



Community Impact Report

FY 2024-25



Table of Contents:

Letter from the Executive Director	5	Early Care & Education	27
Introduction	7	Coaching for Early Care & Education Programs in Quality Matters	28-30
Mission & Vision.....	7	Professional Training for Providers.....	31
Results Based Accountability Framework.....	7	Inclusion in Early Learning Project.....	32
Our Reach	8-10	Ready Kids East County	34-35
Strengthening families	11	Advancing Early Care and Education through Policy and Systems Change	36
First 5 Centers.....	12	Child Care Boost Initiative: Supporting and Retaining a Diverse Child Care Workforce	36-37
Engaging Black Families and Male Caregivers Through Culturally Responsive Programs	13	Conclusion	38-39
Connecting Families to Community Resources	14-15		
Community Representation.....	16		
Building Stronger Systems for Families and Young Children	17-18		
Early intervention	19		
Help Me Grow System.....	20-23		
Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)	24		
Improving Systems to Promote the Healthy Developmental of Young Children	25-26		

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 that reads "Ruth Fernández". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Ruth Fernández, EdD
Executive Director



Mission and Vision



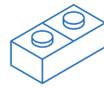
Mission

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.¹

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

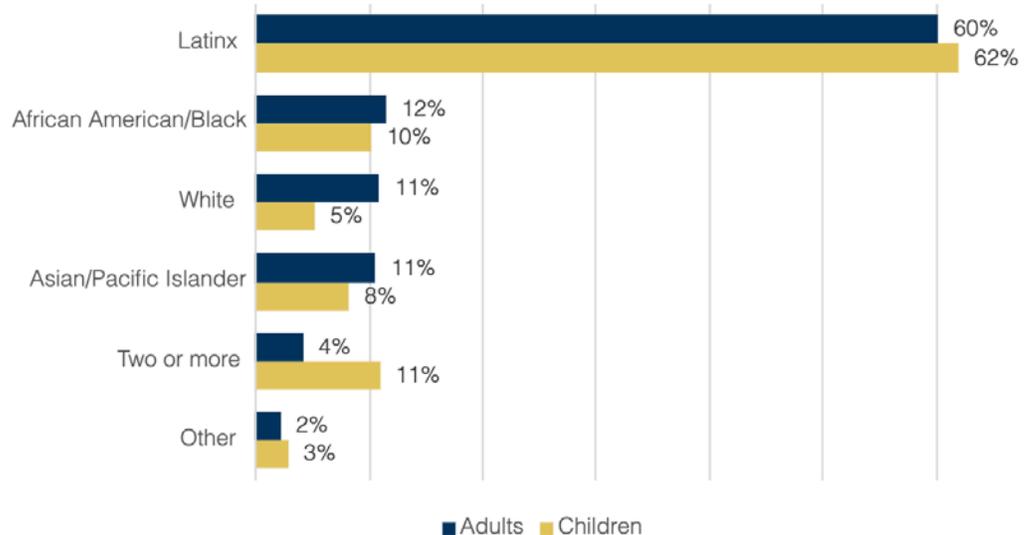


Of adults served where primary language is known, 49% spoke Spanish (including bilingual Spanish/English), 43% spoke English, and 8% spoke another language, including Arabic, Berber, Cantonese, Dari, Farsi, Hindi, Mandarin, Nepali, Pashto, Portuguese, Punjabi, Tagalog, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

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.

FIGURE 1:

