1,462,967	9,314,427	77.9%
F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Expense	% of Total
350,394	-	350,394	2.9%
181,437	-	181,437	1.5%
134,000	-	134,000	1.1%
20,870	-	20,870	0.2%
114,470	-	114,470	1.0%
801,171	-	801,171	6.7%
F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Expense	% of Total
772,969	-	772,969	6.5%
407,323	-	407,323	3.4%
211,619	-	211,619	1.8%
152,803	-	152,803	1.3%
292,443	-	292,443	2.4%
1,837,158	-	1,837,158	15.4%
10,489,789	1,462,967	11,952,756	100.0%

FY 2025/26 Q1 Actuals			
F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Revenue	% Budget Rec'd
1,203,128	-	1,203,128	18.9%
-	-	-	0.0%
-	-	-	0.0%
-	-	-	0.0%
-	230,100	230,100	100.0%
14,214	5,000	19,214	4.5%
1,217,342	235,100	1,452,442	17.2%
-	-	-	0.0%
1,217,342	235,100	1,452,442	12.2%
F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Expense	% Budget Spent
-	29,963	29,963	0.0%
9,642	52,440	62,083	15.7%
-	1,445	1,445	1.1%
9,642	83,848	93,490	14.2%
807,154	74,365	881,519	24.0%
6	-	6	0.0%
1,520	-	1,520	10.1%
808,680	74,365	883,046	23.7%
110,759	22,027	132,786	17.6%
954	110	1,064	4.2%
111,714	22,137	133,850	17.2%
7,627	148	7,775	3.2%
7,627	148	7,775	3.2%
358,318	170,198	528,516	25.4%
183,892	93,088	276,980	22.6%
105,850	-	105,850	17.5%
648,060	263,287	911,346	23.3%
1,585,723	443,785	2,029,507	21.8%
F5 Contra Costa Funds	Other Funds	Total Expense	% Budget Spent
70,833	-	70,833	20.2%
32,058	-	32,058	17.7%
17,973	-	17,973	13.4%
1,603	-	1,603	7.7%
13,204	-	13,204	11.5%
135,670	-	135,670	16.9%
124,504	-	124,504	16.1%
57,698	-	57,698	14.2%
64,252	-	64,252	30.4%
9,346	-	9,346	6.1%
71,052	-	71,052	24.3%
326,850	-	326,850	17.8%
2,048,243	443,785	2,492,027	20.8%

FY 2025/26	% of Total Expenses
Program Initiatives	77.9%
Evaluation	6.7%
Administration	15.4%
Total:	100.0%

FY 2025/26	% of Total Expenses
Program Initiatives	81.4%
Evaluation	5.4%
Administration	13.1%
Total:	100.0%

- NOTES:
1. Revenue sources are detailed in "FY 25/26 Revenue Projection Summary".

2. State Sales Tax revenue includes Prop 10, Prop 56, CECET, and SMIF Interest accrued while in State interest earning accounts prior to distribution to counties.

3. Includes indirect revenue from grants totaling \$150,058: State Grants (\$82,029), Subrecipient Awards (\$44,953), and Philanthropic Grants (\$23,076).

4. Includes interest earnings proportional to First 5's share of County pooled investments (fluctuations based on investment returns).

5. OCAP grant for Fatherhood Engagement was received after budget adoption, hence the expenditure in Q1 under "Other Funds."

6. Includes departmental expenses plus allocated costs (e.g. rent, CAM, insurance, and maintenance Admin Bldg; Finance, HR and IT support; County Counsel, etc.).



**Special Executive Committee Meeting**

**MINUTES**

**Monday, October 27, 2025, 5:00pm**

**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 5:07 p.m.

In attendance: John Jones, Dr. Marla Stuart, Mary Helen Rocha, Vidya Iyengar.

Staff present: Executive Director, Dr. Ruth Fernández; Deputy Director, Sandra Naughton; Finance and Operations Director, Kelly Sessions; Operations Manager, Tammy Henry; Executive Assistant, Mikele Nelson.

Guest: James Ramsey of Eide Bailly.

**2.0 Public Comment.**

No public comment.

**3.0 Approve the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting on September 29, 2025:**

Mary Helen Rocha motioned to approve the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on May 27, 2025. Marla Stuart seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

**4.0 RECEIVE Overview Presentation of the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Financial Audit.**

James W. Ramsey, Partner at Eide Bailly LLP presented highlights of the audit results prepared by Eide Bailly and reviewed the materials provided to the Commission, including the board letter and the audited financial statements. He explained that the board letter outlines required auditor communications, such as the scope of the audit, the responsibilities of management and the auditors, and any significant findings. James reported that the auditors issued an unmodified, clean opinion on the financial statements, confirming they are presented fairly in accordance with GAAP and that there was no opinion shopping or disagreements with management. He noted that one misstatement was identified during the audit and was corrected by management. He also highlighted the adoption of a new accounting standard, which required certain beginning balances to be restated as described in Note 15. The financial statements were determined to be free of material misstatement, and the audit was conducted in accordance with required professional standards. In the review of internal controls under GAGAS, no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were identified. Additionally, the state compliance report showed no instances of noncompliance. Overall, James stated that the Commission received clean opinions in all three areas: financial statements, internal controls, and state compliance.

**5.0 Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 5:22 p.m.**





All meetings are held in hybrid modality with Zoom participation capability.  
Meetings will be held at the First 5 Contra Costa offices.

## Standing Meetings 2026

	<b>Executive Committee 5:00 PM</b>	<b>Full Commission Meeting 6:00 PM</b>
jan		
Feb		
Mar	March 2	March 16 9-12:30 Strategic Planning Retreat 1-2pm Commission Meeting
April		
May	May 4	May 18
June	June 8	June 22
July		
August		
September		
October	October 26	October 26
November	November 30	
December		December 14

# DRAFT





# The Next 25 Years: Building Sustainability for First 5 Contra Costa County

September 2025



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# Foreword:

## A Message to the Community

Dear Community Partners, Friends, and Allies,

First 5 Contra Costa is proud to share our 5-Year Sustainability Plan—a roadmap to secure our organization’s future and ensure that, for the next 25 years, children in Contra Costa County grow up **healthy, ready to learn, and supported by safe, nurturing families and communities**.

Created by California voters through Proposition 10, First 5 Commissions were designed to build an integrated, comprehensive, and collaborative system that prepares children for school and life. Today, declining revenues threaten this vision. While statewide efforts to address sustainability continue, First 5 Contra Costa is committed to meeting the growing needs of young children and families in our county.

**Doing nothing is not an option.** We must leverage the last 25 years of investments to expand and coordinate efforts that set every child on a path to thrive. Our Sustainability Plan outlines bold strategies to stretch our resources, build on community strengths, and drive innovative partnerships. This plan will complement and guide the development of our community priorities established in our Strategic Plan for FY 2026-27 through FY 2030-31.

Since Prop 10’s passage, research has only deepened the case for early investment in children’s health, learning, and family support—especially for those with the fewest resources. **This work is not only urgent but transformational, offering one of the most powerful prevention strategies for long-term community well-being.**

We cannot do this alone. By working together and aligning our strengths, we can co-create solutions that give every child in Contra Costa County the best possible start. **We invite you to join us in this effort**—dreaming, designing, and building a brighter future for our children.

In partnership and community,



Ruth Fernández, EdD  
Executive Director



John Jones  
Commission Chair



## Introduction

Supportive and purposeful early childhood development is shown to set the groundwork for educational attainment, health, and well-being for children far beyond their first five years. In November 1998, California voters approved Proposition 10, the Children and Families Act of 1998, to create a locally driven system of early childhood services statewide. Specifically, this act placed a tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products to fund services and programs for children aged zero to 5.

For 25 years, Proposition 10 funding has supported a network of 58 county First 5 commissions as well as the state-level California First 5 Commission. Programs and services vary by county, with local oversight by appointed board members that include community leaders, practitioners, county officials, and involved parents.

In Contra Costa County, First 5 Contra Costa has served as a funder, convener, advocate, expert, and leader in early childhood systems for more than two decades. Its most recent [Strategic Plan](#)<sup>\*</sup> builds on this strong history and important community role, while also acknowledging uncertainties driven by pandemic-related issues, economic instability for many families in the region, and multiple crises facing families, such as job turnover and mental health needs.<sup>i</sup>

This Sustainability Plan is intended to enable First 5 Contra Costa to meet the future with effective strategies in place to continue its work supporting children, families, and communities—for the next 25 years.

<sup>\*</sup>Download at [bit.ly/first5contracosta-strategic-plan-2023-2026](https://bit.ly/first5contracosta-strategic-plan-2023-2026)



## Why a Sustainability Plan?



When voters approved Proposition 10, it was no secret that tobacco tax revenue would likely be a declining source of revenue<sup>i</sup>. The Legislative Analyst's Office wrote the original voter guide description, noting that the increased tax on tobacco products contained in the measure would likely be passed on to consumers, resulting in declining consumption of these products and therefore decreasing revenues over time.<sup>ii</sup> This assumption has come to pass, with further declines in tobacco usage over time due to additional measures passed by voters as well as effective public awareness campaigns by the state that have contributed to a decline in cigarette consumption that continues year to year.

Proposition 56, enacted by voters in November 2016, placed an additional \$2 per pack tax on cigarettes. While the later proposition included provisions to provide funds to First 5 commissions to backfill lost Proposition 10 revenues, this backfill has not kept pace with the overall decline in tax revenues from tobacco products over time, and total funding from these two sources continues to drop.

<sup>i</sup>In this report, we will refer to the combined Proposition 10, Proposition 56, and related funding (such as interest income) provided to the county commissions by the state as "tobacco tax revenues" for ease of reference.



In addition, the state’s ban on flavored tobacco, which took effect in late 2022, caused a significant, short-term drop in sales and related tax revenues, though the economist who provides analysis and projections to California First 5, Brad Williams of Capitol Matrix Consulting, believes we will be reaching the end of that steeper pattern of decline in the near future.<sup>iii</sup> In the same memo, Mr. Williams notes that inflationary increases in the price of cigarettes have also played a role in reducing sales of those products.

In sum, all of these factors have contributed over time to a situation where many (if not most) county First 5 Commissions, including First 5 Contra Costa, are grappling with the effects of long-term declines in the primary sources of revenue for their programs and services. Statewide, the total tobacco tax revenues allocated to county First 5 commissions dropped from \$342 million in 2014-15 to \$245 million in 2024-25.

Capitol Matrix Partners provided First 5 California a “main” estimate and a “conservative” estimate of tobacco tax revenues over the coming few years, shown in Table 1. Note that some additional smaller funding provided to county commissions, including interest earned on revenues, is not reflected in these numbers.

TABLE 1:  
Statewide Proposition  
10 + Proposition 56  
Funding Projections,  
2024-25 to 2029-30

Source: Capitol Matrix Consulting, July 23, 2025  
memo to First 5 California. \*Reflects Prop 10  
funds minus payments to other funds required  
by the proposition, plus backfill funds from  
Prop 56. It also includes funds that First 5  
California retains for its operations, in addition  
to the funds it will send to county commissions.

Year(s)	Main Estimate		Conservative Estimate	
	Percent Decline	Revenues*	Percent Decline	Revenues
2024-25	-4.5%	\$287 million	-6.0%	\$286 million
2025-26	-4.5%	\$276 million	-6.0%	\$269 million
2026-27	-4.5%	\$267 million	-6.0%	\$253 million
2027-28	-4.5%	\$259 million	-6.0%	\$240 million
2028-29	-3.3%	\$252 million	-3.6%	\$229 million
2029-30	-3.3%	\$246 million	-3.6%	\$221 million

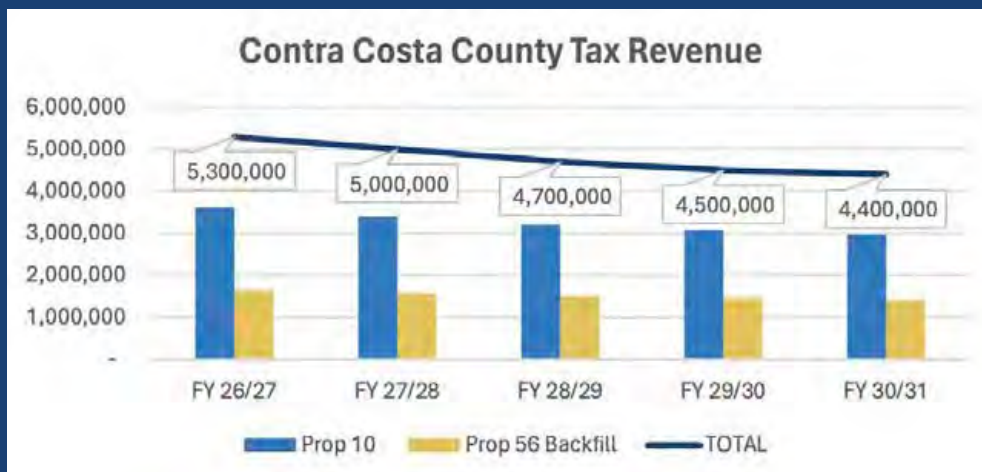
## Declining County Tobacco Tax Revenues

For First 5 Contra Costa, annual tobacco tax revenues dropped from \$8.6 million in 2020-21 to \$5.9 million in 2024-25. Revenues are projected to continue declining into the future by 6.0% annually until 2028-29 when the decline is projected to slow to 3.6% according to estimates from First 5 California. The chart in Figure 1 reflects those changes in tobacco tax revenue for the next five years for First 5 Contra Costa.

FIGURE 1:

### Contra Costa County Tax Revenue

Source: FY 24/25 Department of Finance birthrate totals, August 15, 2025; FY 25/26 – FY 28/29 projections include 6.0% annual revenue decrease dropping to 3.6% decrease in FY 29/30 and 30/31. (First 5 CA)



## Actions Taken to Lower Spending

Over the past several years, First 5 Contra Costa has systematically adjusted its spending to align with reduced state tobacco tax funding levels, demonstrating prudent and strong commitment to fiscal stewardship. This commitment is clearly articulated in its current strategic plan, which articulates conceptual sustainability approaches that are further refined and discussed in this sustainability plan.

On the programmatic side of the organizational chart, leaner spending strategies have included restructuring staff roles and streamlining programmatic efforts to capitalize on natural attrition such as retirements and staff transitions. In addition to reducing the number of program, data, policy, and communications positions, the remaining roles were adapted to be more generalist in nature, rather than being attached to specific programmatic efforts. This approach will enable staff to take on a variety of projects and responsibilities based on their skill sets and strengths, and as the needs of the agency change over time. As a result of these efforts, a relatively lean and adaptable group of talented and knowledgeable program staff remain at the organization today.

On the operations side, First 5 Contra Costa is also assessing role decentralization and exploring greater use of contracted services for technical and intermittent tasks, such as accounting services. In addition, the organization is scrutinizing its operational spending, focusing on its capital assets and spending for rent for its primary administrative offices as well as property owned by the Commission. Currently, First 5 Contra Costa owns two of the buildings that house First 5 Centers and rents space for the other three. Costs for rent and upkeep on the buildings it owns are a relatively significant part of the organization's annual budget.

While consistent efforts to reduce spending have been incrementally integrated into the organization's fiscal planning in the last three years, to achieve long-term sustainability First 5 Contra Costa is now faced with difficult decisions that require more significant reductions in spending in the next two years.



# What is Sustainability?

While the needs of young children prenatal to age 5 and their families will remain First 5 Contra Costa's priority, ensuring the sustainability of the organization is imperative to achieving targeted outcomes in the community. Looking into the future, First 5 Contra Costa's sustainability approach strives to **maintain a stable organization; build on and grow investments** for young children and families in the County through public and private funding partnerships; and **leverage the strengths and assets built** over the years to continue to make the case and successfully advocate for sustainable investments in early childhood.

As part of its 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, First 5 Contra Costa adopted a goal to develop and implement a 5-year Sustainability Plan. **Specific sustainability goals included:**



Identify and pursue diversified revenue sources such as local taxes, fees, and other public revenue streams in addition to philanthropic grants, while also exploring ways to match and/or braid external funding with Proposition 10 funds through partnerships;



Strategically and incrementally shift away from programs, activities, and services that are better aligned with local community partner organizations and that are outside the scope of First 5 Contra Costa's three focus areas;



Join advocacy efforts led by the First 5 Association of California, the Bay Area First 5 Executive Director's Group, and other First 5 Network leadership to identify new and stable revenue sources for First 5 Commissions that leverage declining Proposition 10 revenue statewide;



Use data to support and drive actions, including sustainability targets and benchmarks and return on investment; and



Re-evaluate the amount to set aside in a Contingency Fund each year







This Sustainability Plan is the culmination of an eight-month effort to develop a framework for organizational sustainability. The plan identifies a number of short-, medium-, and longer-term strategies to ensure the organization has the resources to continue to accomplish the vision and mission of the First 5 Contra Costa Commission and accomplish the goals set forth in the Strategic Plan, through both internal and external activities that will take place in the coming months and years.

The plan is intended to inform and determine the level of resources available for the upcoming development of the organization's next Strategic Plan. These sustainability strategies will need deeper reviews of fiscal, organizational, and programmatic aspects of the organization to be implemented.

*While the needs of young children prenatal to age 5 and their families will remain First 5 Contra Costa's priority, ensuring the sustainability of the organization is imperative to achieving targeted outcomes in the community.*

# Key Elements of Sustainability Planning

The basic idea of sustainability planning is to plan for the future, often in the face of known challenges, while safeguarding present operations and gaining flexibility to meet the unknown challenges that inevitably lie ahead. Many industries undertake sustainability planning efforts, for various reasons and under a variety of circumstances. In the non-profit and public service sectors, for example, organizations often face tight budgets and serve vulnerable populations. Sustainability in this context is not just about the survival of an organization, but about the continuation of services to communities through mission-driven work, collaboration, and avoiding gaps or harm should changes in funding, leadership, and/or public policy priorities occur.

## Four Pillars of Sustainability

To achieve overall sustainability, an organization should attend to four key areas, considering ways to improve each area in order to drive long-term sustainability. **Briefly, the four pillars are defined as:**



### Financial Stability

Ensure the organization has a diverse and stable funding base to support its long-term mission.



### Organizational Stability

Strengthen internal capacity, leadership, and partnerships to sustain operations long-term.



### Programmatic Stability

Ensure that core services and programs remain viable and continue to meet community needs.



### Policy and Community Stability

Advocate for system change that supports long-term investments in early childhood programs in Contra Costa County.



*Each of these pillars are explained in more detail in the graphic on the next page.*

In our process we have considered the current landscape of each of the four pillars, where the organization currently sits in each of the four areas, and what core services the organizations provides. This plan identifies sustainability strategies in each area.



## Four Pillars of Sustainability

Each is distinct but connects to the others in multiple ways, creating an interactive synergy across the four pillars.



## Sustainability Planning vs. Strategic Planning

A key issue to address is the difference between Sustainability Planning and Strategic Planning. **While related, these are not the same thing.**



### Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning focuses on setting an organization's vision, goals, and priorities over a defined period of time, typically 3 to 5 years. It charts a specific course to achieve mission-driven success.



### Sustainability Planning

Sustainability Planning, on the other hand, is about ensuring the ongoing viability of an organization. In this case, short-term financial considerations are paramount for First 5 Contra Costa, given that revenue from Propositions 10 and 56 continues to decline and the organization has been tapping its reserves to sustain its operations. This plan sets out a series of quick and thoughtful actions, helping the organization to avoid making rash decisions in the face of a growing financial crisis. The plan also includes longer-term actions that can help it stay on the path of sustainability.

In practice, Strategic Planning and Sustainability Planning should be complementary. In our work, we have timed the development and approval of key strategies contained in the sustainability plan to coincide with the upcoming First 5 Contra Costa strategic planning process, to provide an overall sustainability framework for the organization as it embarks on planning its specific programs and activities for the coming strategic plan period.



# Sustainability Plan Development Process

A number of activities fed into the development of this Sustainability Plan. These included creation of a Working Group to provide guidance and feedback, informational interviews with a number of key individuals within the county, staff input, analyses of the organization's prior-year and projected fiscal data, and an analysis of the landscape in which the organization operates.

The graphic on the right shows the activities undertaken by the organization during this process, some of which are further discussed below.

## Working Group

CEO Cathy Senderling-McDonald of Catbird Strategies LLC served as the project consultant, working closely with Executive Director Dr. Ruth Fernandez and her executive team throughout the eight-month project span. The project was advised by a working group that met 6 times over the project period. Participants included Commission members, the First 5 Contra Costa Executive Director, and key First 5 Contra Costa executive-level staff, detailed in Table 2.

## Plan Development Process



TABLE 2:

## Sustainability Plan Working Group

Working Group Member	Role
Ruth Fernandez, EdD	First 5 Contra Costa, Executive Director
Sandra Naughton	First 5 Contra Costa, Deputy Director
Kelly Sessions	First 5 Contra Costa, Finance & Operations Director
John Jones	District V, Commissioner/Commission Chair
Susanna Marshland	District I, Alternate Commissioner
The Hon. Candace Andersen	District II Alternate Commissioner, County Supervisor
Gareth Ashley	District IV, Alternate Commissioner





With the help of the Working Group, First 5 Contra Costa and Ms. Senderling-McDonald were able to examine key elements of the organization corresponding to the Four Pillars of Sustainability and discuss ideas and options with a knowledgeable group of engaged partners. This work enabled a robust thought process and encouraged the development of a plan that aims high while also being grounded in the realities of available revenues, the current political and economic climate, and the requirements of Proposition 10.

## Key Informant Interviews

To obtain a broader understanding of the organization's partnerships and the engagement of county officials and leaders with First 5 Contra Costa, Ms. Senderling-McDonald conducted informational one-on-one interviews with 17 key interest holders. This included all current elected Board of Supervisors members; several primary or alternate representatives to the First 5 Commission; representatives from three county departments—Health, Employment and Human Services, and the County Administrator's Office; First 5 Contra Costa executive staff; and nearly all working group members.

“

*We appreciate that First 5 Contra Costa authentically partners with emerging programs, supports systems serving children, and engages with non-profits that are doing well and others that may be struggling. We have seen them as a backbone for early childhood issues in the county, a convener and mover of policy and practice.”*

”

Devorah Levine  
Executive Director, Leshner Foundation

Suggested interview questions were vetted by First 5 staff and interviewees were informed that their individual responses would be kept confidential, though they would be used in aggregate to assist in developing this plan.

Notable in the interviews was a strong enthusiasm for the work of First 5 Contra Costa and broad agreement on the need to ensure the organization can sustain itself going forward. Those interviewed expressed support for the mission and goals of the organization and often offered to assist in various aspects of implementing the final Sustainability Plan, once completed. As most of the interviewees work outside of the organization itself, they generally had less familiarity with the day-to-day operations of the organization; still, most demonstrated a deep understanding of the overall goals, purpose, and history of First 5 and also had a history of engagement with First 5's Executive Team and other staff in various ways during their careers, as residents of the county, or as Commissioners.

A number of key themes emerged from the informational interviews, which were shared and further examined with the Working Group members. These themes included a number of strength areas noted by the interviewees, with the most frequently mentioned key contributions that First 5 Contra Costa makes to the community being:



### **A Broker of Services and Support to Strengthen Families**

While First 5 Contra Costa does not provide direct services to families and children, it is well-known for contracting for the operation of five First 5 Centers located across the county. The value of these centers was discussed in nearly all interviews.

First 5 also supports training and professional development for providers and drives quality improvement activities for early care and education in the county, which was commonly mentioned. A number of interviewees also mentioned that they had received First 5-supported information boxes in the hospital when their babies were born.

“

*With everything at the federal level and how that's impacting the state budget also, First 5 Contra Costa might serve as a trusted messenger for parents about what is going on in other programs they are enrolled in. First 5 may serve the families and children already, so helping them—for example, to keep their Medi-Cal coverage—that's a win-win.*

”

Dr. Ori Tzvieli  
Director, Contra Costa Health



### A Convener of Child-Serving Organizations in the County

First 5 Contra Costa is seen as a community leader and an organization that brings together others that share the mission and goals of ensuring children in our county reach their full potential by focusing on the most critical years of development—prenatal through age 5. Interviewees expressed ideas for the organization to further build its relationships with local organizations, including employers and businesses, cities, school boards, and other family-focused groups.



### A Funder of Organizations Working in the Early Childhood Arena

Historically, First 5 commissions have been grantmakers to other local organizations of various sizes doing solid work to support young children and their families. First 5 Contra Costa has a network of current and former grantees and solid relationships that could serve as a springboard for sustainability efforts.



### “The Expert” in Early Child Development and Care

First 5 Contra Costa has well-respected staff that are seen as knowledgeable leaders in the area of early childhood, child care, and the needs of young children and their families. Interviewees mentioned this reputation as a potential opportunity to develop new funding partnerships and programmatic opportunities as part of the Sustainability Plan.

Overall, the interviews were highly informative and provided not only a robust picture of how the organization is viewed by its community partners and county leadership but also identified some potential partnerships and opportunities to explore in implementing the Sustainability Plan.



“

*We are in need of someone convening the sector together to do group planning. I've seen with efforts in the past, they can kind of lose energy. It's so easy to get pulled in other directions if you're not really focused on early childhood. We need someone who can give that focus to the effort, which First 5 Contra Costa can.*

”

John Jones  
Chair, First 5 Contra Costa Commission





## Landscape Analysis

A number of structural and environmental factors affect First 5 Contra Costa, that are useful to enumerate and consider when developing this plan.

### Structural Factors

First 5 Contra Costa was established by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors in 1999 as an independent public entity following the California Children and Families Act of 1998 (Proposition 10). Prop 10 allowed counties to structure their First 5 Commissions either as independent entities or as part of county agencies. First 5 Contra Costa was established as an independent public entity under Ordinance No. 99-15.

Other First 5 commissions face similar sustainability challenges to First 5 Contra Costa, prompting studies on the effectiveness of different structural models. For example, in 2018, First 5 Sonoma's Ad Hoc Sustainability Committee conducted a study on its structure as part of the Sonoma County Department of Health Services. The study found that of the 58 counties, 34 had independent entities, 13 were standalone county departments, and nine were embedded within county departments. Several counties, including Sonoma, later converted to independent agencies to improve sustainability, streamline operations, and better meet Prop 10's intent. Sonoma's study led to a unanimous recommendation to become an independent agency, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in March 2019.