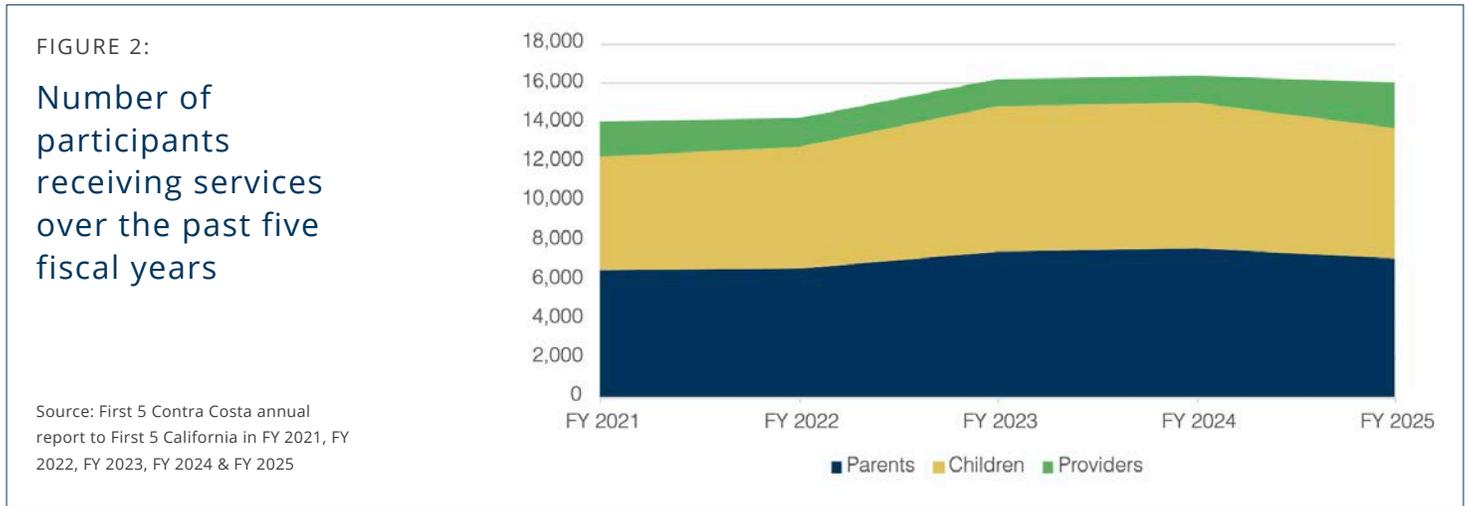
Ethnicity and race of adults and child participants



Source: First 5 Contra Costa annual report to First 5 California in FY 2025, N = 4,096 adults & 2,462 children, ethnicity and race are known for 59% of adults and 37% 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



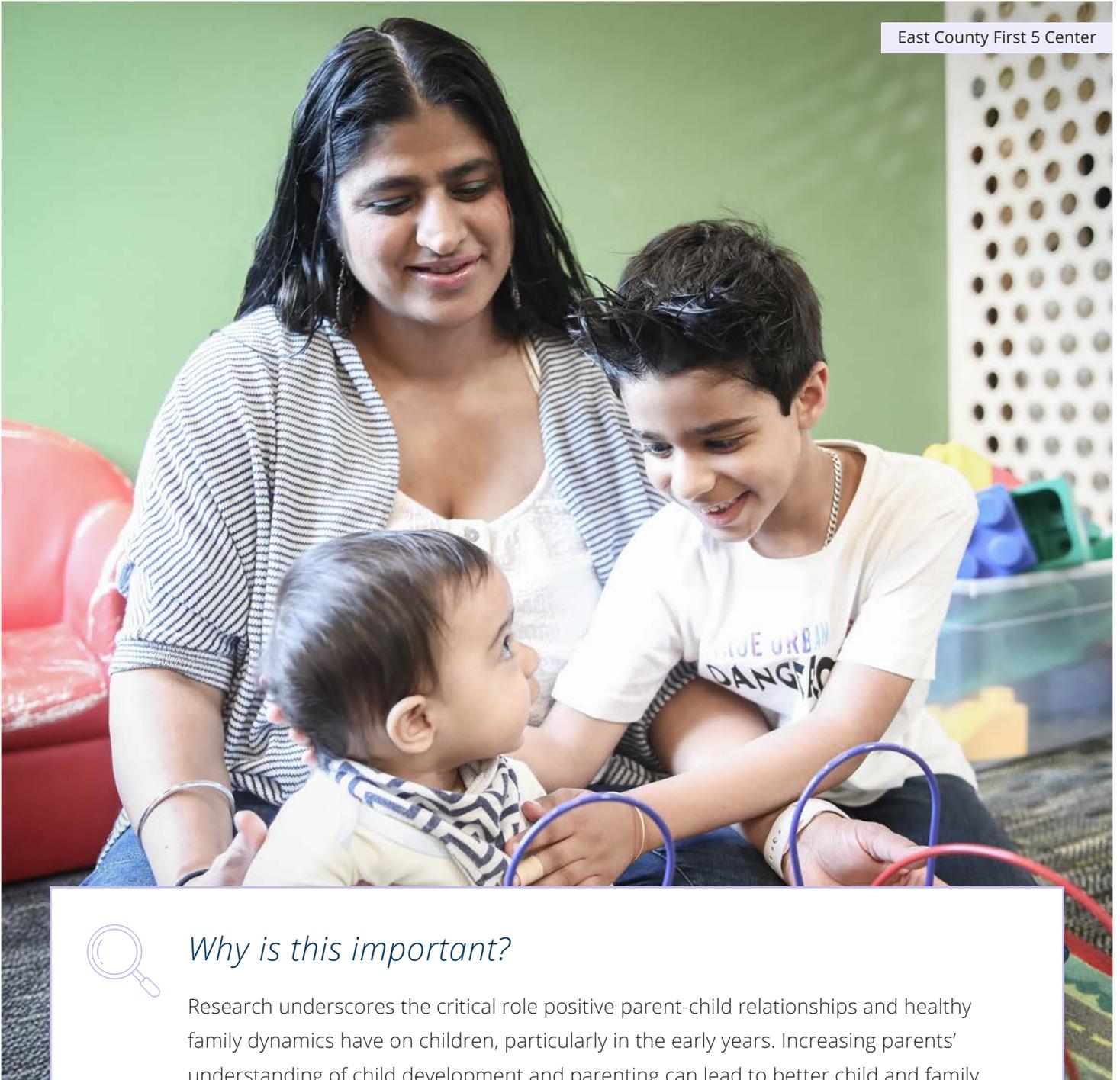
The 555 fewer parents and 702 fewer children served in FY 2025 than in FY 2024 was primarily because FY 2025 was the first year First 5 Contra Costa did not include general information and referral calls to the Contra Costa Crisis Center from parents with children under six. Though the overall number 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.

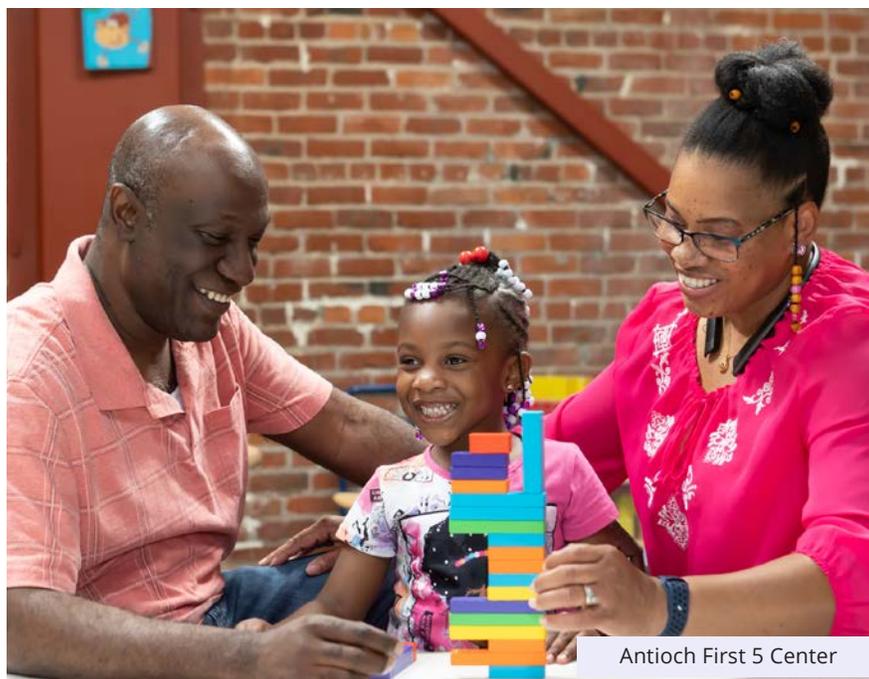
First 5 Centers

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.