While each county is unique, First 5 Sonoma's findings highlight the benefits of independent First 5 Commissions in maximizing operational efficiency and aligning with Prop 10's goals. Many converted commissions reported that independence allowed them to avoid burdensome county regulations and better fulfill their mandate.

In summary, First 5 Sonoma's key findings from their analysis of the pros and cons of converting from a County embedded agency to an independent public agency looked at the factors described below:

1. Operational and administrative efficiency—reductions to staffing costs associated with managing Department and County administrative compliance, cost savings related to staff salaries and benefits, autonomy to procure lean and cost-efficient services (e.g. accounting/fiscal, legal support, IT, telecom, HR).
2. Maintaining public confidence in the Commission's work.

*While each county is unique, First 5 Sonoma's findings highlight the benefits of independent First 5 Commissions in maximizing operational efficiency and aligning with Prop 10's goals.*

3. Maintaining and enhancing political capital and relationships.
4. Assessing capacity to recreate First 5's infrastructure—determining if the commission and staff have overall organizational bandwidth and infrastructure to operate independently.

The decision to become independent allowed First 5 Sonoma to be more flexible and responsive in grantmaking and in their community convener efforts. Similarly, other counties found that independence improved their ability to deliver early childhood resources effectively.

First 5 Contra Costa's independent structure provides flexibility in administration and operations. It allows for quicker decision-making, streamlined procurement, and more responsive programming, unlike county departments, which require approval from the Board of Supervisors. This autonomy helps First 5 Contra Costa act swiftly to serve families and children.



However, being separate from the county limits First 5 Contra Costa's involvement in county-wide planning for young children's resources. Effective coordination between agencies is critical to avoid duplication, maximize funding, and enhance impact. Some First 5 Commissions, like First 5 Sonoma, have formalized partnerships with their Boards of Supervisors to create interagency agreements and integrate First 5 as the **local early childhood expert** that can partner with the county as an intermediary and disseminate county funding on behalf of the county and its departments.

By intentionally relying on First 5 Contra Costa's expertise and flexibility, the county could achieve cost savings, better coordination, and greater impact across the early childhood system. These efficiencies not only support First 5 Contra Costa's sustainability but also strengthen the County's overall service delivery for young children and their families.

## Environmental Factors

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges facing all local commissions related to tobacco tax revenue declines, First 5 commissions also are operating in an uncertain moment with regard to state and federal support and policies for child development, health, and human services related programs. The current-year California state budget already reflects vulnerabilities in terms of cost overruns in major programs such as Medi-Cal (the state's Medicaid health care program); however, the advent of the second Trump Administration in January 2025—including nearly immediate funding freezes and the passage of H.R.1, the "One Big Beautiful Bill"—has created further uncertainty across most governmental service providers. All of this federal-level unpredictability will almost certainly make it significantly more difficult to secure additional federal or state funding or seek policy changes that could be helpful to First 5 Contra Costa and other First 5 commissions facing budgetary pressures due to declining tobacco tax revenues.

## Key Findings and Observations



The issues facing First 5 Contra Costa are largely financial in nature, driven by the decline in tobacco tax revenues and the drawdown of reserves over time. While there are both findings and recommendations in the other areas—operational, programmatic, and policy/community focused—the primary findings and, as a result, the primary recommendations, are driven by these financial realities.

### Financial

- **Deficit budgeting has reduced reserve fund balance significantly**

First 5 Contra Costa has developed a pattern of deficit spending in each fiscal year, assuming a draw-down of its reserve funds to make up the difference between revenues and expenditures. The amount drawn from reserves has fluctuated and often been less than budgeted, but the fund balance is now at a point where its use as a balancer cannot be sustained. If current trends continue, the organization's fund balance will be exhausted after FY 30/31, causing a need for immediate and drastic action. Table 3 shows the current/status quo budget projections if changes are not made to reduce spending, increase revenues, or both.

TABLE 3:

### Year End Projections with Status Quo Budget – FY 25/26 to 30/31

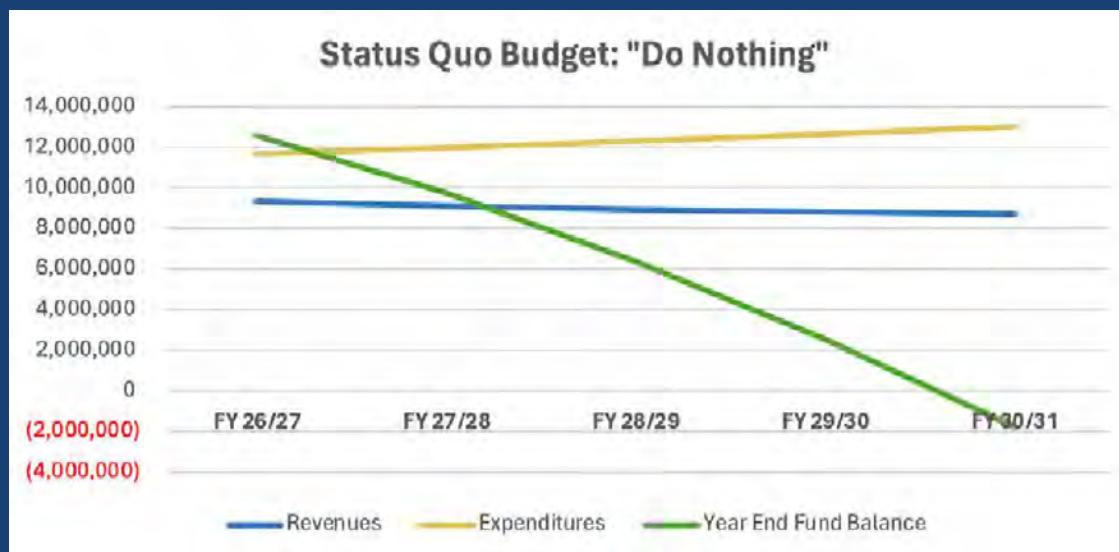
	FY 26/27 Projected	FY 27/28 Projected	FY 28/29 Projected	FY 29/30 Projected	FY 30/31 Projected
<b>Revenues</b>					
Prop 10 Tobacco Tax	3,618,616	3,401,499	3,197,409	3,082,303	2,971,340
Prop 56 Backfill	1,648,825	1,582,665	1,519,159	1,458,202	1,411,748
CECET	98,841	98,841	98,841	98,841	98,841
State Grant Income	3,103,042	3,179,879	3,258,618	3,339,308	3,421,995
Other	860,265	846,997	833,994	821,251	808,763
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>9,329,589</b>	<b>9,109,881</b>	<b>8,908,022</b>	<b>8,799,904</b>	<b>8,712,687</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>					
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>11,682,694</b>	<b>11,975,921</b>	<b>12,299,216</b>	<b>12,649,758</b>	<b>13,025,376</b>
Other financing sources/uses (leases)	11,207	11,767	12,356	12,973	13,622
<b>Net Position Begin of Year</b>	<b>14,918,994</b>	<b>12,577,095</b>	<b>9,722,822</b>	<b>6,343,983</b>	<b>2,513,370</b>
<b>Net Position End of Year</b>	<b>12,577,095</b>	<b>9,722,822</b>	<b>6,343,983</b>	<b>2,507,103</b>	<b>(1,785,697)</b>
<b>Net Change in Fund Balance</b>	<b>(2,341,898)</b>	<b>(2,854,274)</b>	<b>(3,378,839)</b>	<b>(3,836,880)</b>	<b>(4,299,067)</b>

- Current spending cannot be sustained with current revenues.

Due to the declines in tobacco tax revenues and the reduced fund balance, the organization can no longer continue spending at the same rate without seriously jeopardizing its financial stability, as indicated in Table 3 and in Figure 2:

FIGURE 2:

### FY 25/26 to 30/31 Year-End Projections Under Status Quo Budget





In addition to shifting its spending approach, the organization will focus its fiscal efforts to ensure cost-effective and flexible business practices that support long-term diversification of funding. To address fund balance depletion, the intent is to preserve and eventually grow its fund balance. Emphasis will be placed to maintain lean overhead costs and to the extent possible minimize fiscal reductions to community investments. Parallel to this effort, First 5 Contra Costa will lead efforts to identify new funding partnerships and to coordinate pooled funding efforts through public-private partnerships—the hope is that these parallel strategies will help avoid drastic impacts to the community.

- **Diversifying revenues should be a critical focus.**

In addition to continuing efforts to strategically reduce spending, pursuing new revenue streams, funding agreements, and partnerships to leverage resources will help the organization sustain its operations and programming while continuing to advance its mission over time.

Operational

- **The organization’s structure has caused it to miss out on past financial opportunities.**

As a governmental entity, the organization is neither a charitable non-profit nor a county department. Up to this point, it has operated in a gray area that has caused it to miss out on funding that could have been used to support its work, such as donations and grants available only to non-profit (i.e., 501(c)(3)) organizations.

Some other First 5 Commissions have created 501(c)(3) organizations. In a survey First 5 Contra Costa sent out as part of this project, responding commissions provided some details on why they had created their non-profits. Reasons they gave are summarized in Table 4, but generally centered around greater flexibility for the organization and more potential opportunities for partnerships and funding.

<div>TABLE 4:</div> <div>Main Reasons Cited by Commissions for Establishing a 501(c)(3) Organization</div>	What were your main reasons for establishing a 501(c)(3)?
	Ability to apply for private or philanthropic funding
	Increased flexibility in programming and partnerships
	Tax deductibility for donors
	Expanded community engagement opportunities
	Other: To take advantage of a specific tax credit program

- **Organizational staffing shifts have been a good start, but more is needed.**

First 5 Contra Costa has changed its approach to staffing, creating a more flexible operation and taking advantage of natural attrition to reduce positions. However, some major cost centers for the organization persist, especially on the administrative side of the ledger. In particular, costs for rent (for the organization’s main office, as well as three First 5 Centers) and upkeep of the two buildings it owns are significant.

## Programmatic

- **Strategic Planning will bring an opportunity to review programs.**

Knowing that this Sustainability Plan is feeding into the next strategic planning process, our efforts have focused more on the fiscal and operational aspects of the organization. However, it is clear that consideration of what community needs to prioritize in the face of declining revenue and needed spending reductions, how to best to continue driving system-level changes in the county, and where new partnerships may be possible, are all likely decision points in the next planning process.

## Policy and Community

- **First 5 Contra Costa is a respected partner in the community.**

It is clear from the key informant interviews and other aspects of the sustainability planning process that First 5 is viewed as a leader and an important asset to the county and its communities. This gives it an important voice as well as bringing opportunities to explore new partnerships with both public- and private-sector organizations.

- **New state-level funding is not imminent.**

With the current political climate at the federal level and the state facing potentially significant budget challenges due to lost federal funding and impacts of H.R. 1, the budget reconciliation package signed by President Trump in July, new ongoing state-level funding will be difficult to obtain for the foreseeable future. First 5 commissions and their statewide association will not stop their ongoing advocacy for new state funding, however, but it will likely be a longer-term effort than hoped.



## Recommended Actions



The most urgent goals of the Sustainability Plan are for First 5 Contra Costa to (1) reduce spending to live within its means and (2) bring in sufficient funding to support its day-to-day operations in the short term and to meet its overarching mission over time. Achieving these goals will take actions across the Four Pillars, as recommended in this section.

For purposes of these recommendations, we have used a 5-year time horizon starting FY 2026-27 through FY 2030-31, shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5:

5-year time horizon,  
FY 2026-27 - FY 2030-31

Time Horizon	Plan Years
Short Term	Years 1-2
Medium Term	Year 3
Long Term	Years 4-5

## Financial

The actions recommended here are aimed at reducing spending and increasing funding to ensure the organization has a diverse and stable funding base to support its operations as well as its long-term mission.

### Short Term

- Reduce Costs and Spending to Live Within Available Funds.**

To avoid depleting reserves, the organization will systematically budget for operations without tapping its fund balance, beginning in FY 27/28. Operational spending will be based only on available state tobacco tax revenues and other external funding dedicated to delivering specific services or reaching particular community outcomes. Doing so will also preserve fund balance in excess of \$12 million in FY 27/28 and for years going forward, as shown in Table 6 and Figure 3.

**TABLE 6:**

**Year End Projections with Spending Reductions Starting FY 27/28**

	FY 26/27 Projected	FY 27/28 Projected	FY 28/29 Projected	FY 29/30 Projected	FY 30/31 Projected
<b>Revenues</b>					
Prop 10 Tobacco Tax	3,618,616	3,401,499	3,197,409	3,082,303	2,971,340
Prop 56 Backfill	1,648,825	1,582,665	1,519,159	1,458,202	1,411,748
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<b>Expenditures</b>					
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>11,682,694</b>	<b>9,109,881</b>	<b>8,908,022</b>	<b>8,799,904</b>	<b>8,712,687</b>
Other financing sources/uses (leases)	11,207	11,767	12,356	12,973	13,622
<b>Net Position Begin of Year</b>	<b>14,918,994</b>	<b>12,577,095</b>	<b>12,588,862</b>	<b>12,588,862</b>	<b>12,601,218</b>
<b>Net Position End of Year</b>	<b>12,577,095</b>	<b>12,588,862</b>	<b>12,601,218</b>	<b>12,601,836</b>	<b>12,614,840</b>
<b>Net Change in Fund Balance</b>	<b>(2,341,898)</b>	<b>11,767</b>	<b>12,356</b>	<b>12,973</b>	<b>13,622</b>

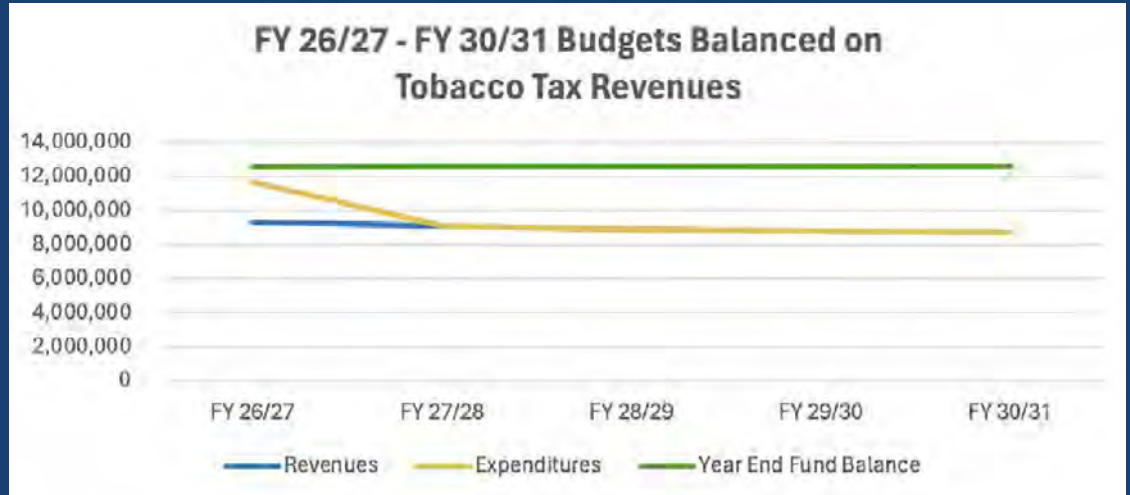
Once this is accomplished, the organization may wish to consider adopting a two-year budget cycle for planning purposes, which could help to better set goals for revenues and expenditures over time, set fundraising and development goals, and work with Commission members to plan ahead for needed changes in programming and operations to maintain a fiscal reserve.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Note that a two-year approach to budgeting does not eliminate the need for fiscal-year reporting to control agencies, audits, or other annually required budgeting and accounting work; it should be considered as more of a planning support than a cost-saving measure.



FIGURE 3:

**FY 26/27  
- FY 30/31  
Budgets  
Balanced on  
Tobacco Tax  
Revenues**



- **Establish a Fund Balance Policy with a Contingency Fund**

The organization has not had a policy regarding the maintenance of a fund balance or contingency reserve. Like many other First 5 commissions, the fund balance built up in years when tobacco tax revenues were healthier has been used to offset more recent revenue declines and uncertain state funding.

With the reserve now at a significantly lower level, First 5 Contra Costa will:

1. Re-establish a goal for a contingency fund level. Until the Strategic Plan adopted in Fiscal Year 2020-21, First 5 Contra Costa maintained an Emergency Reserve of \$7.5 million. Having a contingency fund gives the organization flexibility to respond to urgent needs or seize opportunities that may arise. Having funds in reserve also makes organizational decision-making less reactive and more purposeful; it provides breathing room to evaluate options and make thoughtful, mission-aligned choices.
2. Establish a policy for use of the contingency fund, setting forth circumstances under which fund balance dollars not already committed could be utilized, and how to replenish the reserve if possible.

Ultimately, should tobacco tax revenues become permanently unavailable, the reserve amount should be sufficient to sustain baseline programs for approximately one year while staff secures additional funding and/or begins the process to close operations.

## Short to Medium Term

- **Establish Baseline Funding Goals with Fund Development Goals Year-to-Year**

Related to the short-term effort identified below in the Organizational category, in which the organization will seek to add internal capacity to fundraise from a variety of potential sources, this goal seeks to identify the minimum level of funds needed to support the organization's basic operations, while setting fund development goals for the organization to grow or develop programmatic offerings over time.

This plan does not pre-establish any specific development goals for particular types of funding, as this will need to be part of the discussion and decision-making process internally with staff input, as well as with support and input from the Commission and other partners.



## Organizational

The actions in this section target the need to build organizational capacity for fund development, while continuing to work collaboratively with staff to implement the changes and opportunities it may bring for the team. The strategies discussed in this section are also aimed at developing a longer-term plan for ensuring the structure of the organization matches its needs.

### Short Term

- **Review Owned and Rented Space and Identify Changes to Reduce Costs**

As noted previously, the cost of rent and building operations for the First 5 Centers and the First 5 Contra Costa administrative offices are a relatively significant component of the budget. The organization should review its space needs to determine if there are options to reduce or offset costs for rental and owned properties. Additionally, as the organization completes its strategic planning process for the next five years, consideration should be given to service models at the First 5 Centers that integrate co-location, shared spaces, virtual services, and pop-up opportunities that make participation more accessible to families and decrease dependency on brick-and-mortar locations.

This analysis should include a review of current and projected expenditures for rent, taxes, upkeep and other capital outlay, as well as the risks and benefits of maintaining vs. shifting away from the current locations. This should include an analysis of the market and potential sale proceeds of buildings currently owned as well as a consideration of how funding received through such a sale would be used over time as part of the overall sustainability plan. The organization should also consider whether some of the locations it currently rents or owns might be able to support operations of partner organizations through shared spaces that could help offset costs.

- **Establish Organizational Fund Development Capacity**

Up to now, the organization has not had a dedicated position for fund development or fundraising. The Executive Director and program staff have taken on this role, and while the Executive Director would continue to play a key role in this work, having staff with the skills and dedicated time for fundraising, seeking partnerships, developing agreements, and monitoring success is critical. This could include development of capacity within existing staff, establishing contracted positions, and/or establishing a new internal staff position. It could be helpful to consider offering professional development opportunities for existing staff, depending on their skills and interest in this type of work.

Due to the potential to pursue various funding types and sources, careful consideration should be given to the strengths, experience and skills that will be needed to obtain the types of funds that would be the best fit for the organization, and whether the role should be concentrated within one staff position or spread across multiple positions. Establishing goals and actively managing these efforts, with appropriate accountability, will be critical.

- **Create a 501(c)(3)-Status Organization Under First 5 Contra Costa**

The organization has been considering the idea of creating a separate organization incorporated as a 501(c)(3) for fundraising purposes. Some organizations—including both public and private funders—require such a designation for their grantees. As a result, First 5 Contra Costa has missed opportunities to apply for funding in the past.

After consulting with the Working Group and with other First 5s that operate separate 501(c)(3) organizations, the recommendation is to develop a 501(c)(3) for First 5 Contra Costa. There will be some small upfront costs (estimated at less than \$15,000) to properly start up and register the organization and ensure its documents of incorporation are consistent with the mission, vision and goals of the Commission, as well as some small costs (estimated at \$5,000 per year) to ensure compliance with reporting requirements. It is not recommended to separately staff the organization, but to instead use First 5 Contra Costa staff within their existing duties to provide any needed support.

Overall, the flexibility afforded by the existence of this organization in terms of fundraising and tax-deductibility for donors should outweigh the costs, based on the feedback received from First 5 Commissions that have created a 501(c)(3).







## Short to Medium Term

- **Continue Reviewing Organizational Needs and Revising Staffing Patterns**

In a continuation of the work that predated the development of this plan, the organization should continue to review its staffing and make adjustments as needed to support a leaner approach to operations, without compromising quality or goals.

- **Diversify Funding Streams by Expanding and/or Developing New Relationships.**

Although as mentioned in the landscape section that many private and public funding sources are currently being reduced or eliminated due to the political climate, there are opportunities for new partnerships within the county—with cities, school boards, corporations, and the county itself—which could bring the potential for new one-time or ongoing funding streams, service expansions, and other means of either lowering First 5 Contra Costa's costs or enhancing its efforts.

- **Establish an early childhood focused funder collective with private philanthropy**

First 5 Contra Costa will lead the effort to establish an Early Childhood Funders collective that can intentionally pool funds for targeted needs and issue areas in early childhood. Given the current gaps in services and funding for underserved communities, public and philanthropic funders have an opportunity to prioritize public-private partnerships. By sharing responsibility and aligning resources, these collaborations can maximize impact, promote innovation, and create more sustainable solutions than any one sector could achieve alone.

- **Create more interagency agreements to formalize relationships with key county departments**

These include departments such as the Health Department (Contra Costa Health) and Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD), which serve similar populations in many of their programs. This could result in new service partnerships that leverage multiple public funding streams and maximize use of resources for the intended audiences.

Several counties, including some in the Bay Area, already rely on their First 5 Commissions to manage local ballot measure funds supporting early childhood initiatives. This model ensures strong fiscal accountability, alignment with community priorities and knowledge of the early childhood landscape, and coordinated service delivery.

*Positioning* First 5 Contra Costa *to leverage its expertise as the County's expert and go-to public entity solely dedicated to coordinating early childhood planning, collaboration, and—when appropriate—discretionary funding initiatives that would create new opportunities for efficiency, flexibility, and cross-system collective impact.* This approach positions the County and its partners to more effectively direct resources where they are needed most—toward improving outcomes for young children and families across Contra Costa County.

First 5 Contra Costa's twenty five years of experience as a local public funder, convener and innovator puts the organization on solid footing to take on a broader and greater role to lead the administration of early childhood-related initiatives. **There is great opportunity to more intentionally maximize the authority given to First 5 commissions by Prop 10 statute to achieve greater local coordination through more flexible service delivery systems that in turn leverage community and county assets in Contra Costa County.** This intent is clearly articulated in Prop 10's statute Division 108, Section 130100 (a):

*"It is the intent of this act to facilitate the creation and implementation of an integrated, comprehensive, and collaborative system of information and services to enhance optimal early childhood development. This system should function as a network that promotes accessibility to all information and services from any entry point into the system. It is further the intent of this act to emphasize local decision-making, to provide greater local flexibility in designing delivery systems, and to eliminate duplicative administrative systems."*



*Designating First 5 Contra Costa as the County's central coordinating entity for early childhood planning, collaboration, and—when appropriate—funding distribution initiatives would create meaningful efficiencies, enhance flexibility, and strengthen collective impact.*



As an example of what is possible, Appendix A included in this report contains information on several initiatives that other county First 5 Commissions operate or contribute to, with funding from other local and external sources. Some of the counties selected for these examples not only blend Prop 10 with other public and philanthropic funding sources but also have designated their local First 5 Commission as the lead administrator for early childhood revenue generated by voter approved ballot measures.

- **Develop relationships with cities and school districts**

These entities may be able to offer space for First 5 services, trainings, or other programming, or be willing to establish funding partnerships aimed at better supporting families and young children served by multiple agencies and organizations.

## Programmatic

As fiscal and operational changes come into focus, the impacts to programmatic offerings will become more clear. Syncing this plan with the timing of First 5 Contra Costa's next 5-year Strategic Plan is a purposeful way to gather information and feedback from community members and partner organizations, as well as set priorities for the coming years in light of other changes taking place.

## Short to Medium Term

- **Conduct Strategic Planning in Concert with Sustainability Efforts.**

As the organization develops its next strategic plan, it will be critical to identify which areas of community-focused work should be prioritized based on First 5 Contra Costa's ability to make an impact and our current understanding of need within the county.

Unlike the sustainability planning process which was a largely "internal" process, the strategic plan process will by design include input from the community, including families, partner organizations, and other key stakeholders. First 5 plans to use the strategic planning process to also help the community and stakeholders learn about the agency's sustainability plan and direction for the future.



## Policy and Community

Over time, First 5 Contra Costa has played an active role in advocating for policies that support early childhood development. The organization also has an opportunity to increase its efforts in Contra Costa County to place children and families at the forefront of policy, budgeting and services discussions.

### Short Term

- **Develop Communications Plan to Share Sustainability Efforts.**

In partnership with the state First 5 Association, elected officials, the First 5 Contra Costa Commission, and others, First 5 Contra Costa will discuss its development of a sustainability plan, one of the first few plans of this nature created by a county First 5 commission. This can help jump-start local efforts as well as bringing state-level attention to the needs of First 5 Commissions and the populations they serve.

### Long Term

- **Take the Lead in Establishing a county specific Community Children’s Fund.**

Many localities have developed funds or endowments of this nature to support programs and services for children. With its existing role as a convener and leader in early childhood development, First 5 Contra Costa would be a natural choice to pull together a representative community group to develop the concept and create a governance structure. Establishing a 501c3 status for First 5 Contra Costa will support the creation of a governance structure that can lead efforts to establish a ‘community fund’ that will pool donor contributions and charitable assets dedicated to local programs, non-profits, and/or initiatives that advance the optimal development and education of young children and their families.

### Ongoing

- **Continue Efforts to Create Sustainable Alternative State-Level Funding to Proposition 10/ 56.**

Through the statewide First 5 Association, continue to actively engage in efforts to develop new funding sources for First 5 Commissions. This is likely a multi-year effort and may involve a return to the ballot; the experience of First 5 Contra Costa in developing this sustainability plan, and making the necessary adjustments to continue operations in light of declining resources, will be instructive to lawmakers and policy leaders.