West County First 5 Center



Antioch First 5 Center



East County First 5 Center

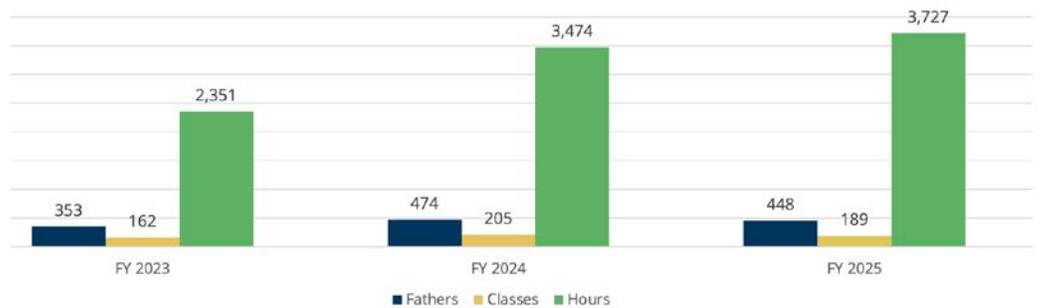
In addition to these culturally responsive programs, First 5 Centers also prioritized father and male caregiver engagement through community events, drop-in activities, multi-week classes, and one-on-one support. In FY 2025, 685 fathers and male caregivers received services—448 participated in multi-week 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.



FIGURE 3:

Male caregiver participation in multi-week classes

Source: Administrative data for FY 2025 reported by First 5 Center contractors



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 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.

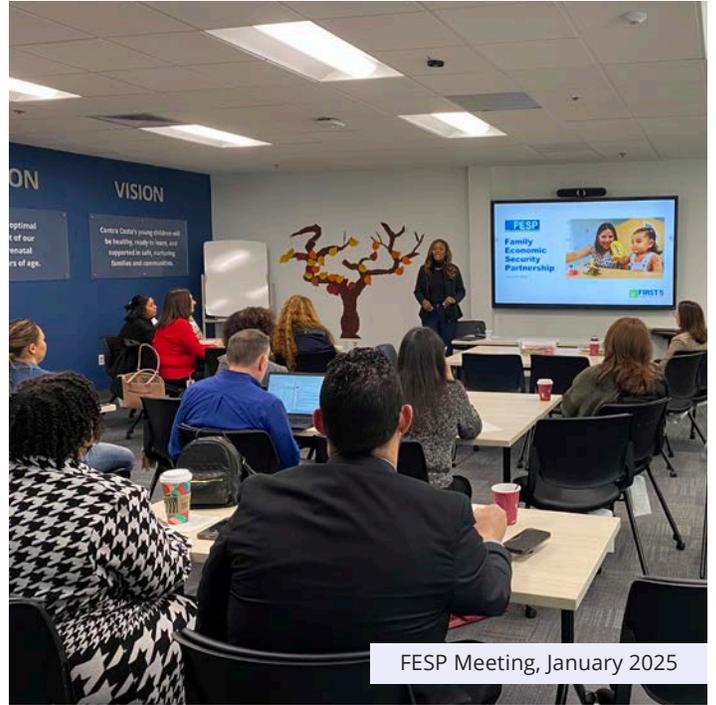


Community Representation

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 (CaKIDS) 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 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