## Next Steps



### Create Tactical Plan to Implement Recommendations

Many of the recommendations in this Sustainability Plan are considered to be short-term and somewhat urgent in nature given the decline in revenue and the pace at which the organization has tapped its reserves to cover funding gaps. The first step for the organization will be to take the recommendations in this plan and build out a plan with action steps and a timeline for accomplishing these tasks.

Developing the recommended communication plan will require First 5 Contra Costa to think through how to frame and talk about this sustainability work and can help to jump-start the process of developing new connections and partnerships within the community. Making decisions about how to “roll out” public communications about this process is a key step.

### Develop Performance Indicators

How will the organization know when it has achieved success in delivering on the goal of long-term sustainability for the organization? Simply checking off boxes on a plan is not enough to declare victory, and much of the work started by this plan—even recommendations labeled “short term”—will almost certainly be ongoing. It will be important to work with Commission members, staff and key stakeholders to define and measure success in this effort over the next five years.

### Monitor and Report

Regular reporting at Commission meetings and internal staff meetings on progress and activities related to the Sustainability Plan will be critical to ensuring ongoing engagement, attention, and progress.





## Conclusion

The thorough and thoughtful efforts of the Working Group, the executive team and staff of First 5 Contra Costa, and the many others who contributed to this Sustainability Plan is groundbreaking. Every First 5 commission has conducted strategic planning and summarized their activities and successes in annual reports for the past 25 years. This process, however, has held up a light to the finances and operations of First 5 Contra Costa in a new and deeper way, forging a path towards long-term sustainability for the organization and taking stock of its position in the community along the way.

The insights gained through this effort are invaluable and set the organization on a path to success for years to come. We hope it serves not only as a roadmap for First 5 Contra Costa, but as a guide for other organizations wishing to do the same.

# Acknowledgements

The successful development of this plan would not have been possible without the contributions of many individuals, who we thank for their time and efforts.

Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and their staff

*Hon. John Gioia, District 1 Supervisor*

*Hon. Candace Anderson, Chair, District 2 Supervisor*

*Hon. Diane Burgis, District 3 Supervisor*

*Hon. Ken Carlson, District 4 Supervisor*

*Hon. Shanelle Scales-Preston, District 5 Supervisor*

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First 5 Contra Costa Commissioners and Alternate Commissioners

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## References

<sup>i</sup> Strategic Plan and Long-Term Financial Plan, Fiscal Years 2023-2026, First 5 Contra Costa. Accessed at: <https://www.first5coco.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/First5ContraCosta-Strategic-Plan-2023.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Legislative Analyst's Office, November 1998. Proposition 10: State and County Early Childhood Development Programs. Accessed at [https://lao.ca.gov/ballot/1998/10\\_11\\_1998.htm](https://lao.ca.gov/ballot/1998/10_11_1998.htm)

<sup>iii</sup> Brad Williams, Senior Partner, Capitol Matrix Consulting, July 23, 2025 memo to First 5 California, "Tobacco Tax Revenue Projections – California Children and Families First Trust Fund," accessed at <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=36031642&AID=1192454&MID=36680>

# Appendix A

## First 5 Commissions Leveraging Funds Across Local and External Sources

Commission	Program	Funding Sources
Yolo	<p><b>Welcome Baby: Road to Resilience:</b> provides vital, early services to families living in Yolo County with a child under the age of two. Families receive in-clinic resource navigation, a nurse home visit postpartum and follow-up, and, as needed, longer-term intensive home visiting services during pregnancy and the child's early years. WB:R2R's tailored, early approach enables timely identification and intervention to promote maternal and child health, prevent child maltreatment, and build a foundation for early learning and school readiness.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>Local Funds:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First 5 Yolo</li> <li>• County Board of Supervisors</li> <li>• City of Davis</li> <li>• City of Woodland</li> <li>• City of West Sacramento</li> </ul> <p><b>External Funds:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CA Dept of Social Services Office of Child Abuse Prevention</li> <li>• American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds allocated by Yolo County Board of Supervisors and local cities</li> <li>• First 5 California Home Visiting Coordination Grant</li> <li>• Private Donors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medi-Cal - CA Dept of Health Care Services (DHCS):</li> <li>• Child and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI)</li> <li>• CalAIM Community Health Worker Services (CHW)</li> <li>• CalAIM Enhanced Care Management (ECM)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Sutter Health</li> <li>• Dignity Health</li> </ul> <p><b>In-Kind Partners:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UC Davis Health Equity Across the Lifespan Lab</li> <li>• UC Davis Health</li> <li>• Sutter Davis Hospital</li> <li>• Dignity/Woodland Hospital</li> <li>• Kaiser Permanente</li> <li>• Capital OB/GYN</li> </ul>

## First 5 Commissions Leveraging Funds Across Local and External Sources (continued)

Commission	Program	Funding Sources
Santa Clara	<p><b>Home Visiting Programs:</b> In a comprehensive study published in November 2024, Santa Clara County's First 5 mapped funding amounts and sources for every home visiting program in operation in the county, some of which are funded by First 5.</p> <p>All home visiting models in the county except for Head Start rely on at least two sources of funding, and several braid and/or blend funding from even more.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p><b>Early Childhood Mental Health Outpatient Consortium</b></p> <p><b>Local Funds:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behavioral Health</li> <li>First 5</li> </ul> <p><b>External Funds:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DHCS/Medi-Cal</li> </ul> <p>The funding sources listed here are for the <b>Early Childhood Mental Health Outpatient Consortium</b>, which represented 53% of funding for home visiting identified in Contra Costa County in FY23-24. The program has an annual capacity of 1,800 slots.</p>
Solano	<p><b>Early Learning Center:</b> First 5 Solano County has raised funds from a variety of sources to purchase and redevelop a former school site in Vallejo. When complete, the ELC will house multiple service providers, including early care and education providers, as well as bringing together other services for families and children.<sup>3</sup></p>	<p><b>Local Funds:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$2M - County Board of Supervisors</li> <li>\$30,000 County Board of Education</li> <li>\$61K - Vallejo City Council</li> <li>\$4.47M - First 5 Solano</li> <li>\$2.86M - Child Start Inc.</li> </ul> <p><b>External Funds:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$500K – Federal earmark</li> <li>\$1M – Syar Foundation grant</li> <li>\$5M – State Earmark</li> <li>\$1M – State Earmark</li> <li>\$200K – Irwin Foundation</li> </ul>
Alameda	<p><b>Collaborative Diaper Distribution Program:</b> Administered by SupplyBank.org, this partnership will distribute \$5.8 million in diapers over three calendar years (2025-2027) at sites such as Family Resource Centers, WIC locations, and Resource and Referral agencies.<sup>4</sup></p>	<p><b>Local Funds:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First 5</li> <li>Alameda County Social Services Agency</li> <li>Alameda County Health</li> <li>Alameda County Probation Department</li> </ul>

## Sources:

<sup>1</sup>The First 5 Center wrote a recent blog post about the Welcome Baby Program, at: <https://first5center.org/blog/first-5-yolo-countys-welcome-baby-program>;

<sup>2</sup>First 5 Santa Clara's full report on home visiting programs is available at: <https://first5kids.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Feasibility-Study-for-the-Expansion-of-Home-Visiting-Services-for-Children-11-1-2024.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>First 5 California, "Sustainability, Diversification & Capacity Building: A Playbook for Local First 5 Commissions," October 2024

<sup>4</sup>First 5 Alameda, "Strengthening system partnerships through collaborative investments in diaper distribution program," January 2025, accessed at: <https://www.first5alameda.org/strengthening-system-partnerships-through-collaborative-investments-in-diaper-distribution-program/>



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

December 2025



## Internal Updates

### *First 5 Contra Costa Staff Join the Statewide First 5 Leadership Lab*

We're thrilled to announce that four of our team members have been selected to participate in the inaugural statewide First 5 Network—Leadership Lab! Congratulations to Sandra Naughton, Deputy Director; Mackenzie Whipps, Ph.D., Data and Policy Manager; Liliana Gonzalez, Early Childhood Program Officer; and Stephanie Shieh, Early Childhood Program Officer. We're proud to see them take part in this exciting professional growth opportunity.

The Leadership Lab is designed to foster mutual growth, connection, and shared leadership across the First 5 Network. Through reciprocal partnerships, participants build confidence, strengthen leadership skills, and cultivate a culture of collaboration and inclusion. This unique model creates space for participants to both give and receive support—encouraging reflection, innovation, and shared success.

We are proud to champion staff development and capacity building through this forward-thinking leadership model, which brings together colleagues from First 5 commissions across the state to learn from one another and grow in service of their communities.

## County Updates

### *Elected Leaders Visit to Discuss Strengthening Early Childhood Support*

In November, Assemblymember Lori Wilson toured our First 5 Center in Brentwood. During her visit, Assemblymember Wilson observed programming in action, and learned more about how the First 5 Center model has evolved over its 20 year history to meet families with young children's most pressing early childhood needs. The visit highlighted how First 5 Centers and the other county-wide services First 5 Contra Costa supports foster the health and stability of families and children during those first five critical years of life.

Also in November, First 5 Contra Costa hosted Congressman Mark DeSaulnier in our office to discuss the need to continue to support early childhood, and in particular, prevention and upstream investments during these challenging times. We appreciate the Congressman's continued leadership and dedication as a champion for early childhood over the years in all his elected positions, from county supervisor to Congressman.



## Focus Area Updates

*Working in partnership with others, First 5 Contra Costa aims to change systems of services and supports through three focus areas—Early Care and Education, Early Intervention, and Strengthening Families—to better meet the needs of young children and their families.*

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

December 2025



## Early Care and Education

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

### ***Celebrating Connection at the Ready Kids East County Big Table Event***

Service providers and parents joined us on the evening of October 29 at the Antioch Community Center for an evening of connection, reflection, and action to strengthen service provision for Black and African American families living in East County. Part of our Ready Kids East County effort, the event included a keynote speaker who shared research-based and practical strategies to enhance outreach to African American families and offered space for participants to reflect on their current practices while identifying actionable next steps to promote engagement and support inclusion.

[Click here to watch the highlights from the Big Table event](#)



### ***Coming Up Next***

First 5 Contra Costa has been selected for a grant through the Contra Costa Together network to expand access to developmental screening and playgroups to incoming Transitional Kindergarten (TK) students enrolling in East County-based school districts. We are excited for this opportunity to replicate the success of the model we have implemented with Pittsburg Unified School District, providing targeted supports to children with mild-to-moderate learning and behavioral needs and to connect families to community resources that support their health and wellbeing.

## Early Intervention

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

### ***Seeking New Resources to Support Early Intervention Services***

First 5 Contra Costa is seeking grant funding from the Concord/Pleasant Hill Healthcare District, administered by the City of Concord, to support developmental playgroups at the Monument First 5 Center. These 8-week, weekly, 1.5-hour playgroups will serve approximately 45 children with mild-to-moderate developmental delays and their parents. An early intervention specialist and teacher associate facilitate sessions, teaching parents about child development and identifying specific strategies tailored to their child's needs. The playgroups also foster new parent connections and equips them with communication skills and information necessary to advocate for their child's needs, within and outside of the school systems. The playgroup model encourages help-seeking behaviors and empowers participating families, especially those facing economic barriers, to address their children's needs and improve their health.



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

December 2025



## Strengthening Families

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

### Strengthening Home Visiting in Contra Costa County

First 5 Contra Costa is working to support the efforts of the home visiting programs across their county, particularly those who serve families most impacted by disparate perinatal health outcomes. First 5 Contra Costa partnered with Prenatal to Five Fiscal Strategies, a national expert in home visiting, to conduct a landscape analysis and lead a multi-month learning series focused on collaboration, workforce capacity, aligning services to community needs, and coordinating funding, data, and evaluation. The resulting report offers system-level recommendations and an implementation plan centered on improving coordination, strengthening the workforce, and ensuring equitable access for all families. Read the full report [here](#).



### Coming up Next:

First 5 is implementing a new grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety that will provide more free car seats, safety education, and certified technician support to protect children aged 0-5 in high-risk communities. The car seats are available to families who register with one of the five First 5 Centers throughout the county.

## Parent Advisory Group

The **Parent Advisory Group (PAG)** is a new effort to intentionally center parent voices in First 5 Contra Costa's efforts, and to support parents as early childhood advocates.

### Supporting Local Community Advocacy: First 5 Contra Costa Awards Mini-Grants to Strengthen Community Voice

First 5 Contra Costa recently announced the recipients of the Building Blocks Mini-Grants, a one-time funding opportunity that supports local advocacy projects that engage parents and/or service providers in advancing issues and policies that benefit children ages 0–5 and their families. The intended outcome of these grants is to strengthen community voice and advocacy capacity, empowering organizations to drive lasting policy and systems change for Contra Costa families with young children. This year, First 5 Contra Costa received 33 applications requesting a total of \$141,400 in funding across all proposals. These organizations will use their mini-grants to create meaningful, community-driven projects that align with First 5 Contra Costa's mission, ensuring young children are healthy, ready to learn, and supported in safe, nurturing families and communities.

Congratulations to the 2025 grant recipients: Black Girls Mental Health Foundation, Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, Contra Costa Abundant Birth Project, in partnership with Public Health Foundation Enterprises for Expecting Justice, NCal Family Child Care Alliance, Care Parent Network, in partnership with VistAblity.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**December 2025**



In addition to these mini-grants, a four-part training series for parents and service providers interested in learning more about advocacy for early childhood issues concluded on November 6. About 40 individuals from across the county participated in these evening training sessions led by Fierce Advocates to learn about advocacy strategies. Thank you to the dedicated parents and service providers who participated in this pilot. We are inspired by the creativity, dedication, and commitment of these grantees and training participants, and we look forward to seeing the impact of their advocacy in our county.



## ***Coming Up Next***

The Parent Advisory Group will meet on December 13 for its second meeting of the program year. The group will learn about First 5 Contra Costa's Strategic Planning process and will provide input that will help inform staff's recommended strategies for family-facing engagement around developmental screening in the future.



**Staff Report  
December 15, 2025**

**ACTION:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DISCUSSION:** \_\_\_\_\_ ✓

**TITLE: Staff Appreciation and Service Milestones**

**Introduction:**

The Commission has adopted the practice of annually appreciating First 5 staff and recognizing those who have surpassed service milestones.

**Background:**

The Commission recognizes staff who have achieved five-year increments of service with First 5.

Two staff members have surpassed their five-year anniversary:

Jamela Tandinco & Deanna Carmona

Two staff members have surpassed their 15-year anniversary:

Sarah Burke & Elida Treanor

One staff member has surpassed her 25-year anniversary:

Lisa R. Johnson

**Recommendation:**

The Commission recognizes staff for their milestone, service, and continued dedication and accomplishments.





**Staff Report  
December 15, 2025**

**ACTION:** \_\_\_\_\_ ✓  
**DISCUSSION:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TITLE: Consider approving the 2026 Slate of Officers of the Commission.**

The Ad Hoc Nominating Committee, consisting of Commissioners Vidya Iyengar, Roslyn Gentry and Dr. Sefanit Mekuria met on *November 17, 2025* and prepared a slate of officers for the election on *December 15, 2025*.

Commissioners were invited to serve as an officer (Chair, Vice-Chair or Secretary/Treasurer) and thereby on the Executive Committee – or propose another Commissioner for the Nominating Committee’s consideration. Note that according to our Bylaws, only Commissioners may serve as officers of the Commission.

In addition, there is a non-voting seat on the Executive Committee that may be filled by either a Commissioner or Alternate Commissioner. This seat will also be on the slate prepared by the Nominating Committee.

In accordance with the Bylaws, the Nominating Committee emailed out this Slate of Officers for election for 2025 to the entire Commission on *November 18, 2025*:

Chair: John Jones  
Vice-Chair: Marla Stuart  
Secretary / Treasurer: Mary Rocha  
Additional Non-Voting Member: Gareth Ashley

**Recommendation:**

Approve the 2026 Slate of Officers of the Commission.



**Slate of Nominees  
for First 5 Contra Costa Commission Officers  
Calendar Year 2026**

<i>Chair:</i>	<b>John Jones</b>
<i>Vice Chair:</i>	<b>Marla Stuart</b>
<i>Secretary/Treasurer:</i>	<b>Mary Rocha</b>
<i>Additional non-voting Member:</i>	<b>Gareth Ashley</b>



**STAFF REPORT**  
**December 15, 2025**

ACTION:   X  

DISCUSSION: \_\_\_\_\_

**TITLE: CONSIDER approval to extend First 5 Contra Costa's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2023-2026 through FY 2026-27.**

**Introduction:**

Proposition 10 calls for every Commission to adopt a strategic plan in order to receive the tobacco tax revenues the Proposition established. Given recent completion of a 5-Year Sustainability Plan for First 5 Contra Costa, staff recommend extending the current plan that would end in June 2026 for a full fiscal year through June 2027.

**Background:**

The Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2023/24 – 2025/26 builds on First 5 Contra Costa's 25-year history and experience as a funder, convener, advocate, and leader in early childhood systems, while elevating key system roles and approaches that are critical for First 5 to remain a viable, sustainable, and impactful organization.

The current plan adopted by the Commission in June of 2023 lays out First 5's approach to sustainability which strives to maintain a stable organization; build on and grow investments for young children and families in the county through public and private funding partnerships; and leverage First 5's strengths and assets built over the years to continue to build the case and advocate for sustainable investments in early childhood.

Also, the plan calls for the creation of a 5-year sustainability plan to guide operational, organizational, and community investments in the long-term. A draft 5-Year Sustainability Plan was created and brought to Commission for input and consideration at the October 27, 2025, meeting, and on the agenda for formal Commission approval for the December 15<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting.

With the current plan ending on June 30, 2026, staff began strategic planning efforts in August 2025; however, additional time is recommended to ensure an in-depth strategic planning process to engage and collect input from staff, commissioners, and the community for the development of a new 5-year Strategic Plan. The new Strategic Plan will take a longer view and will integrate fiscal and organizational strategies and recommendations outlined in the Commission's adopted Sustainability Plan.

Extension of the current Strategic Plan through fiscal year 2026/27 assumes ongoing alignment with the identified Commission's focus areas and strategies for community investments in the FY 2023-2026 plan and implementation of short-term identified operational and organizational strategies for FY 26/27 outlined in the Sustainability Plan to systematically reduce spending and secure sufficient external funding to meet First 5 Contra Costa's overarching mission.

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommend the Commission approve extending First 5 Contra Costa's Strategic Plan for one fiscal year through June 30, 2027. If approved staff will revise the current strategic planning timeline for the new 5-year Strategic Plan to reflect an extended six-month planning period of the new Strategic Plan beginning in FY 2027/28 through FY 2031/32. Staff would bring a draft new strategic plan for formal approval and adoption in December 2026.

Approval of this request will ensure compliance with state regulation for the Contra Costa County First 5 Commission to have an active approved plan in order to receive tobacco tax revenues established by Proposition 10.



# Community Impact Report

FY 2024-25







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# Letter from the Executive Director

At First 5 Contra Costa, we remain steadfast in our commitment to building a more equitable early childhood system—one that centers families, uplifts community voices, and ensures every child has the opportunity to thrive. In Fiscal Year 2024–2025, we celebrated our 25th anniversary with the help of the Board of Supervisors and many of our community partners. It was an opportunity for us to reflect on our accomplishments over time, and recommit to our mission, vision and guiding principles. This year, we deepened our impact through efforts that reflect our values of equity, inclusion, and community partnership, and demonstrate our commitment to building and strengthening the early childhood system in Contra Costa. Our efforts impacted nearly 16,000 parents, children, and providers across the county. In this era of uncertainty and upheaval, we continue to move this important work forward with a focus on sustainability and long-term system change.

Three efforts stand out as particularly meaningful this year. First, we expanded Ready Kids East County, our place-based initiative focused on improving school readiness and family resilience for African American and Black children. Through community-led events, targeted services for underserved families, and a social network analysis, we are building a more connected and responsive ecosystem for Black families in East County. Second, our county launched the BOOST pilot, a wage enhancement program designed to stabilize the early care and education workforce. This initiative, co-designed with community partners and implemented by CocoKids, is now delivering monthly wage supplements to 123 early educators across the county. Third, we advanced our *Inclusion in Early Learning Project* into its second year, equipping 380 child care providers with tools and training to create more inclusive environments for children with disabilities and developmental delays, culminating in one of our largest convenings to date that inspired and educated community members from all across our county.

Our First 5 Centers continue to be trusted spaces for families—especially during a time when many are facing uncertainty due to changes in federal immigration and public benefits policies. This year, through a partnership with the Employment & Human Services Department, our Centers expanded access to concrete supports like food, hygiene kits, and laundry services, while continuing to offer culturally responsive programming, developmental screenings, and peer connection opportunities. They remain a vital lifeline for families navigating complex and rapidly changing systems.

Families are at the heart of everything we do, every day. We are listening more deeply, investing more intentionally, and working more collaboratively to ensure that our systems reflect the strengths and needs of our diverse communities. I am grateful to our Commission, staff, and partners for their leadership and dedication, and to the families who continue to guide and inspire our work.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ruth Fernández". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Ruth Fernández, EdD  
Executive Director







## Mission and Vision



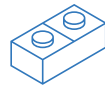
### *Mission*

To foster the development of our community's children, prenatal through 5 years of age.



### *Vision*

Contra Costa's young children are healthy, ready to learn, and supported in safe, nurturing families and communities.



### *Core Values*

Diversity and Inclusion, Equity, Cultural Humility, and Community Partnership

## Introduction

### Results Based Accountability Framework

In FY 2023, First 5 Contra Costa adopted a Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework to measure progress towards achieving our vision that Contra Costa's young children will be healthy, ready to learn, and supported in safe, nurturing families and communities. The RBA approach focuses on collecting and using data to understand the impact of investments or efforts. Data can be used to help organizations better understand the collective impact of programs or efforts and how they are contributing to improvements in community or population-level indicators of well-being. First 5 Contra Costa is in the early phase of adopting an RBA approach. Throughout this report, you will find boxes like the ones below that help identify some of the RBA-inspired programmatic data we begun collecting to answer RBA's three central questions: How much? How well? Who's better off?

#### How Much?

Who was impacted? How many participants were served, and how much service was provided?

#### How Well?

What was the quality of the services delivered? How well were First 5's core values of diversity and inclusion, equity, cultural humility, and community partnership reflected in the services?

#### Who's Better Off?

How are participants better off as a result of receiving services? How has participants' quality of life improved?



## Our Reach

The Community Impact Report looks at the multiple ways we are working to fulfill our mission to foster the development of our community's children, prenatal through five years of age. This report highlights our work in partnership with others to strengthen the early childhood ecosystem and deliver needed services to meet the needs of young children and their families.

Our work at First 5 Contra Costa generally falls into three focus areas: strengthening families, early intervention, and early care and education. Within those focus areas, we aim to deliver programming that builds provider capacity to deliver high-quality early childhood programming, reduces outcome disparities, and connects families to needed services.

In FY 2025, we continued to expand our work to address the root causes, or social determinants, of outcomes for young children and their families—deepening our systems change work. This year in our Community Impact Report, we are including a spotlight on one particularly successful systems change effort—a wage augmentation program that we and our partners helped design and launch.

First 5 Contra Costa funds several organizations to deliver programs that foster families' resilience, enhance parent-child-interactions, and promote school readiness. In FY 2025, First 5 Contra Costa funded organizations that provided services to approximately:

6,995

parents,

6,670

children under age six, and

2,332

service providers.

The **6,670** children who participated in services accounted for about

10%

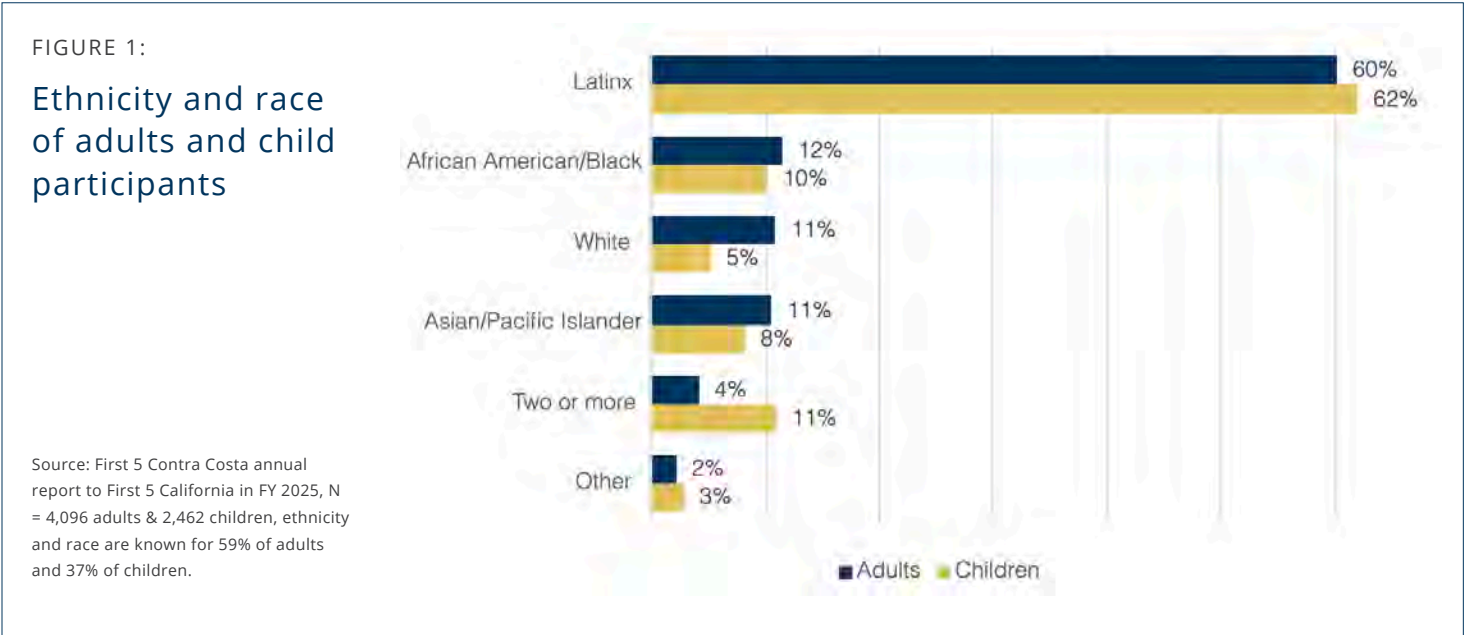
of the estimated **68,765** children ages 0-5 in Contra Costa County.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As cited on kidsdata.org, California Dept. of Finance, Population Estimates and Projections; U.S. Census Bureau, Population and Housing Unit Estimates (Mar. 2025)



Of adults served where primary language is known, 49% spoke Spanish (including bilingual Spanish/English), 43% spoke English, and 8% spoke another language, including Arabic, Berber, Cantonese, Dari, Farsi, Hindi, Mandarin, Nepali, Pashto, Portuguese, Punjabi, Tagalog, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

Among families who participated in services and provided information on their ethnicity and race, Latinx was the most common identification, comprising 62% of children and 60% of adults. African American and Black participants represented 12% of adults and 10% of children, followed by Asian/Pacific Islander (8% adults, 11% children), White (5% adults, 11% children), and two or more ethnicities and races (4% adults, 11% children). Finally, other ethnicities, including Middle Eastern/North African groups such as Afghan, Algerian, Persian, Syrian, and Turkish, made up 3% of adults and 2% of children.





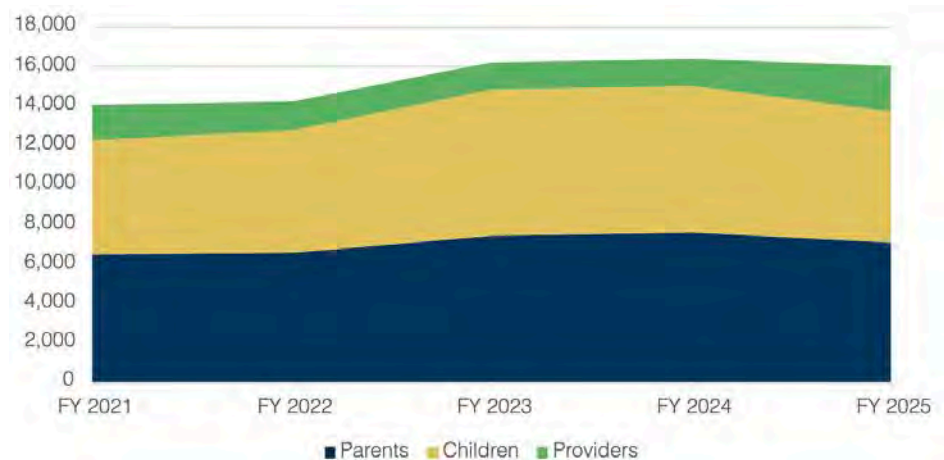
Over the past five fiscal years, First 5 Contra Costa has consistently served around 15,000 participants annually, with fluctuations primarily due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, normal fluctuations in service participation, and programmatic changes. The pandemic, spanning from March 2020 to May 2023, disrupted access to programs, leading to some year-to-year changes in participation. A significant change occurred in FY 2024 when First 5 Contra Costa reallocated funding for home visiting services to First 5 Centers, which resulted in an overall decrease in adult and child participants agencywide. However, this was partly offset by the distribution of 646 more parent kits, expanding outreach to caregivers. Additionally, in recent years, First 5 Contra Costa has shifted from a direct service provider role toward a systems-building and capacity-strengthening role, aligning with evolving community needs and sustainability goals.

Participants	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Parents	6,396	6,531	7,394	7,550	6,995
Children	5,793	6,196	7,428	7,372	6,670
Providers	1,813	1,426	1,341	1,402	2,322
	14,002	14,152	16,163	16,324	15,987

FIGURE 2:

### Number of participants receiving services over the past five fiscal years

Source: First 5 Contra Costa annual report to First 5 California in FY 2021, FY 2022, FY 2023, FY 2024 & FY 2025



The 555 fewer parents and 702 fewer children served in FY 2025 than in FY 2024 was primarily because FY 2025 was the first year First 5 Contra Costa did not include general information and referral calls to the Contra Costa Crisis Center from parents with children under six. Though the overall number of adults and children was fewer in FY 2025, some programs increased the number of participants they served. For example, First 5 Centers provided services to 45 more families, including an additional 112 children in FY 2025 compared to FY 2024; 363 more caregivers attended Positive Parenting Program coaching and seminar sessions; 427 more parent kits were distributed to families; and First 5 Contra Costa collected screenings for an additional 212 children.

Additionally, the number of child care and other providers served increased by 66% from 1,402 providers in FY 2024 to 2,322 providers in FY 2025. This was primarily because of additional funding First 5 Contra Costa received to work with early educators on quality improvement by offering a variety of capacity building, training, and material supports related to inclusion in early childhood education programs.

**Data Notes and Limitations:** The number of unduplicated adults, children, and providers who participated in First 5 Contra Costa funded programs is an estimate. Programs such as the distribution of New Parent Kits, general information and referral through 211, and Tandem StoryCycles provide aggregate data. It is unknown how many of these participants also received services from programs where individual data is collected. In this report, First 5 Contra Costa used lower numbers of providers who received coaching in FY 2022 and FY 2023 than originally reported in previous reports due to quality improvements in administrative records.

# Strengthening Families

East County First 5 Center



## *Why is this important?*

Research underscores the critical role positive parent-child relationships and healthy family dynamics have on children, particularly in the early years. Increasing parents' understanding of child development and parenting can lead to better child and family outcomes. First 5 Contra Costa's strengthening families efforts 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.



## First 5 Centers

First 5 Center staff provided classes, information and referrals, resources, screenings, and other direct services to 6,022 adults and children, which was a slight increase over the prior fiscal year. Multi-week classes were most popular—an unduplicated 2,574 adults and 2,264 children attended these programs. Classes focused on early learning and literacy were the most attended, and included classes such as Art & Storytime, Baby Signs, and Zumbini. First 5 Centers also contracted with other organizations to offer 187 classes for 988 hours of programming.

Types of Programming	Classes	Hours	Participants*
Early Learning & Literacy	498	2,704	4,126
School Readiness	136	955	954
Parent Education	116	1,052	514
	750	4,711	5,594

\*Participants are unduplicated within programming types and duplicated across all three programming types. This table doesn't include Help Me Grow developmental playgroups or Triple P parent education classes delivered at the First 5 Centers.

In addition to classes, First 5 Center staff organized multiple community celebrations and other events throughout the year attended by an estimated 6,325 duplicated adults, children and other family members.



Antioch First 5 Center

### How Much?

**2,785** families participated at First 5 Centers, including **3,391** adults and **2,631** children:

- **4,838** adults and children attended multi-week classes
- **6,325\*** adults, children and other family members attended one-day events
- **840** children were screened for developmental milestones
- **814** caregivers met one-on-one with staff to connect to community resources
- **186** children received car seats

\*This is a duplicated count of adults and children who participated in each activity because attendance isn't taken at one-day events

### How Well?

Parents attended **792** classes and workshops and, of those who completed a post-session survey, **93%** responded that First 5 Center staff valued, respected, and embraced the diversity of their families, and **91%** responded they connected with parents they didn't know before taking the class.

### Who's Better Off?

Of parents who attended classes and also completed surveys:

- **95%** responded they learned new information that would help with their parenting and ability to support their child's development.
- **96%** responded that the class helped them understand what to expect from their child at this age and stage of their development.

## Engaging Black Families and Male Caregivers Through Culturally Responsive Programs

First 5 Contra Costa applies a targeted universalism framework to ensure all children thrive while addressing barriers that uniquely impact African American and Black families. First 5 Centers provide inclusive, culturally responsive programs that reflect the strengths and needs of these communities, while also intentionally supporting fathers and male caregivers as critical partners in children's healthy development.

In FY 2025, the Centers served 551 African American and Black adults and children, maintaining steady participation from the previous year and reflecting sustained engagement in programs and services. Staff delivered over 450 hours of programming across 90+ classes, activities, and events, including culturally significant gatherings such as a Juneteenth BBQ Bash, which brought together 75 parents and children. Other popular activities at First 5 Centers included:

Location	Activity	Description
Antioch First 5 Center & Delta First 5 Center	Let's Count & Match with Mrs. Bernice	A class where parents and children explore numbers and colors together through fun hands-on activities that strengthen children's memory and early learning skills.
East County First 5 Center	Sisters in Parenting	A welcoming group where African American and Black moms come together to connect, explore, and share culturally relevant parenting and family topics.
Monument First 5 Center	Caring Connections	A support group for African American and Black parents that addresses the ongoing stressors of parenting through a strengths-based approach grounded in the Five Protective Factors.
West County First 5 Center	Read Aloud with Mr. Ty	A fun read aloud to support African American and Black children's literacy, language, and cognitive development through books and songs, along with community and family interactions.



In addition to these culturally responsive programs, First 5 Centers also prioritized father and male caregiver engagement through community events, drop-in activities, multi-week classes, and one-on-one support. In FY 2025, 685 fathers and male caregivers received services—448 participated in multi-week classes, hundreds attended one-day activities and events, and 73 met individually with a Community Resource Specialist. While the number of participating fathers has remained consistent over the past three years, total attendance hours have increased steadily, from 2,351 in FY 2023 to 3,727 in FY 2025, demonstrating a commitment to deeper and more intentional engagement with fathers and other male caregivers.



Connecting Families to Community Resources

First 5 Centers have dedicated bilingual Community Resource Specialists who have knowledge and expertise in navigating a wide array of resources within Contra Costa County and make this information available to families through individual consultations. In FY 2025, Community Resource Specialists provided 1,278 consultations to 814 parents—this was a 34% increase in consultations and a 26% increase in participants in FY 2025 compared to FY 2024.

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Consultations	806	657	766	952	1,278
Participants	391	412	482	647	814

As a result of continued effort to provide affirming, targeted supports to African American and Black families and male caregivers this fiscal year, the number of Black parents served by Community Resource Specialists increased by 38%, and the number of fathers increased by 52%.

Community Resource Specialists are trained to administer the Ages & Stages Questionnaire developmental screenings—they support parents with completing the screenings and provide information and resources, including referrals to community-based supports. In FY 2025, First 5 Center staff administered 1,586 developmental screenings to 840 children. If concerns with a child’s development were identified, Community Resource Specialists provided activity handouts for parents, periodically rescreened, and/or provided information and resources. Along with providing



referrals to community agencies, Community Resource Specialists helped parents determine if their child was eligible for services at early intervention programs and, when needed, assisted with applications and other paperwork.

### ***Empowering Immigrant Families through Information and Support***

Immigration in the United States is a complex and evolving issue, influenced by global events, policy changes, and shifting political dynamics. In FY 2025, First 5 Centers responded to new shifts in immigration policy by creating safe, supportive, and proactive environments for immigrant families. Centers maintained clear, up-to-date policies for responding to immigration enforcement and ensured families felt informed and secure while on-site. Staff received training in “Know Your Rights” guidelines, provided educational materials including legal rights cards, and kept current lists of immigration-related resources. They also hosted workshops on legal rights and family preparedness, displayed welcoming signage, and designated private spaces to reassure families. Collaborating closely with First 5 Contra Costa, staff monitored emerging needs and participated in capacity-building trainings, reinforcing the Centers’ role as trusted and inclusive spaces for all families.

### ***Expanding Concrete Supports and Fatherhood Programs***

In April 2025, First 5 Contra Costa partnered with Children and Family Services within Contra Costa County Employment & Human Services to expand concrete supports and fatherhood programming at First 5 Centers in East Contra Costa County. Over 50 hygiene kits were distributed to families in need, containing essentials such as deodorant, shampoo, soap, toothbrushes, and toothpaste. Laundry cards were also provided, enabling families to wash and dry over 170 loads of laundry at no cost.

Fatherhood programming included a Men-Supporting-Men group, workshops on father resilience, and engaging one-day activities that gave fathers the opportunity to meet one another while spending quality time with their children. Survey feedback demonstrated the impact of these efforts: 100% of fathers reported enjoying the activities, and 67% said they learned something new to support their parenting. One father in the support group shared, ***“This class is a great reminder that we are not alone as a new father, and others may have the same struggles.”***



Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/immigration-resources-for-partners-families](https://bit.ly/immigration-resources-for-partners-families) to access a set of resources, tools, and information that can support immigrant families and service providers to remain informed and supported during uncertain times.

The East County First 5 Center facilitates a T.E.A.M. Dad support group which stands for teaching, experience, and meaningful conversations. This weekly meeting is a space for dads to discuss what matters most to them and their families and learn from one another. After one of these groups, a few dads stayed behind to share with First 5 Center staff the impact T.E.A.M. Dad has had on them. A father commented, ***“I wanted to make it a priority to find other fathers, not only for our kids to play, but to also get advice and hear about their kids from their perspectives. T.E.A.M. Dad has helped make that possible!”*** The dads also shared they had created a text group called “Men with Babies” and planned social outings with one another outside the First 5 Center to connect and schedule playdates for their kids.



Community Representation

Each First 5 Center is supported by an active Community Advisory Council (CAC) composed of caregivers and parents with children under six. These councils serve as the community’s voice, conducting research and providing recommendations to strengthen Center programs and services. In FY 2025, 40 individuals participated across the councils. Of these members, 60% primarily spoke English, 30% spoke Spanish, and 10% spoke other languages, including Arabic, Farsi, and Hindi.

In June 2025, CAC members completed an end-of-year survey: 100% reported that the training they received was helpful in understanding their role, and 97% said they would recommend volunteering as a CAC member to others, such as family and friends. Members were also asked how their participation influenced their likelihood of engaging with their community in the future. The results highlight the councils’ role in fostering civic engagement and leadership:

Future engagement activity	% of respondents who answered yes
Join a committee or advisory group at child’s school	97%
Volunteer in your community	94%
Take on leadership role at work or in a volunteer position	90%
Contact an elected official about a concern you have in your community	77%





## ***Building Stronger Systems for Families and Young Children***

In an effort to promote family resiliency at a systems level, First 5 Contra Costa leads and participates in several efforts focused on advocacy, policy, or systems change.

First 5 Contra Costa continued to lead the Family Economic Security Partnership (FESP), which is a public, private and nonprofit collaboration dedicated to increasing income and building assets of low-income families in Contra Costa County. At quarterly meetings, the partnership explored topics ranging from learning how state ballot measures impact family economic security, understanding how the county develops and uses its annual legislative platform, and examining how the state's budget proposals impact families. The January 2025 meeting provided members with an opportunity to meet the newly elected District 5 Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston (above) and to introduce her to the work of FESP including key issues the partnership focuses on. In FY 2025, FESP engaged 42 participants in events throughout the year and continued to add to its growing mailing list of 178 individuals.

First 5 Contra Costa also started a partnership with the Contra Costa County Clerk-Recorder's Office to promote the state's new California Kids Investment and Development Savings (CalKIDS) program which gives free money for college to all newborns and eligible low-income K-12 public school students. First 5 Contra Costa created a flyer that the Clerk-Recorder's Office shared with individuals who order a birth certificate for a young child.

First 5 Contra Costa is also an active participant in the countywide Comprehensive Prevention Plan (CPP) planning team, led by Children and Family Services within Contra Costa County Employment & Human Services. The CPP vision is that all children and families in Contra Costa County are supported by services and systems that are accessible, have an equitable approach, include culturally and linguistically responsive services, and celebrate all aspects of diversity. The planning team aims to create and oversee a seamless cross-sector network that shares collective responsibility for increasing protective factors and positively impacting the quality of social determinants of health for children, families, and community.



In FY 2024-25, First 5 Contra Costa highlighted the effectiveness of the First 5 Center model to both local and out-of-county stakeholders. In September 2024, staff from First 5 Butte County toured two centers to inform their county's approach to family resource centers, observing programs that support early childhood learning, family well-being, and parent engagement. In October 2024 (left), community leaders, elected officials' staff, and private funders visited centers in Concord, Pittsburg, and Antioch, meeting First 5 Center staff and observing programs and services firsthand.

Over the past decade, the home visiting system has grown significantly in Contra Costa County, expanding funding, program models, and service capacity to support families prenatally and postnatally until children are five years old. In FY 2025, the *Strengthening Home Visiting in Contra Costa County: A Landscape Analysis to Inform System Alignment and Workforce Development* report, commissioned by First 5 Contra Costa, highlighted both progress—such as a 38% increase in funding and 41% growth in enrollment capacity—and ongoing gaps serving underserved populations and families with behavioral health needs. The report emphasized the need for coordinated cross-agency efforts across 17 diverse funding sources and recommended strategies focused on workforce development, infrastructure, equitable access, and continuous quality improvement. This analysis has provided a foundation for home visiting stakeholders in the county to explore ways to collaborate to build a more resilient, coordinated, and culturally responsive county-wide approach to home visiting for families with young children.

Lastly, in FY 2025 First 5 Contra Costa continued a partnership with the Family, Maternal, and Child Health Division of Contra Costa Health to enhance the capacity building of staff working in publicly funded home visiting programs in our county. Through the partnership, 128 unduplicated participants, which included direct service providers, managers, and directors of home visiting programs, participated in four trainings on various topics, including brain development of children 0-5 and supporting families with children who have developmental delays or disabilities.

As a result of these efforts, First 5 Contra Costa convened the Home Visiting System Building Collaborative composed of home visiting program leads across the county. This is the first collaborative of its kind in our county with representation of programs from various service sectors focused on capacity building of the home visiting workforce.



Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/home-visiting-analysis-2025](https://bit.ly/home-visiting-analysis-2025) to download the *Strengthening Home Visiting in Contra Costa County* report.



# Early Intervention



## *Why is this important?*

Regular evidence-based screenings that lead to connecting families to needed services can change children's developmental trajectory. Early identification leads to timely intervention during the most critical time of a child's development. Research shows prevention and early intervention can not only improve lifelong outcomes for children, but also yield long-term economic benefits. First 5 Contra Costa builds the capacity of professionals and the systems they work within to adopt proven prevention and early intervention approaches.

## Help Me Grow System

The Help Me Grow system is comprised of screening children for developmental progress; providing a dedicated Help Me Grow-211 care coordination phone line for families and providers working with families; facilitating developmental playgroups where children can catch up on developmental milestones; and training for staff in pediatric offices, preschools, and childcare programs about developmental screening.

As a part of our Help Me Grow system efforts, First 5 Contra Costa promotes routine screening of children ages one month to six years to assess developmental progress. First 5 Contra Costa promotes the use of the Ages & Stages Questionnaire, an evidence-based tool used in a variety of settings to screen for developmental progress. This questionnaire has two versions—the ASQ-3 which focuses on overall developmental progress and the ASQ:SE2 which is used for early detection of social-emotional



### How Much?

- **2,072** children screened for overall developmental progress and **808** children screened for social-emotional developmental milestones
- **671** parents with **688** children 0-5 received services from Help Me Grow Care Coordinators
- **411** parents and children attended Help Me Grow developmental playgroups
- **54** pediatricians and early care and education providers received training on developmental screenings

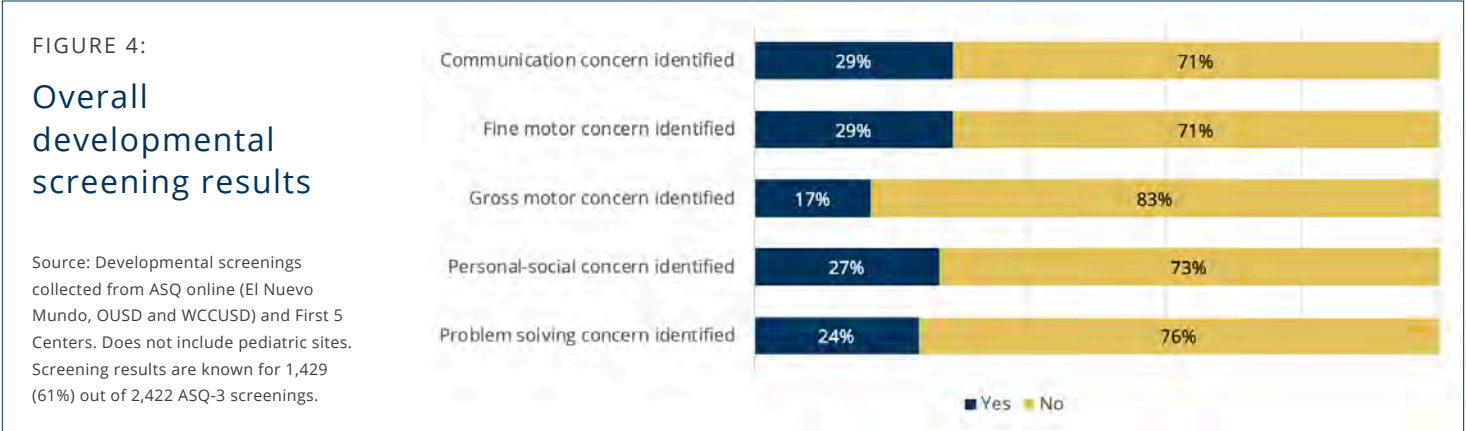
### How Well?

- **99%** of parents responded that their child enjoyed the Help Me Grow developmental playgroup and **98%** thought services were very respectful of their language, ethnicity and culture
- **100%** would recommend a Help Me Grow developmental playgroup to other parents

### Who's Better Off?

- **81%** of caregivers reported to Help Me Grow Care Coordinators they successfully connected to at least one resource provided to them
- **95%** of parents responded that they knew more about how to support their child's strengths and abilities and **94%** said their child's developmental skills improved after attending a Help Me Grow developmental playgroup

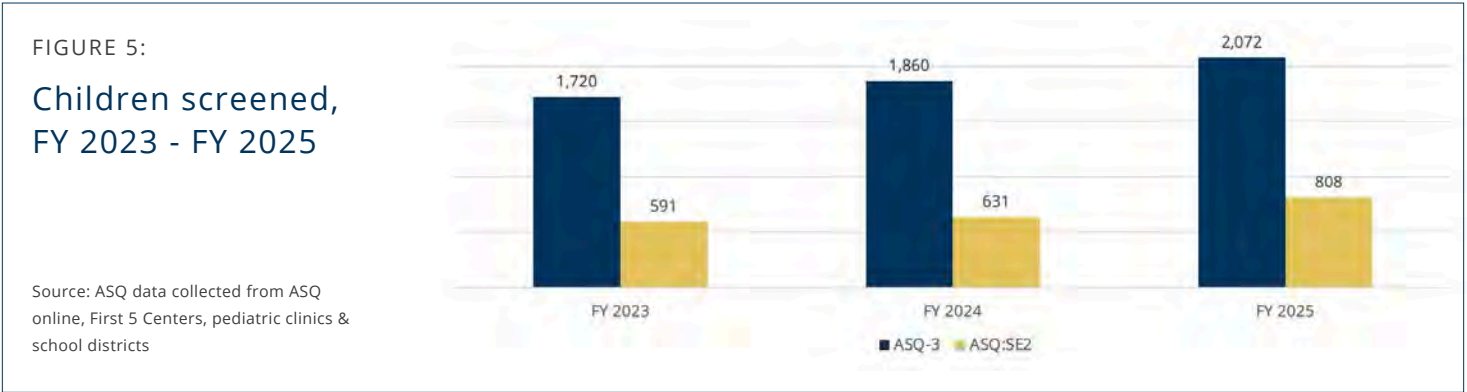
challenges. In FY 2025, First 5 Contra Costa collected data on 3,289 developmental screenings completed by First 5 Centers, pediatricians, school districts, and early care and education providers across the county. While First 5 Contra Costa does not have complete data for all of these screenings, based on the more than 1,400 screenings with complete data, communication and fine motor concerns were identified in 29% of them followed by 27% for personal-social, 24% for problem solving, and 17% for gross motor concerns.



In FY 2025, four early care and education sites used ASQ Online—an online version of the Ages & Stages Questionnaire. These sites included El Nuevo Mundo (a private bilingual childcare center in West Contra Costa), Pittsburg Unified School District (PUSD) and Oakley Union School District (OUSD) which uses it for their transitional kindergarten enrollees, and West Contra Costa Unified School District’s California State Preschool Program. Oakley Union Elementary piloted the ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE2 tools with preschoolers and transitional kindergartners, and children with concerning screening results were connected to community resources.

*Increase in Children Screened*

The number of children screened with the Ages & Stages Questionnaire tools increased 25% over the last three years—in FY 2025, First 5 Contra Costa supported service providers in screening 2,072 children with the ASQ-3, up from 1,860 in FY 2024 and 1,720 in FY 2023. The number of children screened with the ASQ:SE2 also increased from 591 children in FY 2023 to 631 in FY 2024 to 808 in FY 2025.





Through the Help Me Grow-211 phone line, families and providers can access care coordination and navigation support. In FY 2025, bilingual (Spanish/English) Help Me Grow Care Coordinators at the Contra Costa Crisis Center received 1,320 referrals, primarily from health service providers, as well as from community agencies and early care and education programs. Coordinators supported 671 parents and 688 children ages 0–5. Among caregivers, 50% spoke English, 43% spoke Spanish, and 7% spoke another language; interpreter services were used for families who spoke languages other than English or Spanish. Additionally, 38% of callers identified as single parents, and 98% reported being low income or having no income.

In FY 2025, the most frequent referrals provided by Help Me Grow Care Coordinators were to First 5 Centers for developmental screenings and developmental playgroups. Coordinators also regularly referred families to the Regional Center of the East Bay, developmental activities and monitoring tools, and *Parenting Counts*—an online resource that helps caregivers support their children’s social and emotional development.



In November 2024, Help Me Grow Coordinators received a referral for an 18-month-old boy from a pediatrician who had concerns about his development, specifically in the areas of communication, gross motor, and personal-social skills. When the coordinator tried contacting the family, their phone numbers were either out of service or incorrect. The Coordinator reached out to the pediatrician who made the referral but those were the only numbers listed in the boy’s file. In a final attempt to get in contact with the family, the Coordinator sent a letter to the family’s address on file. A few days later, the child’s mother reached out to Help Me Grow-211, shared concerns about her son’s development, and let them know she was interested in services. A coordinator provided educational materials, information about Regional Center of the East Bay, and referred the family to their local First 5 Center. At a December check-in with the family, the boy’s father shared they were able to get connected with Regional Center of the East Bay, had already started speech therapy, and were enrolled in a developmental playgroup at the First 5 Center. The father commented, *“Thank you so much for trying hard to contact us and provide information, we already see that our son is doing better.”*



Children who are screened at a First 5 Center or by their pediatrician and identified as needing additional support are eligible to participate in developmental playgroups hosted at the Centers. In FY 2025, 208 parents and 187 children attended 32 Help Me Grow developmental playgroups. These eight-week sessions, facilitated by child development specialists, help parents and children work together on individualized developmental goals. Activities are designed to build language, motor skills, problem-solving abilities, and social interactions. The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) is completed at the start and end of playgroups to measure children's progress.