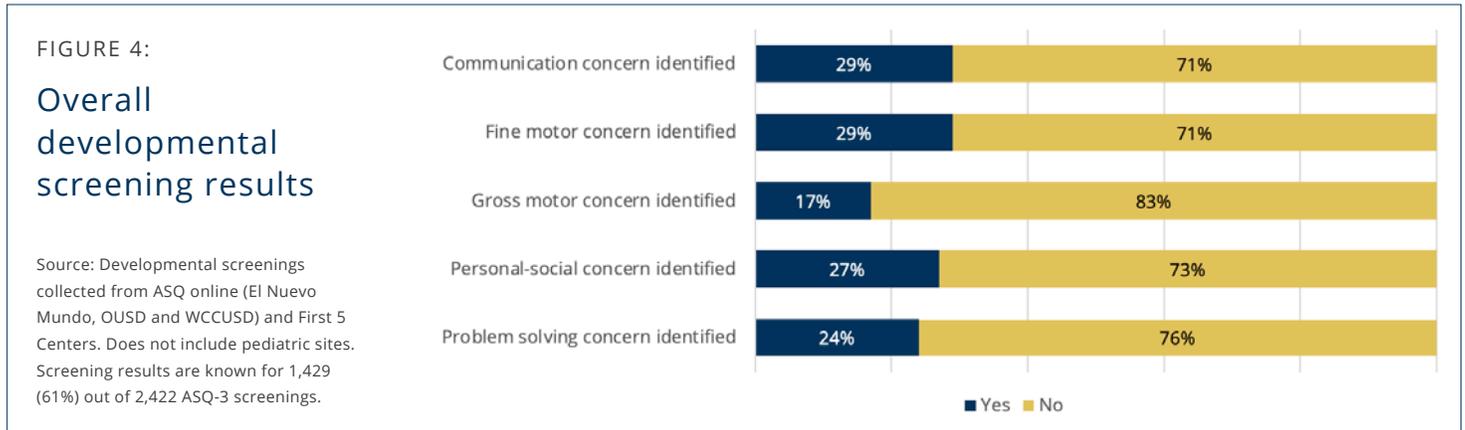
How Well?

- **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

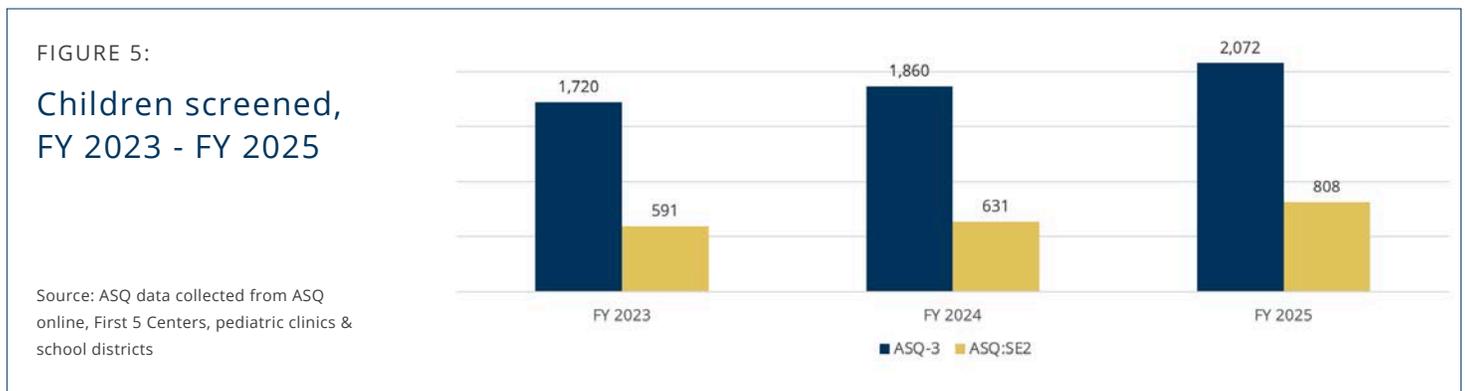
challenges. In FY 2025, First 5 Contra Costa collected data on 3,289 developmental screenings completed by First 5 Centers, pediatricians, school districts, and early care and education providers across the county. While First 5 Contra Costa does not have complete data for all of these screenings, based 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.²



"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

² 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.