In June 2025, Pittsburg Unified School District partnered with First 5 Contra Costa to pilot a developmental playgroup for 16 families whose children enrolled in the district for the 2024–25 school year. Families were identified using the ASQ, which First 5 Contra Costa helped integrate into the district's enrollment process. One mother shared the impact on her five-year-old son: ***"This is my son's first time in a school setting. He has improved a bit more in engaging with other children, following instructions, and paying attention during readings and sing-alongs. My son has started to learn the concept of being in a school setting and now looks forward to attending."***

## Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)

The Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) is a family support program that offers evidence-based strategies to help parents raise happy, confident children. The program is guided by five key principles: creating a safe environment, encouraging positive learning, using assertive discipline, setting realistic expectations, and prioritizing self-care for parents.

In FY 2025, 127 unduplicated parents attended 15 Triple P classes. Of these participants, 12% identified as African American or Black, and 4% as Asian or Pacific Islander. Classes were offered in English and Spanish, with 10 sessions conducted online to reach more families.

In addition to classes, 332 parents attended 39 brief Triple P seminars. For parents needing extra support, individualized coaching was available in up to four sessions of 15–30 minutes each over four to six weeks. In FY 2025, 93 parents received coaching, a targeted one-on-one intervention that helps families develop strategies for managing behavioral challenges (e.g., tantrums, sibling conflicts, shopping trips) and skill development (e.g., eating independently, toilet training, staying in bed at night).



### How Much?

- **127** unduplicated parents attended **15** Triple P multi-week classes
- **332** parents attended **39** one-time seminars, and an additional **65** received one-on-one coaching

### How Well?

- **100%** of adults increased their parenting confidence
- **92%** met some or all their goals after participating in a Triple P class
- **86%** of parents responded that their child's overall behavior improved

### Who's Better Off?

- Of the **127** parents attending Triple P classes who completed pre/post assessments, the intensity of their children's disruptive behavior decreased, and these behaviors were less of a problem for parents. Respondents' parenting skills improved, and they reported feeling less anxious and depressed.<sup>2</sup>



*"I loved being able to apply the tools provided in this class. I always tell other moms I meet about this class and recommend it!"*

Mother who attended the Triple P program

<sup>2</sup> As measured using the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI), Parenting Scale, and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS21)





In January 2025, staff joined the statewide Positive Parenting Advocacy Day at the Capitol to advocate for early childhood priorities and expanded funding for parenting supports and programs.

## Improving Systems to Promote the Healthy Developmental of Young Children

In FY 2025, First 5 Contra Costa continued to lead and engage in initiatives aimed at strengthening public systems that support the healthy development of children. First 5 Contra Costa spearheaded the Early Childhood Prevention & Intervention Coalition (ECPIC), a county-wide, multi-disciplinary collaborative that advocates for prioritizing the social-emotional needs of young children (prenatal to age 6) within state and county systems. Through ECPIC, First 5 Contra Costa shared updates on policy and funding opportunities and developed strategies to raise awareness and advance advocacy for the mental health needs of young children and their families.

Staff also maintained active leadership and participation in several key collaboratives during FY 2025. They served on the Executive Committee of Healthy & Active Before 5 (HAB45), which advances health equity through local policy and environmental changes that benefit children ages 0–5 and their families. Staff also participated on the Stewardship Committee of *Contra Costa Together*, an emerging initiative of the California Accountable Communities for Health, focused on cross-sector collaboration to improve community health and well-being. In addition, staff contributed to the Contra Costa Interagency Collaborative, led by Care Parent Network and Early Childhood Mental Health, to strengthen information sharing and care coordination for children with special needs.



*“The Help Me Grow Café showcases the power of community collaboration. Witnessing service providers unite to share knowledge, resources, and a common mission reinforces the vital role of local organizations in creating brighter futures for our youngest residents.”*

Help Me Grow Café participant

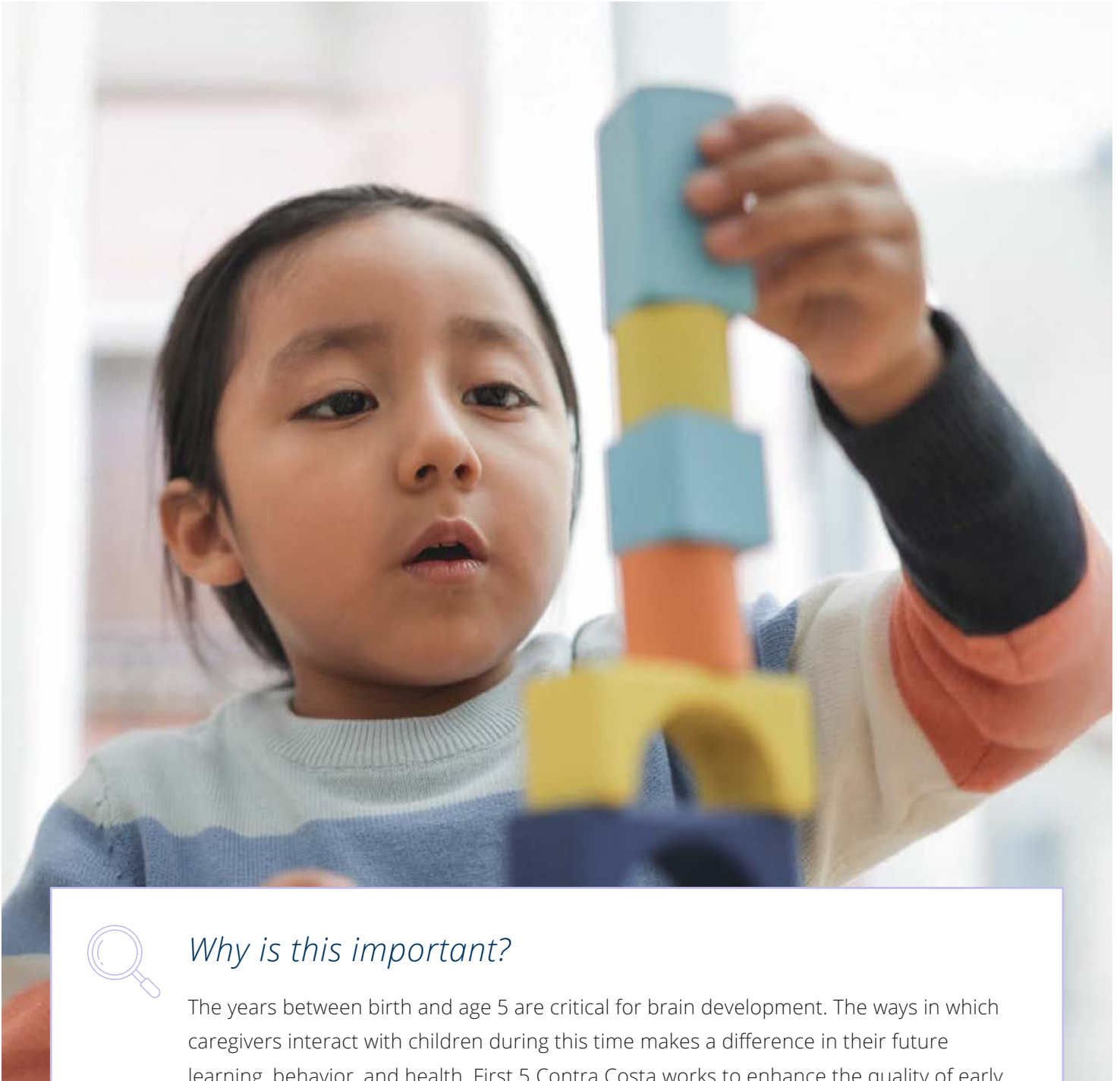
The February 2025 Help Me Grow Café featured a special presentation on Transitional Kindergarten and a Universal Prekindergarten overview.

First 5 Contra Costa continued to host quarterly Help Me Grow Cafés—these networking events included presentations on topics such as early childhood trauma, father engagement, and self-care. In FY 2025, 91 unduplicated service providers attended these meetings and, of those who completed an evaluation form, 99% found the presentation information useful to their work, 81% responded the presentation workshops learning objectives were met, and 53% answered they would change their practice as a result of the presentation.

Other systems change efforts included participation in Help Me Grow National's *Cultivating System Leadership Skills and Competencies* learning community, which strengthened First 5 Contra Costa's capacity for systems building and enhanced engagement with the county's pediatric sector. First 5 Contra Costa also facilitated collaboration among school districts to increase attention to early developmental services and integrate these services across the county.



## Early Care & Education



### *Why is this important?*

The years between birth and age 5 are critical for brain development. The ways in which caregivers interact with children during this time makes a difference in their future learning, behavior, and health. First 5 Contra Costa works to enhance the quality of early childhood programs across the County by offering early educator training, technical assistance, coaching and other programs. High quality early learning experiences in safe, stable, nurturing environments are critical for children's academic, physical and socio-emotional well-being in the short and long term.



## Coaching for Early Care & Education Programs in Quality Matters

First 5 Contra Costa works with several partners to offer early educators a variety of training, coaching, and learning opportunities to enhance the quality of their programs—including center-based programs, family child care programs, and informal caregivers such as family, friends and neighbors. Quality Matters is Contra Costa County's quality improvement program for early care and education providers, operated by First 5 Contra Costa in collaboration with the Contra Costa County Office of Education and CocoKids, a nonprofit in Contra Costa County that champions and provides free or low-cost early-education services, child care referrals, and financial support for families, children, and child care providers.

In FY 2025, Quality Matters served 158 child care sites and launched a new tiered model designed to meet providers where they are and tailor support to their program's readiness and capacity:

- **Cultivating Quality**  
Quarterly peer learning opportunities and additional technical assistance from a program specialist.
- **Ready for Coaching**  
Intensive, individualized coaching and site-based training from dedicated First 5 Contra Costa staff.
- **Maintaining Quality**  
Specialized tracks to deepen knowledge in targeted areas with trained facilitators.

### How Much?

- **668** hours of coaching to early care and education programs

### How Well?

- **84%** of sites enrolled in our coaching program found one-on-one coaching valuable to their early care and education program

### Who's Better Off?

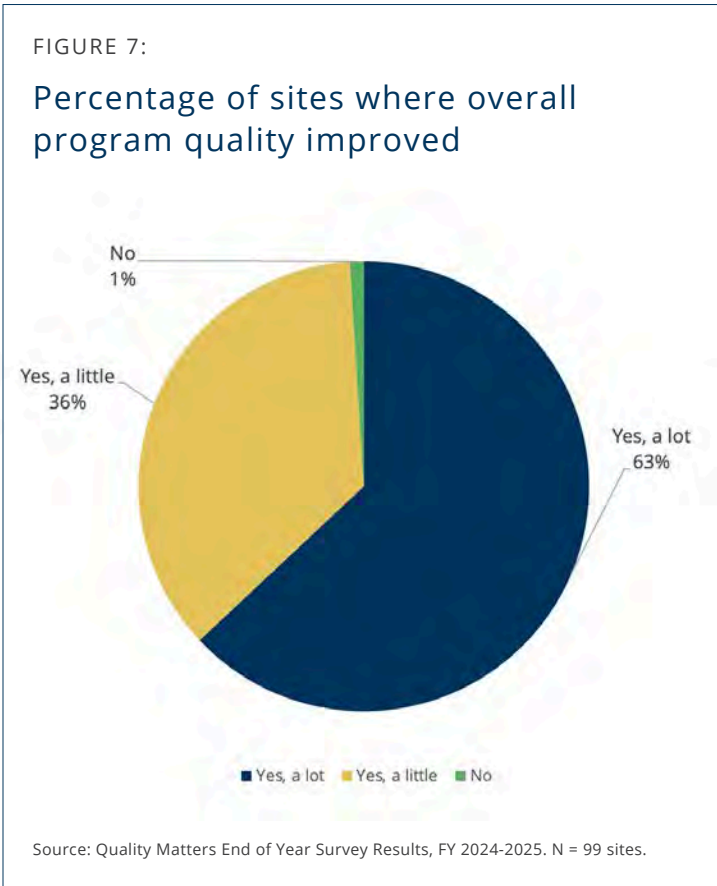
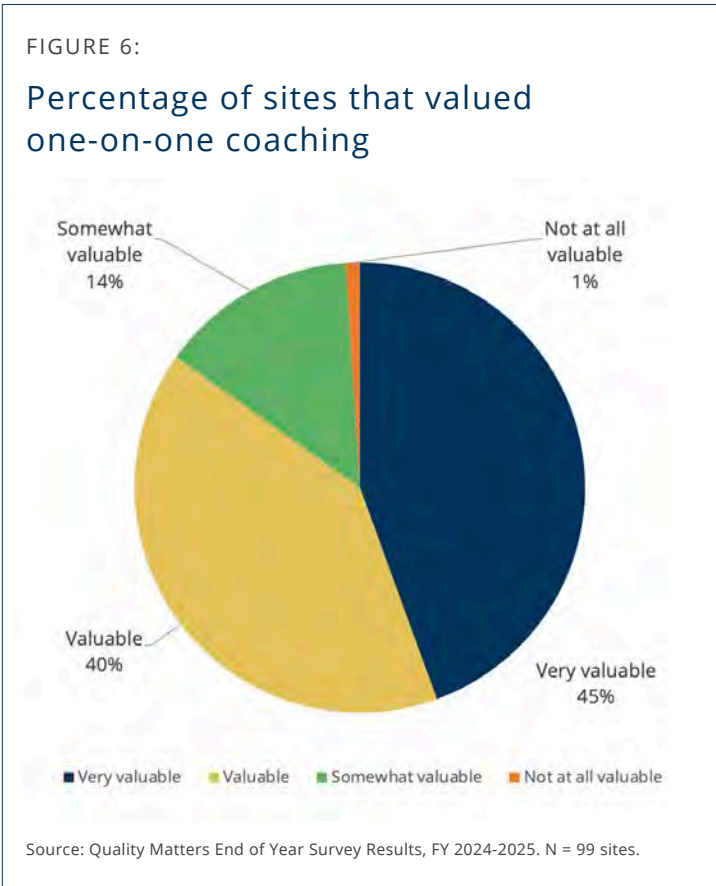
- **81%** of QM-enrolled sites reported staff leadership skills gains, and **82%** reported receiving support and guidance from others in the field
- **92%** of QM-enrolled sites reported improvements to the classroom environment

Source: Quality Matters End of Year Survey Results, FY 2024-2025. N = 99 sites.



Through these tiers, early learning programs worked with coaches and other experts to develop quality improvement goals specifically for their child care sites. Quality Matters coaching model is evidence-based and reflective, guiding educators to set and implement goals that apply best practices in teaching and caregiving. Coaches delivered 668 hours of individualized support to help child care providers with their quality improvement goals, and 84% of sites reported one-on-one coaching as valuable or very valuable.

To stay responsive to the evolving needs of the field, coaches adapted training and support throughout the year. In FY 2025, coaching emphasized infant and toddler care, strategies for supporting neurodiverse children, approaches for navigating challenging behaviors, and practices that strengthen positive teacher-child interactions. Providers reported notable gains: 63% said their overall program quality improved significantly, and another 36% saw moderate improvements.







## Family Child Care Partners Program

The Family Child Care Partners Program is a peer-to-peer support model designed for child care providers who operate home-based programs. It pairs experienced Family Child Care (FCC) providers with those who are newer to the field or seeking additional support in enhancing program quality. The program's goals are to strengthen provider retention, deepen professional skills, and build meaningful connections that foster a stronger sense of community among FCC providers. In FY 2025, 14 seasoned providers mentored 26 newer or less-experienced providers, helping expand professional networks while offering personalized guidance on quality improvement practices.

As one provider shared, ***“We got to know each other’s places, share suggestions for improvements, find support in each other regarding the difficulties we’re currently facing, and so much more!”*** Their feedback reflects how the program not only supports professional growth but also cultivates a supportive, collaborative FCC community.



*“Participating in Quality Matters encouraged teachers to focus on a more defined learning outcome for their [professional development] rather than the typical scattershot ‘take whatever classes I can’ approach. In addition, the requirement of creating a product and/or sharing their learning meant that the information gained didn’t just benefit themselves but had a direct benefit on parents and other staff members.”*

Quality Matters provider

## Professional Training for Providers

Group trainings and other professional development offerings are a critical and complementary component of quality improvement efforts. In FY 2025, 874 unduplicated child care providers participated in 54 professional learning opportunities designed to strengthen their capacity to support families with young children. Training topics included developmental screenings, inclusive strategies, reframing challenging behavior through a sensory lens, stress management and self-care, and the Teaching Pyramid, a framework for promoting social-emotional development in young children, including infants and toddlers.

In addition, a series of trainings specifically focused on helping child care providers—and the families they serve—navigate shifts in immigration policy and enforcement. To further support these efforts, First 5 Contra Costa distributed its *Supporting Immigrant Families Toolkit* and created a dedicated webpage with resources for both child care providers and the families they serve.

First 5 Contra Costa also partnered with Tandem StoryCycles—a book lending program that provides children with access to diverse books in order to create meaningful opportunities for literacy engagement at school and at home. The selection of books intentionally reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of Contra Costa County. In FY 2025, Tandem provided services to 312 parents, 1,748 children, and 375 early care and education providers. Fifty-one early learning sites implemented the StoryCycles program in their classrooms.



During a workshop facilitated by Tandem StoryCycles at a First 5 Center, a mother shared how a previous session—“Sharing Stories, Sharing Feelings”—had a lasting impact. After receiving a book about losing a grandparent, she used it during story time to talk to her daughter about the grandfather she never met. The book opened a meaningful dialogue about grief and family memories, allowing the child to feel more connected and giving the parent a space to process her own emotions.

The mom expressed how powerful the experience was and how much it helped her and her child bond and heal. She and other attendees were enthusiastic about future workshops and eager for more book-based discussions. The mother stated: *“This book became her favorite because now she asks for another story about Grandpa every night. I didn’t realize how much I needed to talk about him too—it’s helped me start healing.”*

### How Much?

- **54** professional trainings were held for **874** unduplicated child care providers
- **312** parents, **1,748** children, and **375** providers served through Tandem’s StoryCycles school-to-home book lending program

### How Well?

- **99%** of providers responded that the quality of information was either good or excellent, **89%** reported that the training’s learning objectives were met, and **99%** found training information useful to their work

### Who’s Better Off?

- Of providers accessing professional development, **93%** indicated they would be changing their practice because of the training
- **99%** of educators who received training through StoryCycles reported they are confident in implementing the literacy strategies they learned in workshops





## Inclusion in Early Learning Project

Many children with disabilities, developmental delays, or other support needs still face significant barriers to accessing child care programs equipped to serve them. This segment of our early childhood population is growing rapidly—and continues to feel the effects of the pandemic—yet inclusive early learning environments remain limited. Creating programs where every child can participate and thrive is a critical but long-overlooked component of a strong early childhood system. Thanks to the leadership of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, the *Inclusion in Early Learning Project* is supported by local Measure X sales tax funding, which First 5 Contra Costa has matched with state tobacco tax revenue.

In FY 2025, First 5 Contra Costa advanced this work through two major efforts: engaging stakeholders and building the capacity of educators. Early in the year, staff synthesized extensive community input gathered through five meaning-making sessions and two large convenings with parents, child care providers, and advocates. These bilingual events helped refine the findings and recommendations that ultimately shaped a comprehensive public report released in

In May 2025, the Inclusion Convening on Neurodiversity brought together community partners and providers for a day of learning and connection, featuring a keynote, workshops, a family panel, and resource fair.



*“Excellent! Just want more! Want all my teachers to have access to inclusion workshops... please!”*

Early Educator

October 2024. Available in multiple languages, the report outlines both short- and long-term strategies to strengthen inclusion and accessibility in early learning settings—grounded in the voices of those most affected.

Guided by these insights, First 5 Contra Costa implemented a robust set of training and capacity-building activities to help educators create more inclusive environments. A total of 380 providers representing 267 programs/14 trainings, 14 peer learning sessions, and targeted material-support opportunities. Through 210 “shopping passes” and 350 inclusion toolkits, educators gained practical materials and strategies to better support children with disabilities, developmental delays, and social-emotional needs.

To strengthen early identification and intervention, First 5 Contra Costa partnered with five community-based organizations to promote developmental screening through culturally responsive outreach. These partners reached over 1,550 child care providers and 1,106 families, including African American, Latinx, and Indigenous Central American communities, and produced multilingual tools and videos in languages ranging from Mam to American Sign Language. Additional efforts included piloting a developmental screening technical assistance model at seven child care sites and launching a new early childhood mental health consultation program, which supported 113 providers and 793 children across 11 programs with trauma-informed, resilience-building guidance.

Finally, in response to community recommendations, First 5 Contra Costa hosted a countywide convening on neurodiversity in early childhood. The event drew more than 100 participants and featured autism advocate and Love on the Spectrum cast member Dani Bowman, along with expert-led sessions and parent panels focused on understanding and supporting neurodiverse children.



*“What really makes a difference is that our outreach staff really reflects the communities that we serve. They speak Spanish and have lived experience in immigrant and working-class communities... [T]hat kind of trust... resonates with families.”*

**Outreach specialist**







## Ready Kids East County

African American and Black families in East Contra Costa County continue to experience significant inequities in access to early childhood supports, culturally affirming care, and systems that reflect and honor their lived experiences. The Ready Kids East County (RKEC) effort—now in its sixth year—works to address these disparities by strengthening a connected, responsive, and community-rooted early childhood ecosystem. By centering Black families, RKEC aims to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive—from the womb to the classroom.

With support from the Dean & Margaret Leshner Foundation, First 5 Contra Costa brings together Black families, school districts, community-based organizations, and public agencies to co-design strategies that advance family well-being. Efforts focus on funding and convening community-led events, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and using data to inform and refine continuous improvement across the system.

In FY 2025, First 5 Contra Costa conducted a large-scale social network analysis to better understand how organizations across East County collaborate to support Black families with young children. Based on survey data from **29** organizations, the analysis showed a promising foundation for collective impact, with **93%** of respondents aligned with RKEC's mission. It also revealed moderate connectivity across the network, with many organizations partnering through shared programming, referral pathways, and advocacy efforts.

In April 2025, the Ready Kids East County Resource Fair brought together Black and African American families for a vibrant day of community, culture, and connection. The event served as a welcoming space for East County families to access essential early childhood resources, from pregnancy to Kindergarten.



*"We are proud of our Blackness, and we're determined to make sure our children grow up with early care and education experiences that surround them with love and affirmation."*

East County provider

The analysis also highlighted opportunities to deepen collaboration—particularly by strengthening bidirectional relationships and engaging additional equity-focused partners. These findings point to the need for intentional strategies that elevate underrepresented voices and ensure that influence within the system aligns with the goal of centering Black children’s school readiness and family resilience.

Throughout FY 2025, RKEC expanded its reach and deepened its impact by directly supporting Black caregivers and young children. Highlights include:

- **42** Black women participated in the *Motherwork Summit*, a day of reflection and advocacy organized by *Her Story Is Mine*.
- **16** Black caregivers completed the *I Believe in Black Family Leadership Series*, facilitated by the *Black Women in Early Childhood Collective*.
- The *RKEC Resource Fair* connected over **60** caregivers and **65** children with **33** service providers, offering on-site services including vaccinations, food distribution, and WIC enrollment.
- **100** culturally tailored “Welcome Totes” were distributed to expecting Black families in partnership with the Contra Costa County Library.



Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/resource-fair-2025](https://bit.ly/resource-fair-2025) to watch the highlight reel and relive the joy, connection, and community celebration from the Ready Kids East County Resource Fair.





## Advancing Early Care and Education through Policy and Systems Change

In addition to the previous efforts, First 5 Contra Costa continued to lead the Early Learning Leadership Group (ELLG) which is composed of representatives from the local child care landscape, and which collectively advocates for policy changes at the local, state and federal level. In FY 2025, the group discussed the impacts of state and federal funding and policy shifts on the child care field, licensing issues, ways to support the child care workforce, and local opportunities to advocate for the needs of the child care field.

In fall of 2025, ELLG accepted an invitation to join an application for a four-county planning grant to strengthen the child care field, with a particular focus on programs that serve low-income and underserved communities. First 5 Contra Costa was asked to serve as the county's lead in the *High Road to Early Childhood Education Consortium*. The planning grant, a part of California Jobs First program, was awarded and the effort launched in FY 2026.



### Spotlight

## Child Care Boost Initiative: Supporting and Retaining a Diverse Child Care Workforce

Contra Costa County continues to face a child care crisis: thousands of families lack access to care, and remaining providers are often underpaid and overburdened. Low wages drive turnover in the early childhood education workforce, destabilizing programs and limiting access to quality care. Wage enhancement is a proven strategy to address these challenges—improving staff retention, strengthening relationships between caregivers and children, and generating long-term economic benefits.

In FY 2025, First 5 Contra Costa advanced a strategy to stabilize the county's early learning workforce by leveraging congressionally directed federal funding to design and support a wage-boost pilot aimed at keeping programs open and children in care. Over the course of the year, a comprehensive design process produced several reports



*"I don't want to stop my dream and venture somewhere else where the money is... my passion is to help kids. But what do I do with bills that need to get paid?"*

**Early Educator in  
Contra Costa**





*“The Child Care Boost Initiative has already made a meaningful impact. Providers are sharing that this wage enhancement is helping ease financial strain, boost morale, and recognize the invaluable work they do every day to support children and families in Contra Costa County.”*

**Workforce Development Coordinator, CocoKids**

outlining a county-level wage enhancement model for early educators. These reports synthesized local workforce data, national and state best practices, and input from family child care providers, center staff, and system partners to create an actionable, equity-centered pilot framework.