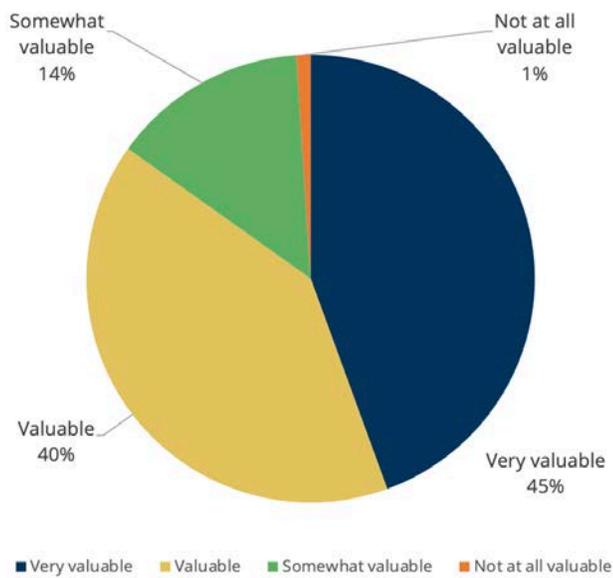


Through these tiers, early learning programs worked with coaches and other experts to develop quality improvement goals specifically for their child care sites. Quality Matters coaching model is evidence-based and reflective, guiding educators to set and implement goals that apply best practices in teaching 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.

FIGURE 6:

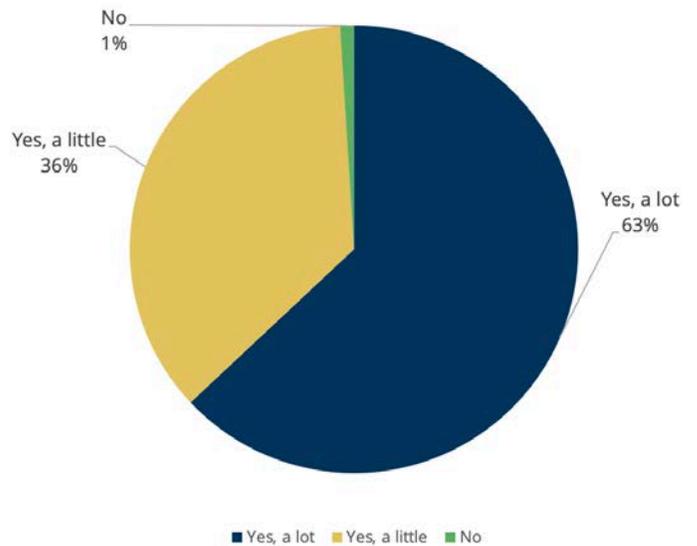
Percentage of sites that valued one-on-one coaching



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

FIGURE 7:

Percentage of sites where overall program quality improved



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



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.



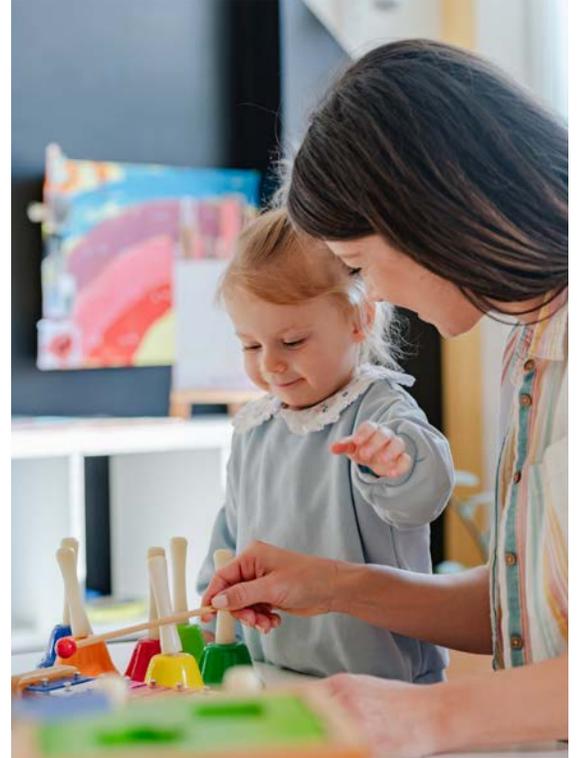
Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/resource-fair-2025 to watch the highlight reel and relive the joy, connection, and community celebration from the Ready Kids East County Resource Fair.



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



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



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