Launched in early 2025 and implemented by CocoKids with funding from the local Measure X half-cent sales tax, the Child Care Boost Initiative received applications from more than 320 child care sites, representing over 700 early educators. Through a lottery process, 123 dedicated providers were selected—including educators from 36 family child care homes and six early learning centers across the county—and all opted to participate. The pilot delivers monthly wage supplements of approximately \$1,000 for 18 months, prioritizing providers in areas of highest need.

In addition to co-designing the program, First 5 Contra Costa partnered with community organizations to conduct outreach, simplify the application process, and provide technical assistance to the implementing partner. As the lead agency for the program’s evaluation, First 5 Contra Costa will continue to collaborate with local system leaders to share findings and inform future workforce stabilization efforts in FY 2026 and beyond.



## Conclusion

The early years of life are a critical window for growth, learning, and development. First 5 Contra Costa's work in FY 2025 demonstrates that timely, evidence-based interventions and high-quality early care and education can transform children's developmental trajectories. By supporting families, training educators, and strengthening the systems that serve young children, these efforts ensure that children not only reach key milestones but also develop the skills, confidence, and resilience they need to thrive.

Equity is at the heart of this work. Programs like the First 5 Centers, Help Me Grow, Quality Matters, and Ready Kids East County prioritize access for families who have historically faced barriers to early childhood supports. From culturally responsive parenting programs to inclusive early learning environments, First 5 Contra Costa is helping to build a community where every child—regardless of race, ability, or background—has the opportunity to succeed.

Through collaboration, innovation, and sustained investment, First 5 Contra Costa's work is creating lasting change—for individual children, their families, and the broader community. Over the past 25 years, First 5 Contra Costa has invested more than \$140 million to support families and young children in reaching their full potential—serving as a funder, convener, advocate, and leader in early childhood systems. In September 2024, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors proclaimed their commitment to children ages 0-5 while celebrating the 25th anniversary of First 5 Contra Costa. First 5 Commissioners, and leaders from community and business organizations gathered at the Board of Supervisors' meeting in Martinez to recognize the role First 5 Contra Costa has played in improving the outcomes for the most underserved families with young children in our county.



## *Join Us in This Work*

As we look to the future, First 5 Contra Costa remains committed to strengthening partnerships, coordinating resources, and advancing equity so that every child in the county has the opportunity to thrive. We invite parents, caregivers, community members, and partners to join us in this mission. Together—through collaboration, volunteering, advocacy, or sharing ideas—we can continue building a community where every child and family has the support, opportunity, and encouragement they need to succeed. Every contribution matters, and each effort helps shape a stronger, more resilient future for the youngest members of our community.

For more information, visit us at [first5coco.org](https://first5coco.org)



If you are interested in supporting First 5 Contra Costa by becoming a donor, or would like to partner, please scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/first-5-partner-donor](https://bit.ly/first-5-partner-donor)



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# Year in Review: Community Impact Report

Fiscal Year 2024-25



# About this report

First 5 Contra Costa's Community Impact Report looks at the multiple ways we are working to fulfill our mission to foster the development of our community's children, prenatal through five years of age.

This report highlights our work in partnership with others to change systems of services and supports to better meet the needs of young children and their families.





**4** About First 5 Contra Costa

**6** Participants Served

**11** Strengthening Families

**19** Early Intervention

**26** Early Care & Education





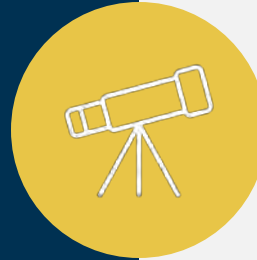
## Why Focus on Ages 0-5?

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically during the first five years of life. During this critical period, a window of opportunity exists to help shape how a child's brain matures and to lay the foundation for the years that follow.



## Mission

To foster the development of our community's children, prenatal through 5 years of age.



## Vision

Contra Costa's young children are healthy, ready to learn, and supported in safe, nurturing families and communities.



## Core Values

Diversity and Inclusion, Equity, Cultural Humility, and Community Partnership



# Results Based Accountability Framework

First 5 Contra Costa adopted a Results Based Accountability (RBA) Framework to measure progress towards achieving our vision. Throughout the Community Impact Report you will find boxes like those below that aim to answer RBA's three central questions:

## How Much?

Who was impacted? How many participants were served, and how much service was provided?

## How Well?

What was the quality of the services delivered? How well were First 5's core values of diversity and inclusion, equity, cultural humility, and community partnership reflected in the services?

## Who's Better Off?

How are participants better off as a result of receiving services?  
How has participants' quality of life improved?

Over the past five years,  
the number of participants  
has fluctuated



	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Caregivers & parents	6,396	6,531	7,394	7,550	6,995
Children under six	5,793	6,196	7,428	7,372	6,670
Direct service providers	1,813	1,426	1,341	1,402	2,322
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,002</b>	<b>14,152</b>	<b>16,163</b>	<b>16,324</b>	<b>15,987</b>

Note: These are estimated unduplicated counts of participants



# Reached 10% of children ages 0-5

With an estimated 68,765 children ages 0 to 5 in Contra Costa County, First 5 Contra Costa reached about 10% of that age group in FY 2025.



Ages of children	FY 2024	FY 2025
0 < 3	2,668	2,536
3 to 6 years	2,322	2,330
Ages unknown	2,382	1,804
Total	7,372	6,670

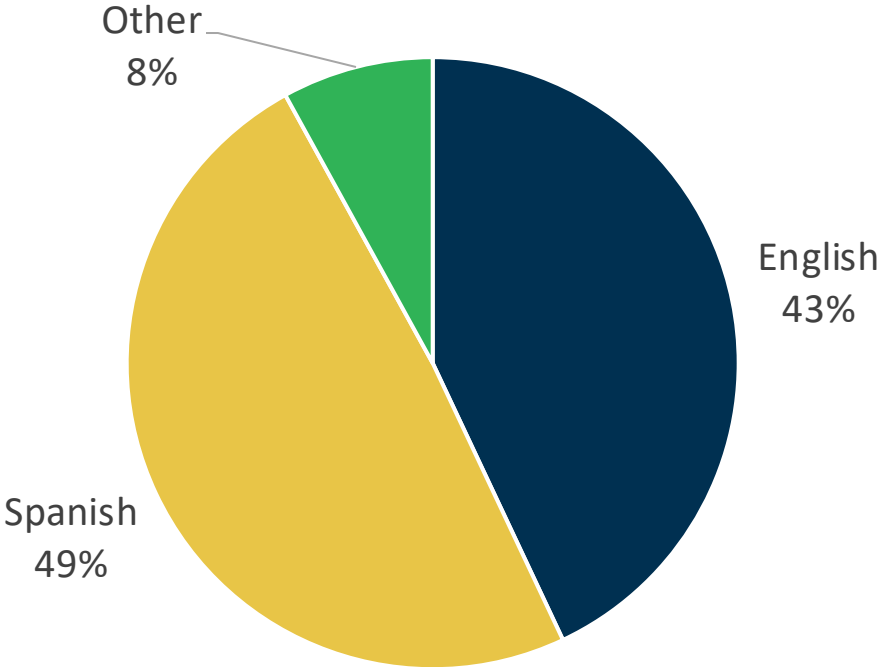
Note: Unduplicated counts



# A little over half of families speak languages other than English



Primary Language of Caregivers, FY 2025



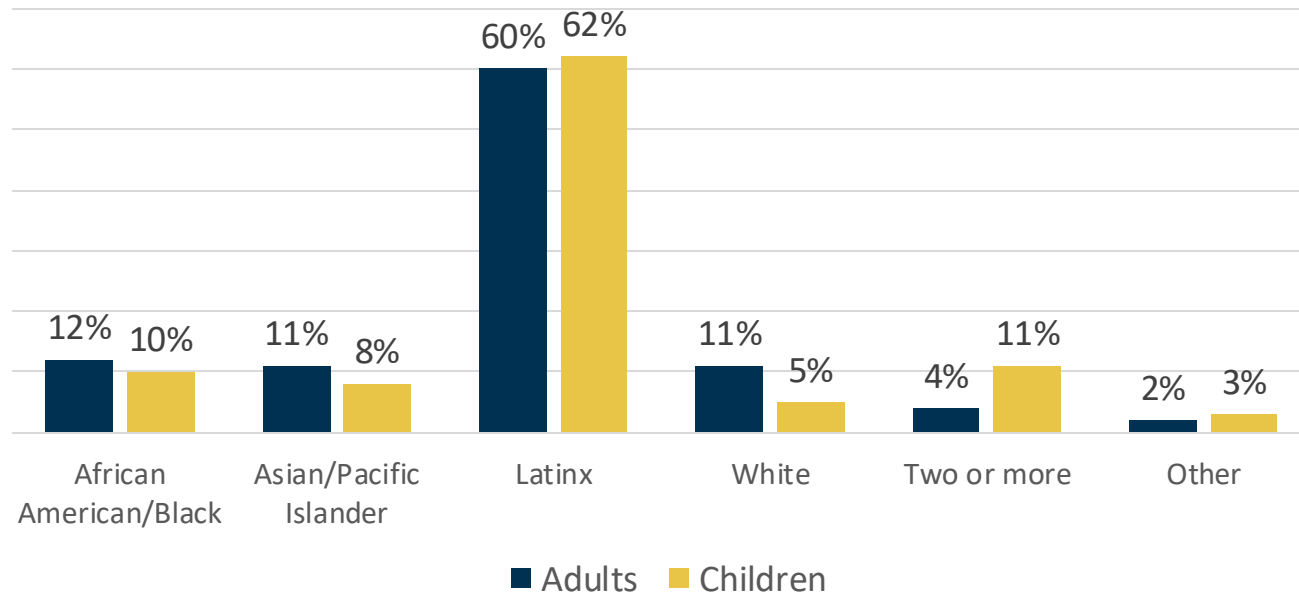
N = 6,431 adults

“Other” languages included Arabic, Berber, Cantonese, Dari, Farsi, Hindi, Mandarin, Nepali, Pashto, Portuguese, Punjabi, Tagalog, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.



# Known ethnicity & race of adult & child participants

Ethnicity & Race of Parent & Child Participants,  
FY 2025



N = 4,096 adults and 2,462 children under age six



*The majority of parents and children were Latinx, with additional representation from other racially and ethnically diverse communities*



## Themes for FY 2025:



**Connecting families to community resources & supports**



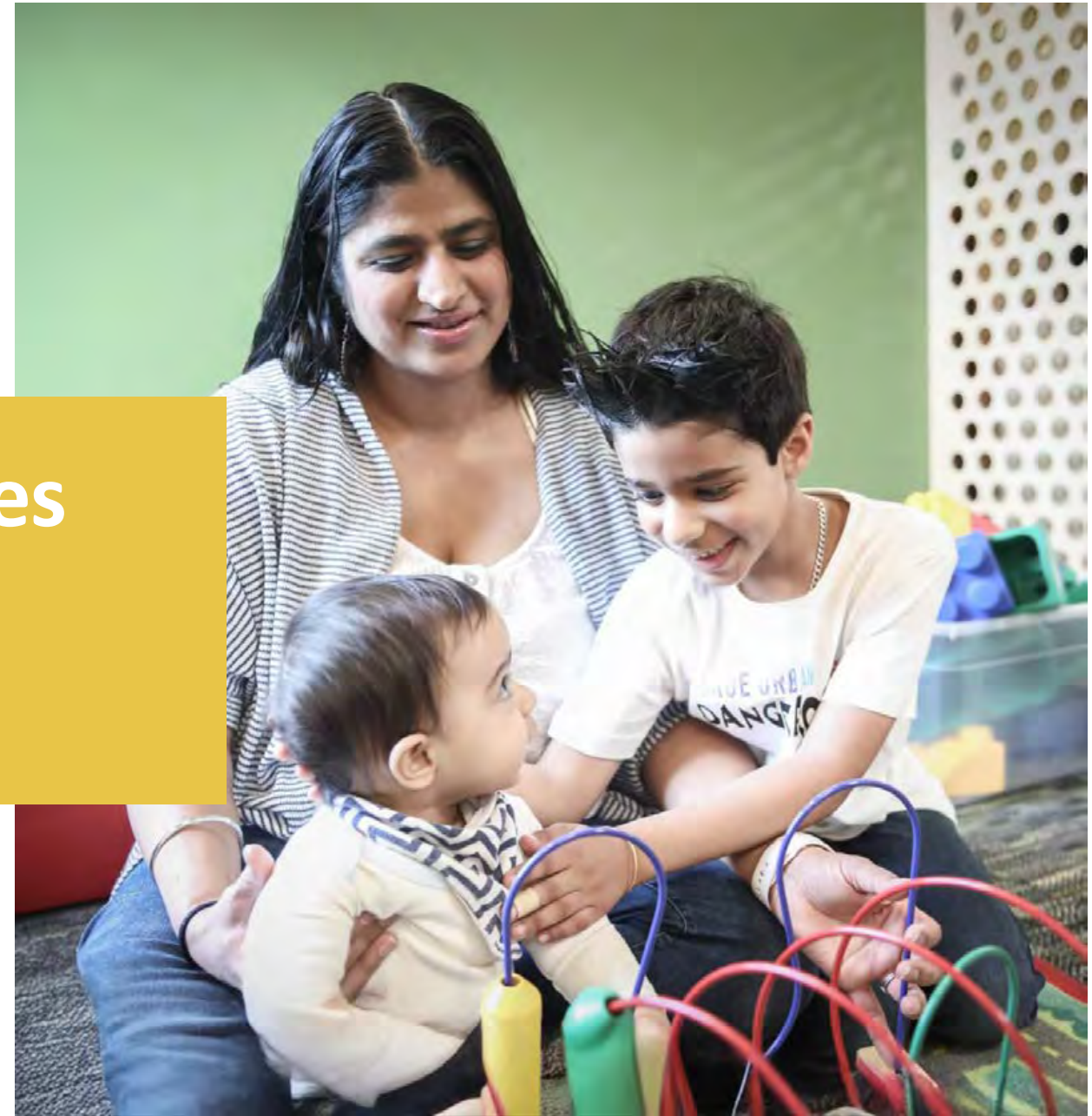
**Expansion of developmental screenings & playgroups**



**Inclusion in early care and education settings**

# Strengthening Families

Thriving families lead  
to thriving children.



# Strengthening Families

Thriving families lead to thriving children.

What we do:



Support the holistic needs of children and families through our First 5 Centers.



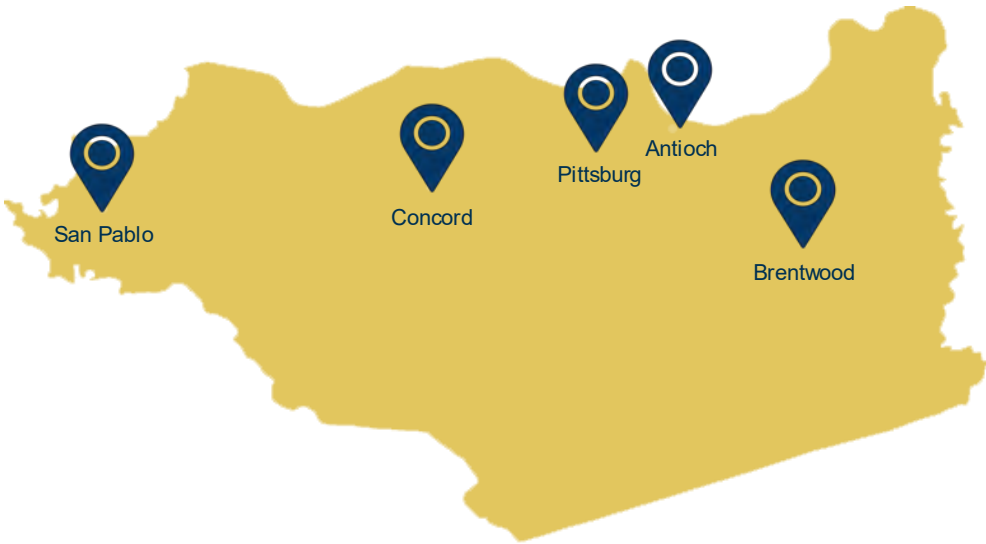
Enhance parents' knowledge of children's development and positive parenting practices.



Foster parents' ability to advocate for themselves and build a sense of community.



# More children and their families participated in services at First 5 Centers



## How much?

Types of service	FY 2023 participants	FY 2024 participants	FY 2025 participants
Attended a class or activity*	4,241	4,835	4,838
Developmental screenings of children ages 0 to 5	751	790	840
Consultation with staff for referral to services*	482	648	814
Car seats provided and installed	149	148	186

\*Note: participant counts are unduplicated within each service listed. Many participants participated in multiple classes or activities, and several participants received multiple consultations for referrals within the fiscal year, although each participant is only counted once for each type of service.

# First 5 Centers strengthened parenting knowledge & family resilience

In FY 2025, centers offered **4,711** hours of programming. After each class or workshop, participants are asked to complete an anonymous survey. Below are highlights of the results in FY 2025:

## How well?

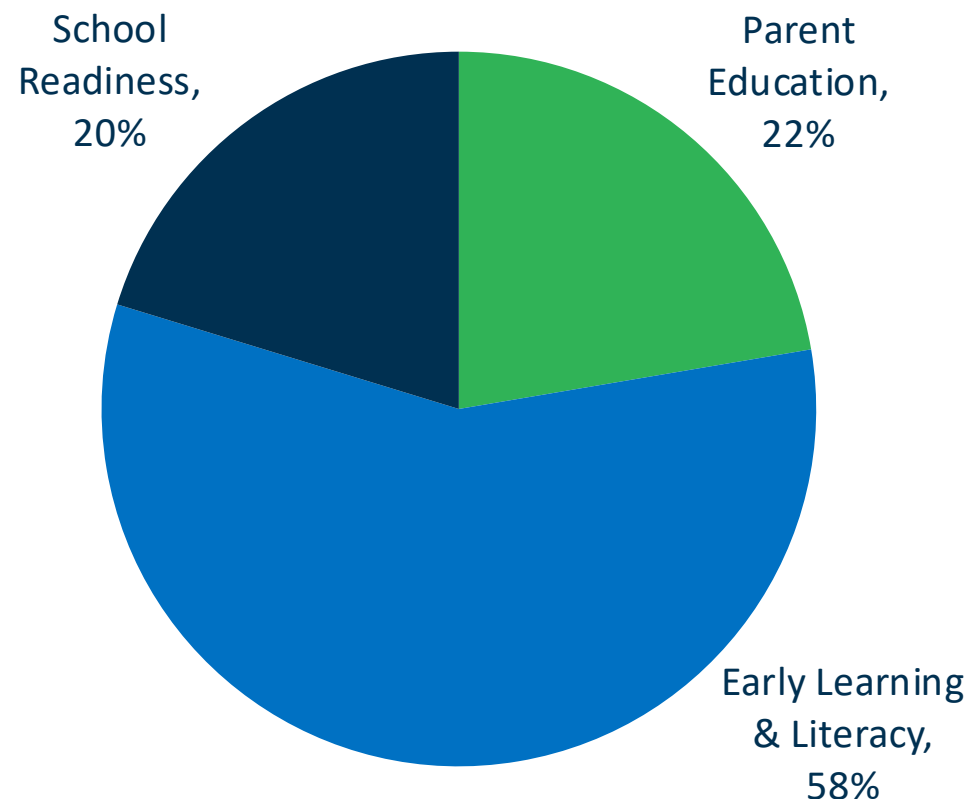
- **93%** thought First 5 Center staff valued, respected, and embraced the diversity of their families
- **91%** connected with parents they didn't know before taking a class

## Who's better off?

- **95%** learned new information that would help with their parenting and ability to support their child's development
- **96%** felt the class helped them understand what to expect from their child at this age and stage of their development.

Note: Results are based on between 1,256 and 1,276 respondents. Not all respondents answered each question.

Programming Hours across all First 5 Centers, FY 2025



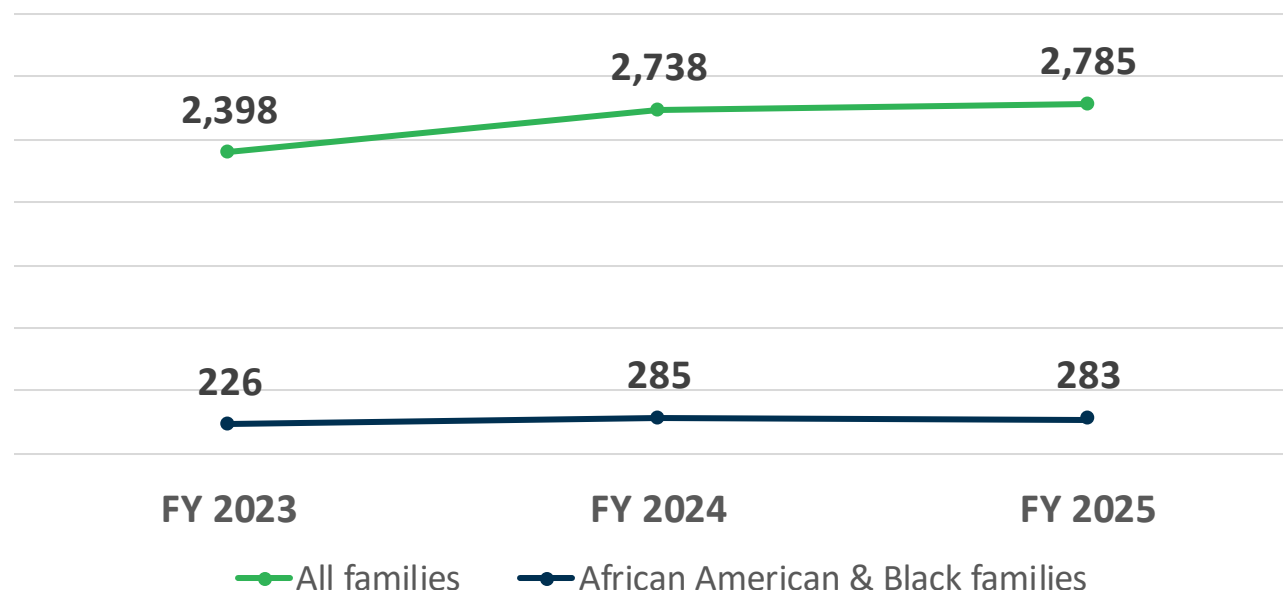
# Culturally responsive programming that reflects the strengths and needs of African American and Black families

## How much?

In FY 2025, the Centers served **551** African American and Black adults and children, maintaining steady participation from the previous year and reflecting sustained engagement in programs and services.

Staff delivered over 450 hours of culturally relevant programming across 90+ classes, activities, and events, including culturally significant gatherings such as a Juneteenth BBQ Bash, which brought together 75 parents and children.

African American and Black families account for 10% of all families



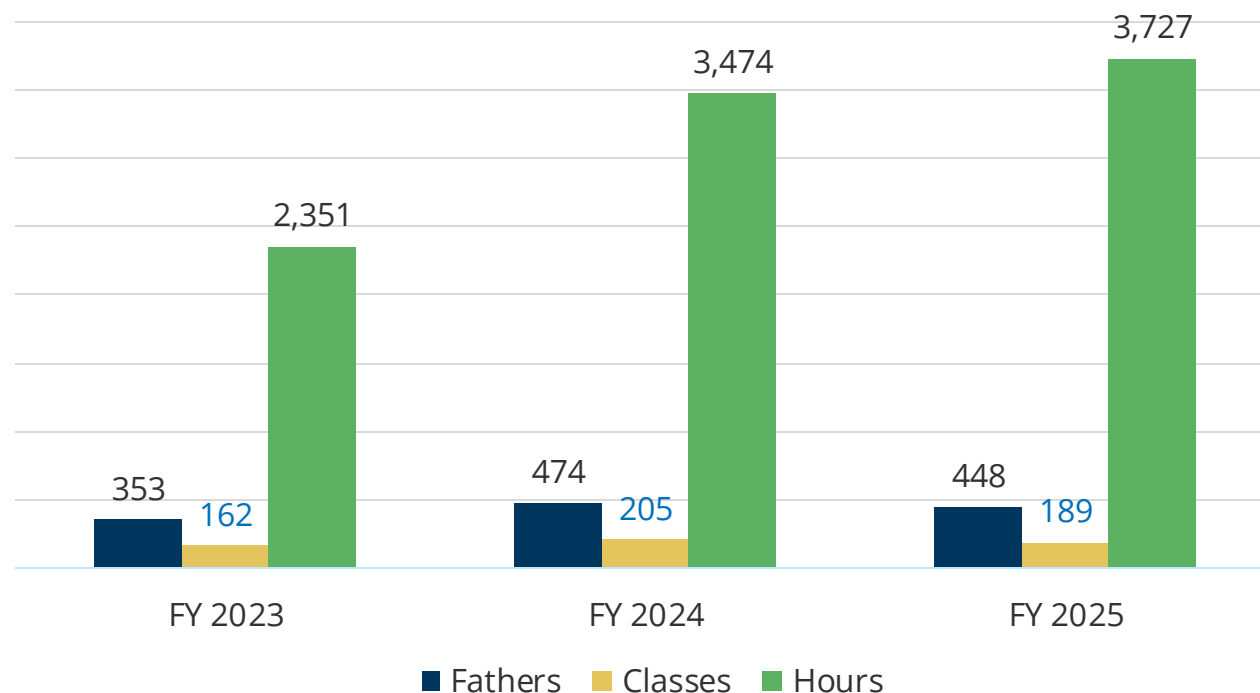
Note: An African American & Black family is counted if they participated in services.

# Increased male caregiver participation

In FY 2025, **685** fathers and male caregivers received services – 448 participated in multi-week classes, hundreds attended one-day activities and events, and 73 met individually with a Community Resource Specialist.

While the number of participating fathers has remained consistent over the past three years, total attendance hours have increased steadily, demonstrating a commitment to deeper and more intentional engagement with fathers and other male caregivers.

Male caregiver participation in multi-week classes





# First 5 Centers connected more families to community resources

Community Resource Specialists are staff at each First 5 Center trained to meet individually with parents to refer them to services.

## How much?

These staff provided **1,278** one-on-one consultations to **814** caregivers and parents (compared to 952 consultations and 648 parents in FY 2024).

First 5 Center staff also supported immigrant families by offering legal resources, workshops, and a safe, welcoming environment.

In April 2025, with additional funding from EHSD, centers in East Contra Costa were able to expand concrete supports by distributing hygiene kits to families and new parents and providing laundry services.

## How well?

- **93%** were satisfied with information and services they received from a CRS
- **99%** would recommend a visit with the CRS to other families in the community

## Who's better off?

- **77%** were completely able to access the programs and services the CRS suggested

# Building Stronger Systems for Young Children and their Families

First 5 Contra Costa **leads** the **Family Economic Security Partnership (FESP)**:

- Engaged **42** participants in events and added to its growing mailing list of **178** individuals
- Explored topics ranging from learning how state ballot measures impact family economic security, understanding how the county develops and uses its annual legislative platform, and examining how the state's budget proposals impact families

First 5 Contra Costa **participates** in these collaborations:

- **Contra Costa County Comprehensive Prevention Plan** planning team which aims to create and oversee a seamless cross-sector network that shares collective responsibility for increasing protective factors and positively impacting the quality of the social determinants of health
- **Emerging Countywide Home Visiting Partnership** with Family and Maternal Health Division of Contra Costa Health, Employment & Human Services Department and community partners to enhance the capacity building of home visiting programs in our county

# Early Intervention

All children deserve to reach their full potential.



# Early Intervention

All children deserve to reach their full potential.

What we do:



Promote developmental screenings and connections to services.



Build capacity to prevent, screen, treat, and heal childhood adversity and toxic stress.



Bolster early childhood mental health through system changes and investment in prevention.





# Help Me Grow: Screening & Referrals

Help Me Grow Contra Costa is a system that helps families understand their child’s progress toward development milestones and connects them to service providers that help foster their child’s physical and socio-emotional development.

**As the lead of our local Help Me Grow system, First 5 Contra Costa:**

- Trains staff from a variety of agencies and tracks developmental screenings from the First 5 Centers, pediatric clinics & school districts
- Funds the Contra Costa Crisis Center to operate the Help Me Grow 211 Care Coordinators
- Funds two agencies to lead developmental playgroups that help children catch up on their developmental milestones and provide tools for families to support their child’s development

**How much?**

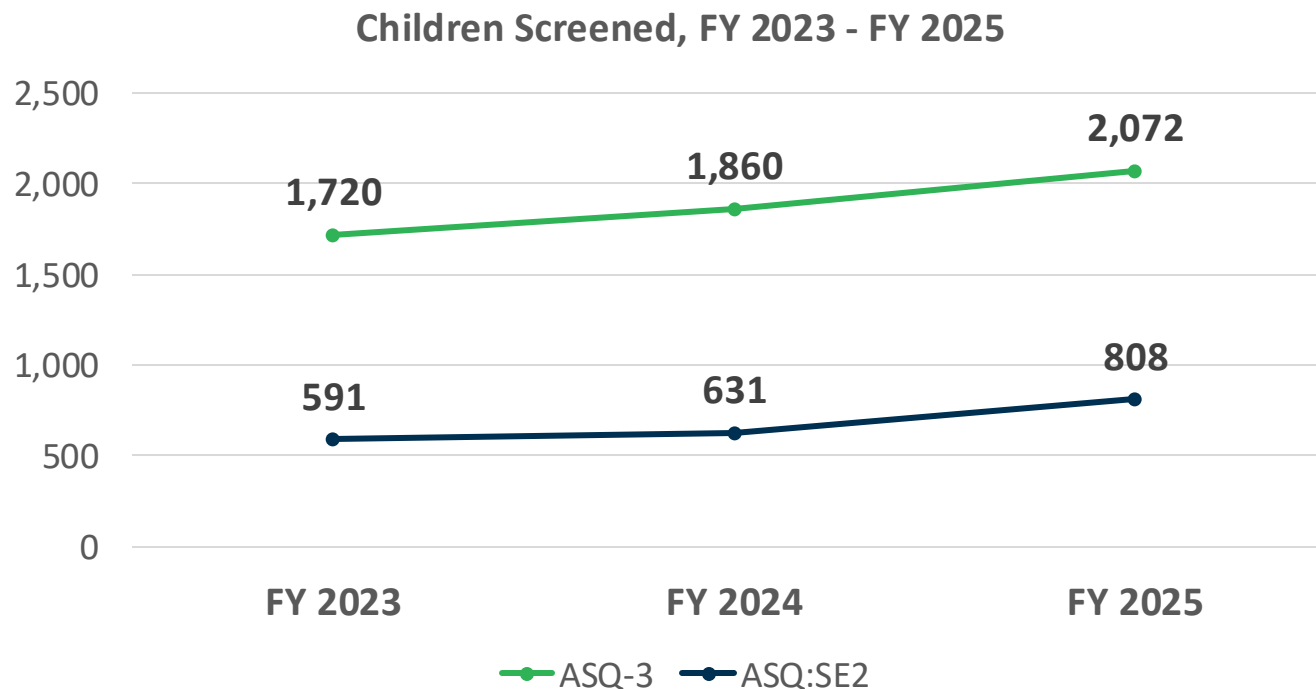
Type of service	FY 2024 participants	FY 2025 participants
Screening on overall developmental progress – children	1,860	2,072
Help Me Grow 211 Care Coordination – adults	621	671
Developmental playgroups – adults & children	430	411

# Increase in children screened

## How much?

- **2,535** individual children were screened with the ASQ tools
- **54** unduplicated pediatricians and early care and education providers received training on developmental screenings

The number of children screened with the Ages & Stages Questionnaire tools increased over the last three years



# Developmental playgroups support parents and children

## Who's better off?

**97%** of parents said they feel better able to manage their child's behavior

**94%** of parents said their child's developmental skills improved since being in a playgroup

**98%** of parents thought services were respectful of their personal background (language, ethnicity, culture, gender, religion, etc.)

N = 146 exit survey respondents



# Parenting classes help caregivers develop skills

## How much?

Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) is a family support program that provides evidence-based strategies to help parents raise happy, confident children.

In FY 2025, **127** unduplicated parents attended **15** multi-week Triple P classes and, out of those parents, **79** also received case management.

In addition to Triple P classes, **332** parents attended **39** brief Triple P seminars and, for parents who needed extra support, **93** received one-on-one coaching.

*“Loved being able to apply the tools provided in this class. I always tell other moms I meet about this class and recommend it!” ~ Triple P class participant*

## Who's better off?

### Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI)

Of caregivers whose pre assessments exceeded the clinical cutoffs for intensity and problem scores, after completing a Triple P class their post assessments showed a:

- **79%** decrease in intensity scores
- **86%** decrease in problem scores

### Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS)

For parents whose initial assessment showed mild to extremely severe depression:

- **82%** of the parents showed a reduction in depression after attending a Triple P class

N = 54 pre & post assessments



# Improving systems to promote the healthy development of young children

First 5 Contra Costa **spearheaded** the **Early Childhood Prevention & Intervention Coalition (ECPIC)**:

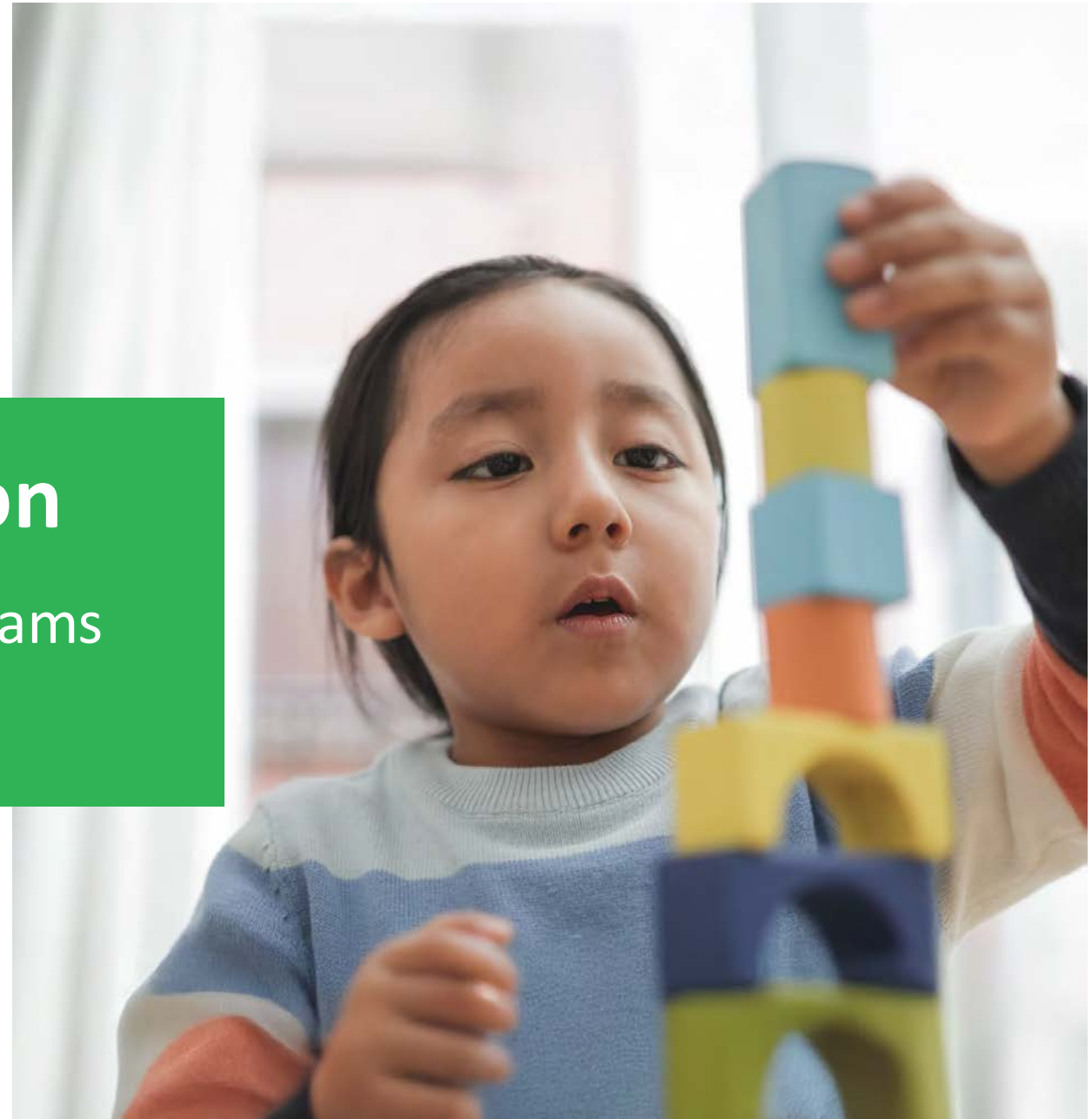
- Shared updates on policy and funding opportunities
- Developed strategies to raise awareness and advance advocacy for the mental health needs of young children and their families

Staff also **participated** in these collaborations:

- Executive Committee of **Healthy & Active Before 5 (HAB45)**, a collaborative that advances health equity through local policy and environmental changes to support the health and well-being of children ages 0-5 and their families
- Stewardship Committee of **Contra Costa Together**, an emerging initiative of the California Accountable Communities for Health, focused on cross-sector collaboration to improve community health and well-being.
- **Contra Costa Interagency Collaborative**, led by Care Parent Network and Early Childhood Mental Health, which shares information related to 0-5 care coordination of children with special needs

# Early Care & Education

High quality early learning programs  
impact children's future.



# Early Care & Education

High quality early learning programs impact children's future.

What we do:



Provide professional development opportunities for early educators to enhance quality.



Reform systems and services with an emphasis on school readiness.



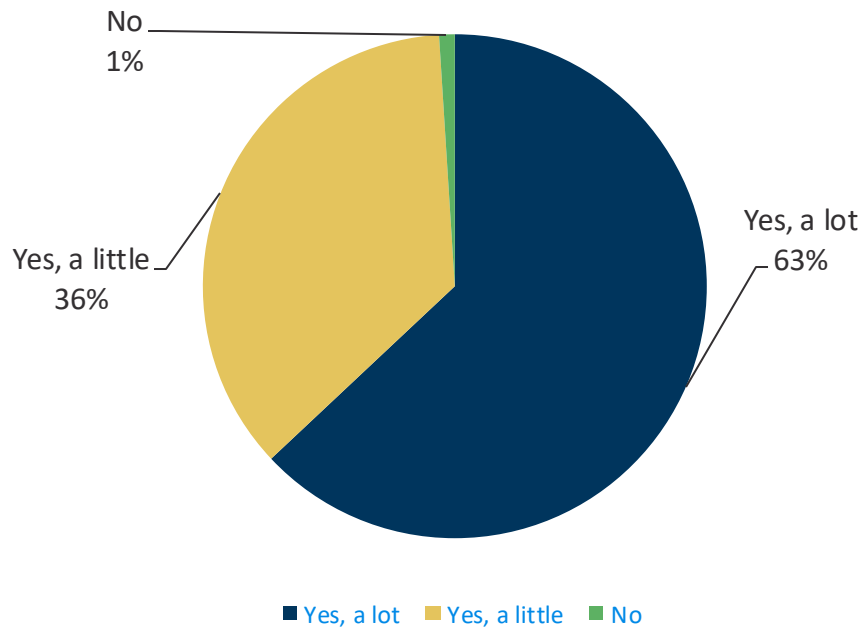
Understand and respond to the county's early learning educator workforce crisis.

# Early care and education programs value one-on-one coaching

Quality Matters is a program that offers a variety of quality improvement supports to early care and education (ECE) programs. First 5 coaches provided **668** hours of coaching in FY 2025, a **23%** increase in hours compared to FY 2024.

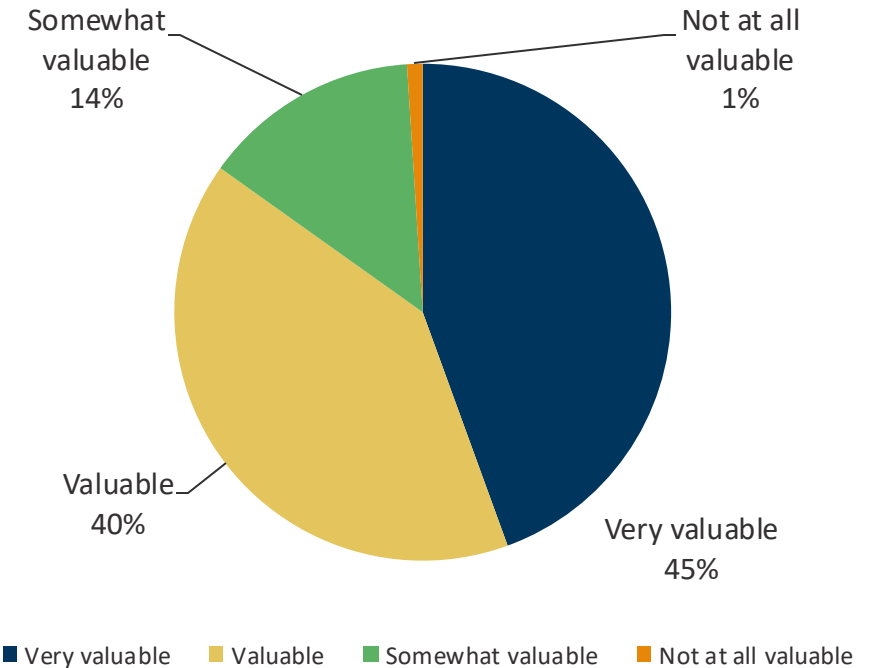
## Who's better off?

Percentage of sites where overall program quality improved



## How well?

Percentage of sites that valued one-on-one coaching





# More early care & education providers received professional training

## How much?

- **874** unduplicated early care and education providers attended **54** trainings coordinated by First 5 (compared to 292 providers and 28 trainings in FY 2024)
- **144** participants completed the Professional Development Program (compared to 100 in FY 2023)
  - **62** completed college coursework
  - **6** earned college degrees



# Helping educators create more inclusive environments

Guided by insights from the community, First 5 Contra Costa implemented a robust set of trainings and capacity-building efforts to help educators create more inclusive early care and learning environments.

## How much?

A total of **380** unduplicated providers, representing **267** early care and education sites throughout the county, participated in **14** trainings, **14** peer learning sessions, and targeted material-support opportunities, including:

- **210** shopping passes
- **350** inclusion toolkits

## How well?

- **99%** of respondents rated trainings as excellent or good (n = 253)

## Who's better off?

- **99.5%** were confident in their ability to implement the information and strategies they learned (n = 212)
- **96.8%** responded they would either fully or partially change their teaching practices as a result of inclusion training (n = 253)

*"It was a wonderful facilitator who helped us feel comfortable and provided us with lots of information as well as strategies."*  
~ Director at a childcare center

# Working to address inequities faced by African American & Black families in East Contra Costa

Ready Kids East County (RKEC) works to address inequities faced by Black families in East Contra Costa County by strengthening a connected, culturally responsive early childhood ecosystem that supports children's school readiness and family well-being."

## How much?

- **42** Black women participated in the ***Motherwork Summit***, a day of reflection and advocacy organized by Her Story Is Mine.
- **16** Black caregivers completed the *I Believe in Black Family Leadership Series*, facilitated by the *Black Women in Early Childhood Collective*.
- The ***RKEC Resource Fair*** connected over **60** caregivers and **65** children with **33** service providers, offering on-site services including vaccinations, food distribution, and WIC enrollment.
- **100** culturally tailored "Welcome Totes" were distributed to expecting Black families in partnership with the Contra Costa County Library.



# Advancing Early Care & Education through Policy & Systems Change

First 5 Contra Costa continued to lead the **Early Learning Leadership Group**:

- Addressed topics such as the impacts of state and federal funding and policy shifts on the childcare field, licensing issues, ways to support the childcare workforce, and local opportunities to advocate for the needs of the childcare field
- In fall 2025, ELLG joined a four-county planning grant to strengthen childcare for low-income and underserved communities. First 5 Contra Costa led the county's participation in the ***High Road to Early Childhood Education Consortium***. The planning grant, part of California Jobs First, was awarded and the effort launched in FY 2026.

## **Child Care Boost Initiative:**

- Developed a wage-boost pilot to support and retain early educators, particularly in family childcare homes and early learning centers in high-need areas, using local data, national best practices, and input from providers and system partners.
- Launched in early 2025 through CocoKids with Measure X funding – 123 providers received ~\$1,000/month for 18 months; First 5 Contra Costa led outreach, technical assistance, and evaluation to inform future workforce stabilization efforts.





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

**Thank you**



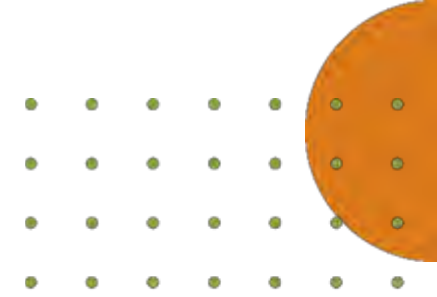
FIRST 5 CENTER FOR  
CHILDREN'S POLICY



## First 5 Contra Costa Commission Meeting

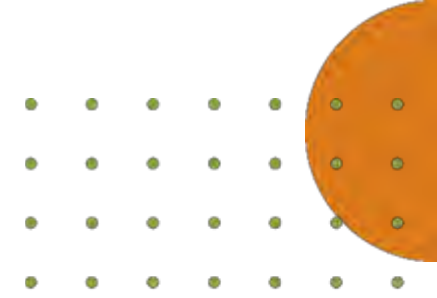
December 15, 2025



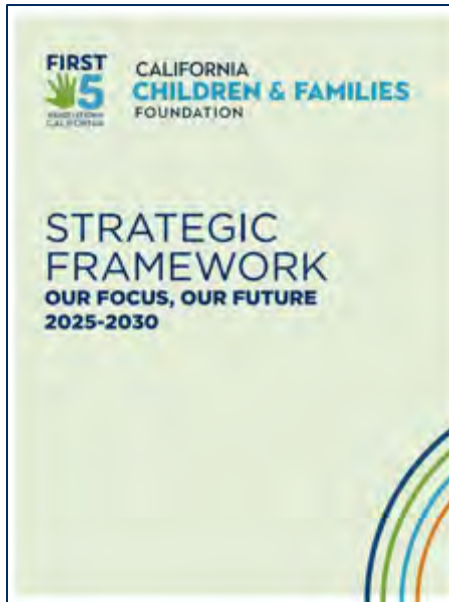


# Content

- First 5 Association Background, Goals and Ways we Work
- Association 2026 Legislative Plans and Framing
- Choose Children 2026



# First 5 Association Goals

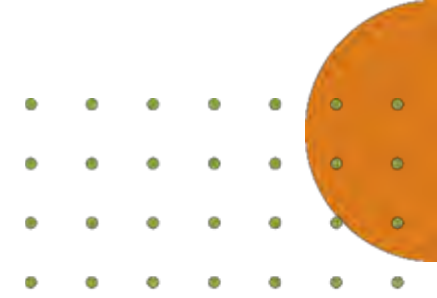


**ADVOCATE** for state and federal public policies and funding that support California's young children and families

**POSITION** First 5s to thrive

**DEVELOP** leaders across the First 5 Network and the broader early childhood field





# First 5 Association – Ways We Work

- ✓ Policy Research and Development
- ✓ Government Affairs and Advocacy
- ✓ Relationships and Influence
- ✓ Leadership Development and Learning Opportunities
- ✓ First 5 Network Support
- ✓ Strategic Communications

# Membership Benefits

- ❑ Member Learning and Engagement
- ❑ Policy Development and Advocacy
- ❑ Communications
- ❑ Consultation and Intermediary Services



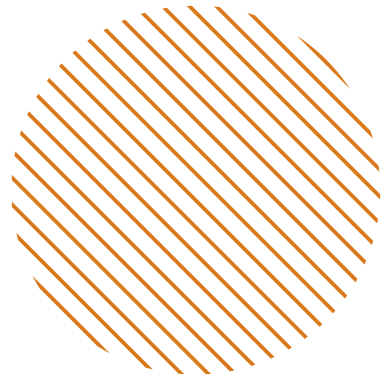
**MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS**

First 5 Association of California offers several benefits to member First 5 county commissions.

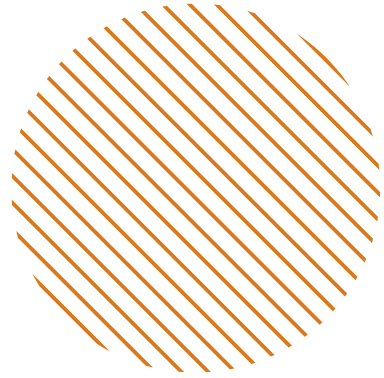
Member Learning and Engagement	Policy Development and Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to the First 5 Leadership Institute – a comprehensive member education and leadership development institute that provides learnings on relevant and timely topics such as state and federal policy implementation, funding and partnership opportunities, leadership development, mentorship, and fellowship.</li><li>• Networking events including the First 5 Annual Summit.</li><li>• Regional and issue-specific workgroups for peer learning, cross-sharing, and collaboration with other First 5 county commissions.</li><li>• Resource library on Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) principles, staff orientation, strategic plan examples, and other resources and samples from counties within the First 5 Network.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct state and federal lobbying on behalf of members.</li><li>• Annual legislative advocacy day at the State Capitol.</li><li>• State policy development, analysis and updates for members.</li><li>• Advocacy assets including talking points and fact sheets directed to local, state, and federal leaders.</li><li>• State and federal legislation and budget tracking that affect local First 5s and communities.</li><li>• Access to the First 5 Center for Children's Policy which provides policy research, development, and publications on issues salient to First 5s and the prenatal to five field.</li><li>• Access to research and policy briefs detailing First 5 outcomes and emerging issues.</li><li>• Access and introductions to state leaders, including legislators, department heads, Governor's office, and key partner coalitions.</li></ul>
Communications	Fee-based Consultation and Intermediary Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communications strategy, brand positioning, and messaging for the Network.</li><li>• Weekly member newsletter, Network highlights, learning and funding opportunities.</li><li>• Regular communications calls and trainings.</li><li>• Customizable communications assets.</li><li>• Advocacy and social media toolkits.</li><li>• Collecting and communicating First 5 stories of community impact to state and federal leaders, media, and the early childhood field.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technical assistance for program and policy implementation.</li><li>• Program, policy, system, and evaluation design consultation.</li><li>• SOGCS grantwriting services on behalf of members that are seamless, efficient, and cost-effective.</li><li>• Pooled funding support and advice.</li></ul>

# Current Policy and Political Context

- Budget challenges at all levels (local, state, national)
- Proposition 10 revenue expected to see annual decline of ~6% per year through FY28-29
- 2026 marks final year under Newsom Administration
- Increased visibility of First 5s with the Legislature
- Legislative champions ready to author legislation for First 5s



# Overall First 5 Positioning Frame



First 5s:

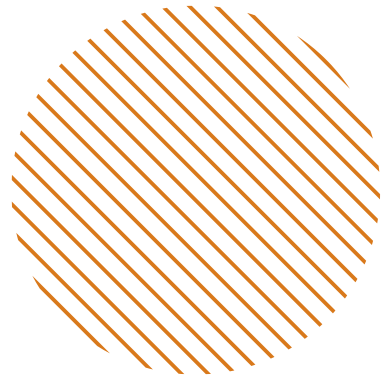
- are created (and were defended) by **California voters**
- are **public entities**, stewarding **billions of taxpayer dollars** over nearly three decades, and have local and statewide **accountability** in place
- have unparallel **local expertise** on early childhood systems and programs
- have been California's **reliable implementation partner** on initiatives such as Preschool and Home Visiting Expansion, Medi-Cal and Health Collaborations, and Rapid Response (e.g. COVID 19)
- are **underutilized** by the state as local, public early childhood **infrastructure**





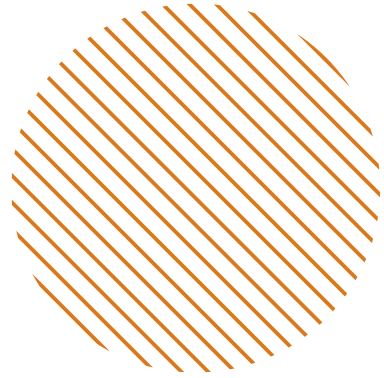
## 2026 First 5 Legislation Plans

- Centers the First 5 Network as Essential Partners with State
- Creates cost and/or implementation efficiencies for the state and local communities
- Solves a problem
- Possible focus areas / **home visiting and early childhood behavioral health**





# 2026 Gubernatorial Engagement and Education



A statewide campaign ensuring California's next governor prioritizes young children and families





# CHOOSE CHILDREN

## Who We Are:

- Choose Children is guided by a diverse California network of over three dozen child advocates and service organizations committed to creating a thriving future for California children and families
- We work to ensure that candidates for California Governor take action and support investment and approaches that advance the well-being, care, and learning of young children, their families, and the essential workers who care for them.
- Choose Children is led by the First 5 Association of California, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, The Children's Partnership, and the LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment.





# CHOOSE CHILDREN

## Context and Why Now?

California has the 4th largest economy in the world, yet our children's health and well-being do not match our economic output.

- Nearly **19%** of California Children live in poverty – fourth worst in the nation
- California ranks fourth for most expensive child care in the country **averaging \$21,945 per year** – nearly three times more than an in-state college tuition.
- **Sixty percent** of California babies are not getting all their recommended well-child visits, and for African American babies, that number rises to 75 percent.
- **17%** of early educators make less than a living wage





# CHOOSE CHILDREN

## Strategies

1. Compile Research, Community Needs, and Voter Polling
2. Direct Candidate Engagement, Host Events, and Forums
3. Media: Place the Early Childhood Issue in the Context of the Governor's Race
4. Develop a Consensus Policy Agenda
5. Track and Influence Outcomes



News > Education

### **Prioritize children, campaign insists to Newsom, others in governor's race**

Advocates see an opening to call for more early childhood education funding.





## Policy Platform

- 1. System navigation:** Ensuring California families can easily access guidance and peer assistance for economic, social-emotional, and developmental services
- 2. Economic Security:** Providing California families with the necessary financial resources and support for their child's healthy development.
- 3. Birth Justice:** Delivering high-quality, culturally sensitive care and seamless support to birthing people and families before, during, and after birth in California.
- 4. Early Learning and Care:** Offering California families access to affordable, high-quality, and culturally and linguistically appropriate early learning and care for children from birth to age 5
- 5. Health Coverage and Access:** Guaranteeing affordable and high-quality health coverage and care for California families with young children.
- 6. Governance:** Establishing a robust infrastructure and governance in California to prioritize and support families with young children and birthing people.



# CHOOSE CHILDREN

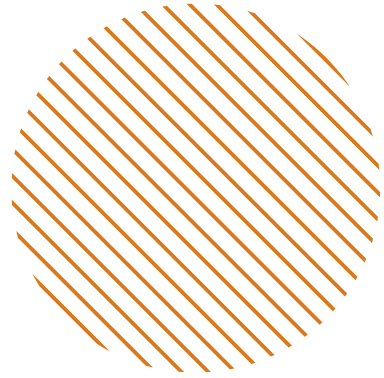
**Learn about Choose Children 2026 and stay engaged!**

- Join our email list
- Look at our new poll findings
- Learn about our Policy Primer and Platform





# Contact



**Avo Makdessian**  
Executive Director  
[avo@first5association.org](mailto:avo@first5association.org)  
408.892.9336







**Thank You**



At-A-Glance:

# Contra Costa Early Childhood System Map

The Early Childhood System Map is a visual and strategic tool that illustrates the many systems and programs families with young children in our county rely on. It also highlights families' and service providers' perspectives on strengths and opportunities across these supports.

## The Purpose:



## To turn data into insights and insights into action

It's part of a broader effort by First 5 Contra Costa to build a more coordinated, responsive, and family-centered early childhood system in Contra Costa County. By analyzing what early childhood services exist and who uses them, we uncover patterns, barriers, gaps, and assets. **Those insights can help align efforts, improve access, and drive equity.**

## What Leaders Can Do with It:

### Better data, better decisions, better outcomes



#### Strengthen collaboration:

Use the map to align goals and strategies across agencies.



#### Inform funding, programming, and policy:

Ground decisions in real-world family experiences and outcomes.



#### Support continuous improvement:

Track progress and adapt strategies over time.



#### Identify leverage points

See where small changes could have big impact within or across systems.

*See what's inside—plus learn more about our work on the back.*



[bit.ly/early-childhood-system-map](https://bit.ly/early-childhood-system-map)

**Let's strengthen the early childhood system together.**

Connect with us to learn how your team can use the System Map to identify opportunities, align efforts, and improve outcomes for Contra Costa families.

Mackenzie Whipps, Ph.D.  
Data and Policy Manager  
[mwhipps@first5coco.org](mailto:mwhipps@first5coco.org)  
(925) 771-7333



# What You'll Discover Inside:

## A comprehensive look at Contra Costa's early childhood system



**Community Context:** Outlines Contra Costa's demographics, geography, and economic landscape that shape need and access. Includes population, language, race/ethnicity, housing, and neighborhood-level child density to show where services are most needed.



**Strong, Supported Families:** Describes family-level economic and social determinants (income, employment, food security, housing, child care affordability) and the safety-net supports families use. Surfaces stressors affecting parents and highlights community assets.



**Quality Early Childhood Programs:** Profiles major early learning and family-serving programs (WIC, home visiting, Early Start and Special Education, State Preschool, Transitional Kindergarten, child care subsidy, early intervention, and early childhood special education). Summarizes slots, reach, and where capacity falls short of estimated need.



**Healthy Beginnings:** Covers prenatal, birth, and infant health indicators and services (prenatal care, infant outcomes, immunizations). Highlights where health services are working well and where racial, geographic, and coverage gaps exist.



**Early Childhood Workforce:** Presents workforce size, credentials, languages, compensation, turnover risk, and professional development access. Identifies workforce strengths (commitment, bilingual capacity) and barriers (low pay, burnout, training gaps).



**Funding and Governance:** Shows how funding flows through the system and identifies the local conveners and governance roles that guide coordination.



**Program Profiles:** Contains program-level details and tables for practitioners and planners who need operational specificity to act.

## How the Tool was Developed:

### Built through partnership, data, and community voice

- ☒ First 5 Contra Costa used a template designed by Start Early and worked with them to gather local program data from county agencies and community partners.
- ☒ Start Early compiled public and administrative datasets, compared data to state benchmarks, and held focus groups with families and providers to surface barriers, needs, and experiences.
- ☒ After synthesizing the data into the dashboard, we gathered the advisory group who provided input during the development to validate the final tool.

*Join us in building a stronger, more equitable early childhood system for all families in Contra Costa County.*

[bit.ly/early-childhood-system-map](https://bit.ly/early-childhood-system-map)

## About First 5 Contra Costa

### Supporting Contra Costa's young children and their families

For over 25 years, First 5 Contra Costa has worked to support every child in reaching their full potential by focusing on their most critical years of development, prenatal to age 5. We do this through three key focus areas.

**Early Care & Education:** ensuring children have high-quality early learning experiences that help them succeed in school and in life.

**Early Intervention:** making sure families have access to prevention and supports that foster the optimal development of all children.

**Strengthening Families:** helping families connect to the information, resources, and services they need to help their children thrive.



(925) 771-7300 | [www.first5coco.org](http://www.first5coco.org)

# Contra Costa Early Childhood System Map

A visual and strategic tool for understanding  
and strengthening our early childhood system

Mackenzie Whipps, Ph.D.  
Data and Policy Manager





# Purpose of Today's Presentation

- ✓ Orient to the *System Map*
- ✓ How and why it was developed
- ✓ Explore what's inside
- ✓ Discuss how it can be used



# What is the System Map?

A one-stop, interactive synthesis of:

- Program-level data
- Public data for our county and state
- Family and provider perspectives



# Why the System Map was Created



To turn data into insights  
and insights into action

- Early childhood ecosystem is cross-sector and complex.
- The map supports decision-makers, funders, and providers in aligning efforts, improving access, and driving equity.



# Who was involved?



## Start Early Consulting

Led the design and data synthesis for the Contra Costa Early Childhood System Map, bringing expertise in cross-system analysis and visualization.



## First 5 Contra Costa

Commissioned and guided the project, ensuring that the map reflects local priorities, family experiences, and the county's broader vision for an equitable, family-centered early childhood system.



## Advisory Group

Provided critical input and data throughout the process, validating findings, recruiting participants, surfacing real-world perspectives, and ensuring the map's relevance and usability across sectors.



# What's Inside



Community Context



Healthy Beginnings



Strong, Supported Families



Quality Early Childhood Programs



Early Childhood Workforce



Funding & Governance



Program Profiles

Early Childhood Systems Map

## Contra Costa County, CA



Introduction  
& Approach



Community  
Context



Healthy  
Beginnings



Strong,  
Supported  
Families



Quality Early  
Childhood  
Programs



Early  
Childhood  
Workforce



Funding,  
Governance, &  
Collaboration



This map of Contra Costa County provides a comprehensive picture of the early childhood system, looking at health and wellbeing, family support, early childhood programs, workforce, funding, and cross-system collaboration. Using the systems map, Contra Costa's partners - early childhood agencies, families, and providers - can effectively collaborate; improve policies and systems; facilitate informed decision-making; and plan strategically to improve outcomes for young children and their families.



JULY 2025

# How Leaders Can Use the System Map



**Strengthen** collaboration across agencies



**Inform** decisions on funding, programming, and policy



**Support** improvement through ongoing tracking



**Identify** leverage points for big impact

# Let's strengthen the early childhood system together.

[bit.ly/early-childhood-system-map](https://bit.ly/early-childhood-system-map)







# Key Learnings from First 5 Contra Costa Listening Tour | Brief

Continuous Improvement Rapid Cycle Learning &  
Evaluation (CIRCLE) Team, Stanford Center on  
Early Childhood, Stanford University

September 2025

## Authors:

Jennifer Paterson-Marke, MA

Lamisa Mustafa, MPP

Alex Parton, MS

Kathryn Beauchamp, PhD

Monica Arpino, MA

In partnership with:



**Stanford**  
Center on Early Childhood



# Families with young children in Contra Costa County speak about their experiences engaging with family support services in the county.

---

## Key points

- Contra Costa County is home to thousands of families with children under age 6.
- Parents of young children shared what's helpful for their families and where more support is needed around programs, resources, and services.
- Their experiences and suggestions can guide First 5 Contra Costa and other early childhood providers, agencies, and advocates to find impactful ways to support more families with young children.

“

*I feel that First 5 has helped me a lot as a woman, as a mother, as a friend, and I am very grateful to First 5 for all that I have learned, for the way I have improved. I don't know what I would do if First 5 wasn't here in Concord, and um... I am very grateful to all the teachers, to all the staff. Everything they have done for me and the programs they have offered us have been very helpful, but I feel that there should be more.*

*- Parent in Contra Costa County*

”



Families in the county report both positive experiences with services and unmet needs related to raising young children, highlighting the importance of better understanding their experiences, elevating parent voices, and offering supports that ensure every child thrives from the start.

## Lifting up parent voices

The Stanford Center on Early Childhood (SCEC) partnered with First 5 Contra Costa to understand the experiences of Contra Costa families with children under age 6. We focus on these early years because they are a critical time in children's and families' lives that builds the lifelong foundation for physical health, emotional well-being, and positive development.

In this brief, we lay out what we've learned from Contra Costa parents about their experiences accessing family support services in the county, including what's working well and where more support is needed. We gathered these insights from discussion groups and interviews, conducted in both English and Spanish, with more than 50 families between March and July 2025.

Parents know best what their children and families need. We are grateful to the families who shared their time and stories with us to shape programs and family support services for young children in the Contra Costa community.



## Understanding families' experiences

We gathered input from First 5 staff and their parent advisory group about what questions we should ask families to better understand their experiences and needs as they relate to family support services in Contra Costa County. For the listing tour, we recruited families that engage with First 5 Contra Costa-funded services and families that do not.

### Many families expressed difficulties paying for basic needs.

We asked families about the kinds of help available in the county for basic early childhood necessities like food, car seats, and diapers. Parents reported difficulty accessing food and household goods, including diapers. Access to basic needs was related to eligibility for programs and services designed to support families with low incomes, with one parent left asking, "How do I qualify for low-income housing, but not food stamps, cause... right now, everything's really expensive." Availability of basic necessities differed by region too; for example, some parents mentioned particular struggles with food access in West Contra Costa. Parents also discussed the lack of affordable, accessible child care that meets their family's unique needs, despite child care access not being a focus of this family support listening tour.

### While many families engaged with different supports, others didn't know they existed.

Overall, parents across Contra Costa reported a high demand for supports, naming over 45 programs and services they have used to support their families. Many reported engaging in enjoyable activities at one of the five First 5 Centers in the county, such as parenting classes and parent-child activities. However, some only learned about what was available through the SCEC's discussion groups or by first being connected to other services. We learned that this initial connection point is crucial as it often leads to connections to other services and family supports.

### Even when they knew about the programs, not all families could access them.

Knowing about county services and other family support options isn't enough; many families couldn't access what they needed because of conflicting schedules, unclear eligibility, complicated enrollment, limited availability, and fear of stigma. Program staff across agencies helped families to navigate some of these barriers, but more outreach and support is needed to meet families where they are and improve access.

### Families shared where there were gaps, beyond access to child care and covering basic needs.

As discussed, many families expressed affordable child care and paying for basic needs as unmet needs. Parents in all regions of the county reported the perception that their neighborhood or city was particularly underserved, though that sentiment was more strongly and consistently reported by parents living in West Contra Costa. Across the county, parents said that offerings for fathers and the Latinx population were hard to find.

### Families learned about supports through a variety of sources.

Parents found out about family support services through informal connections, like family and friends, and more formal connections, like their pediatrician and the library. More can be done to ensure that information is shared through the channels that parents tell us they already rely on, such as word-of-mouth referrals and pediatricians. Sharing information through trusted sources and service providers can help make sure that more families know their options.

Parents would like programs to be offered at times that would better suit their schedules, a wider ranges of topics covered and language options.

We asked parents for specific ideas and suggestions about improving their access to and engagement with supports for families with young children. Here are some of the most common suggestions we heard:

Parents would like information to be in one place and for systems to be better connected.

They asked for a clear, county-wide resource guide to be shared widely (many did not know about an existing, county-wide resource guide, 211, which is funded by various county agencies and organizations, including First 5). In particular, stay-at-home parents, immigrants, and those with infants may need targeted outreach. Participants also shared a need for systems to be better connected to make it easier to find and access support. For example, parents specifically called out the need for more attention and support for referral pathways for children with developmental concerns (e.g., the Regional Center).

*"I think that if there was a way to connect folks more quickly to the Regional Center that would be helpful because, you know, the earlier the intervention, the better."* - Parent in East Contra Costa County

For county programs and services with strict eligibility rules around income, parents shared a need for simpler, consistent systems to access programs.

They need less paperwork, clearer eligibility rules, and one-on-one guidance to reduce stress and make it easier to get the help their families require.

*"You may qualify for one thing with one agency and then not for another agency, so just navigating that can be a little bit hard and understanding what you qualify for."* - Parent in West Contra Costa County

For agencies offering classes specifically, parents would like more classes with flexible schedules, a wider range of topics, and language options.

They also need child care to attend classes and engage in career support and community events.

*"I wish there was more that [would] provide us skills of how to find a job, where we can become successful at the same time as being moms."* - Parent in West Contra Costa County

Parents expressed a need for child care support.

They asked for child care during parent classes, job interviews, and for siblings of children when classes are not appropriate for all ages.

*"If they could provide childcare like on site for the littles... because that can be a barrier. I know it's been a barrier for me several times like trying to bring my now 2-year-old, and my 6-year-old, and she obviously is not appropriate for those programs... it can be kind of distracting to the little kids."* - Parent in East Contra Costa County

## Conclusion

While families with young children in Contra Costa are benefiting from available services, they also seek better access to information, programs, and basic supports.

While many are interested in accessing family support services, barriers like low awareness, weak referral pathways, and burdensome paperwork can get in the way of uptake. Trusted relationships often help families navigate these challenges. These insights can guide First 5 Contra Costa and local system leaders to improve outreach, tailor support, and strengthen programs to lay a strong foundation for healthy children, families, and communities.



To download the full report, scan the QR code or visit: [bit.ly/listening-tour-2025](https://bit.ly/listening-tour-2025)

In partnership with:



**Stanford**  
Center on Early Childhood

We extend our appreciation to the Stanford Center for Early Childhood, the authors of this report, and the participants of the listening sessions for their invaluable contributions. We would also like to thank our community partners and organizations for their continued commitment to supporting families with young children.



# County Listening Tour

Update on Strategic Data Collection Effort

December 2025

Mackenzie Whipps, Ph.D.  
Data and Policy Manager

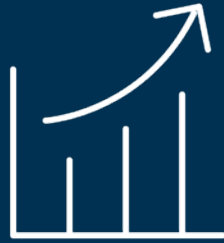




# Our Core Strategies



**Capacity  
Building**



**Research**



**Resource  
Connection**



**Advocacy &  
Community  
Engagement**

# Purpose

Strategic planning data collection project

- Partnered with Stanford's CIRCLE team
- Understand met and unmet family needs, within our Strengthening Families workstream
  - Early child development needs
  - Family support needs
- How needs may vary across populations and geographies



# Strengthening Families

Thriving families lead to thriving children.

## What we do:



Support the holistic needs of children and families through our First 5 Centers.



Enhance parents' knowledge of children's development and positive parenting practices.



Foster parents' ability to advocate for themselves and build a sense of community.

# Partnering Organization

## Stanford's Center on Early Childhood

- Continuous Improvement Rapid Cycle Learning and Evaluation (CIRCLE) team
- An initiative of the Stanford Accelerator for Learning
- Co-developed research instruments, protocols, recruitment frame







# Participation

**53** Parents of children 0-5 in Contra Costa

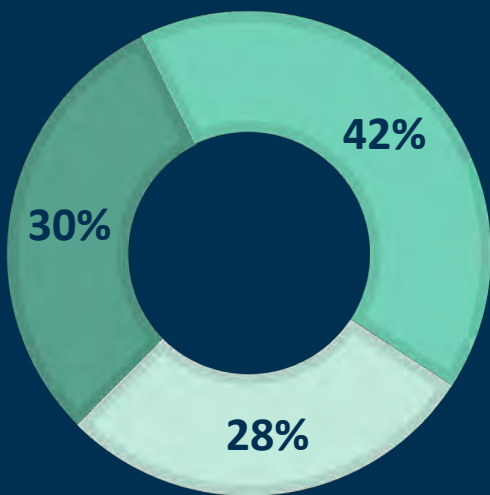
**8** Focus Groups

**6** 1-on-1 interviews

# Sample Characteristics

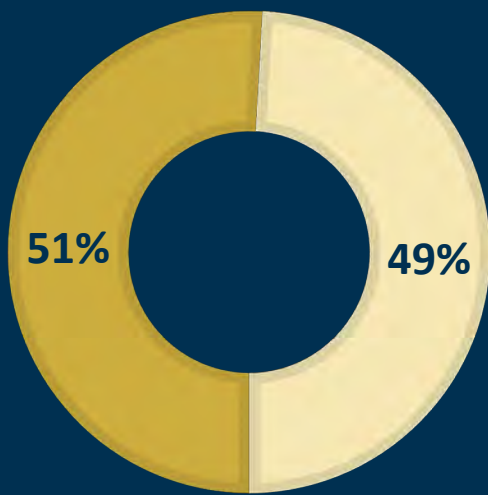
## GEOGRAPHY

- East
- Central + South
- West



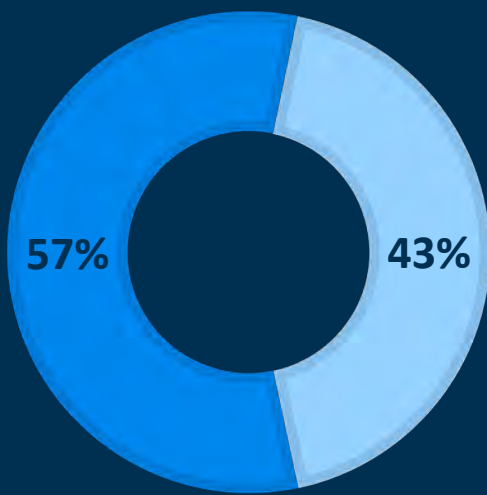
## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

- <\$60K
- \$60K+



## FIRST 5 PARTICIPATION

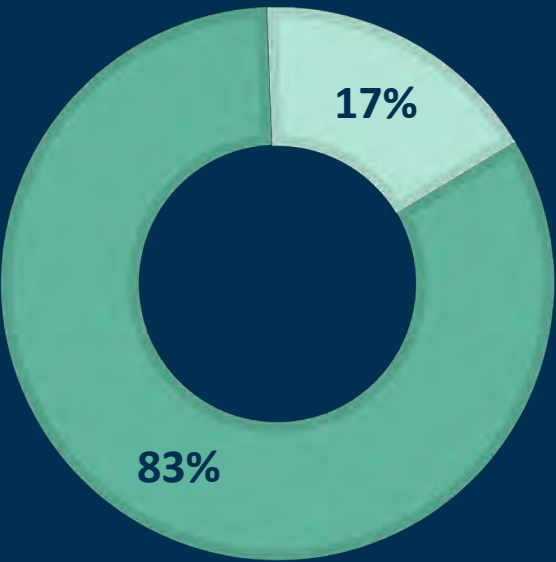
- Yes
- No



# Data Collection

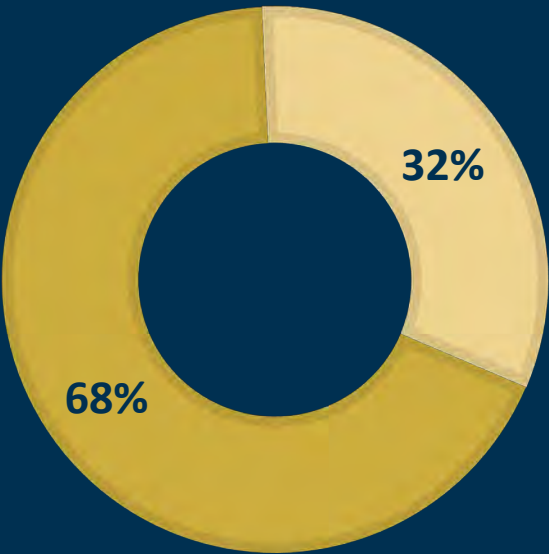
## LANGUAGE

English Spanish



## MODE

Virtual In Person





# Key Findings

*“I feel that First 5 has helped me a lot as a woman, as a mother, as a friend, and I am very grateful to First 5 for all that I have learned, for the way I have improved. I don't know what I would do if First 5 wasn't here in Concord, and um... I am very grateful to all the teachers, to all the staff.*

***Everything they have done for me and the programs they have offered us have been very helpful, but I feel that there should be more.”***







# Key Findings

- Awareness of First 5 services can be limited
- Awareness does not always equal access

*“[Y]ou can only hear about it if only you’re [already] participating in the First 5 or certain daycares, where they kind of tell you that.”*

*“It takes us like 2 years, like I told you, to discover First 5.”*

*“I have come across First 5 but we haven’t utilized it yet. I’m not really sure how everything there works...”*

→ **Leverage word of mouth from trusted communities, such as pediatricians; provide targeted outreach to newcomers and stay-at-home parents**



# Key Findings

- Parents not already connected to “system” are isolated; being connected to one organization opened access to other support
- Healthcare sources are trusted by new parents

*“I didn't know there was a First 5 right here in Richmond and apparently it was a few blocks down [from] my house...I never knew about it.”*

*“I wish there was a way to find out about First 5... directly... after you have your kid, you're going for a checkup... For like seven months, I was like, I don't know what to do with this baby. We were just in the house. When I found out about [First 5 Contra Costa], it was so, so nice.”*

→ **Leverage word of mouth from pediatricians**





# Key Findings

- Challenges with accessing services in Spanish
- Fear due to documentation status

*“I would like to see a Latino Community Center with an office with resources for us, the Latinos... There should also be resources to help us grow as individuals and be able to be somebody in this country.”*

- ➔ **Create or support a hub for Latinx residents**
- ➔ **Expand offerings (classes and groups) in Spanish at West and Central County Centers**



# Key Findings

- Child care is unaffordable, hard to find
- Drop-in child care an unmet need

*“[I]nfant care is so expensive, it just doesn't make sense for me to continue to teach, to pay for daycare for my baby. So yeah, subsidized childcare... I would really support that.”*

*“[T]he childcare facility that I have reached out [to] has been full until like next year or 2 years”*

*“...needing childcare, maybe like a 1-time voucher... That would be helpful if you're trying to find a job.”*

→ **Consider child care options for job interviews, for parenting classes, and for older siblings**





# Key Findings

- Means tested program applications are difficult to access, understand, and complete
- Universal programs' information is scattered
- Some are wary / fearful of in-person support, prefer virtual communications and minimal paperwork

*"In my case, what still limits me from connecting... is fear, because I don't have a legal status."*

- ➔ **Support early and timely referrals to Regional Center; provide one-on-one support for family navigation; clarify eligibility; reduce administrative burden**
- ➔ **Share current services more broadly**



# Key Findings

- Affordability crisis
- Program eligibility changing rapidly for low-income families

*“[B]arely making it, but you don't qualify for... anything because you make too much money.”*

*“I feel like the resources that are being offered aren't really stacking up to like the needs of the community.”*

*“[F]unding was being cut, and they weren't able to provide as many diapers as they would like.”*

→ **Continue to provide resources for basic needs (diapers, food)**





# Key Findings

- Parents in all regions feel underserved

*“Here in Richmond I don't feel like we have a lot of resources for early education for the kids.”*

*“I wish that... these... resources were also in Pinole and Hercules area, because it's always Richmond.”*

*“...there's a lot more things going on in Oakley and in Brentwood than there is in Pittsburg.”*

*“Antioch [has] a lot less going on.”*

→ ***Increase number of classes available, particularly in West County; expand range of class types; consider more drop-in classes***



# Key Findings

- Parents of kids with disabilities and delays are still in need of additional support, tighter referral pathways
- Universal screening program is helpful

*“I'd like to try and see about how resources can be given to those to assess for special needs or for kiddos [who] are neurodivergent.”*

*“I [did the ASQ] at First 5 and had some results but...my pediatrician didn't really see like there was much of an issue, so they didn't refer me out, but then First 5 was like ‘we need to like nip in the bud and try to do as much intervention like early intervention as possible’ and it actually really helped...”*

→ **Train staff to support families with special needs**



# Thank you

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