

Contra Costa Early Childhood System Map

Interact with the map here:

bit.ly/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. 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.

First 5 Contra Costa's Key Take Aways:

Below are First 5 Contra Costa's analyses of where it sees the most opportunity for improving its efforts to enhance the early childhood system so it is more family-centered, equitable, and transformative for young children and their families.

Strengthening Families

What the Data Tells Us:

Given how public systems are structured, families must engage with multiple systems to receive the services they and their children under 5 need, such as:



Families juggling raising a young child, trying to make ends meet in our high-cost county, and encountering other challenges in their daily lives, need more support connecting to services, particularly preventative services that could help them avoid a crisis.

50+

service providers and families provided insight and identified where increased investments are needed to better support families:



Connect families to community services that meet their needs and prevent crises



Help service providers understand how to make effective referrals to other services beyond their scope



Ensure follow-up and connection so families can access the services they're referred to

How the Data Applies to Our Work:

First 5 Contra Costa is using this input to strategically refine its investment in five [family resource centers](#) focused on families with young children, as well as its [Ready Kids East County](#) effort that aims to connect African American families to culturally responsive services.

See more takeaways—and learn more about how First 5 Contra Costa is using the System Map to identify opportunities, align efforts, and improve outcomes for Contra Costa families.



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Early Care & Education

What the Data Tells Us:

Public investment in early care and education programs and their workforce continue to be critical. There are

14,000+ Children under age 5

(many of whom are infants and toddlers) in our county who are eligible for publicly-funded early childhood programs who are not currently being served (p.39, 40).

While child care is essential for families to work or go to school, families report:

- ✓ needing more inclusive and culturally-responsive child care options
- ✓ not qualifying for publicly-funded programs despite struggling to afford the cost of child care
- ✓ delays in accessing services due to long waiting lists, even when eligible
- ✓ difficulty finding programs that meet family needs, even when services are available (p. 34)

Because of low pay, poor work-life balance, and the intense demands of their roles,

Early Childhood Educators report burnout & high turnover

They also need more training to support their skill development and address gaps in serving children with diverse learning and behavioral needs (p.49, 53-56).

How the Data Applies to Our Work:

First 5 Contra Costa is working to meet these needs in various ways, including supporting the Measure-X funded [Wage Boost](#) pilot that provides monthly wage enhancements to teachers, as well as investing in capacity-building efforts that [improve program quality](#) through coaching, professional development, technical assistance, and connection to resources—both supporting workforce retention (p.45).

¹Quality and Population Health Management, California Department of Health Care Services. (2024). 2023 Preventative Services Report. <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/dataandstats/reports/Documents/CA2022-23-Preventive-Services-Report.pdf>. Accessed February 4, 2026.

Early Intervention

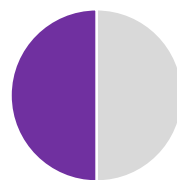
What the Data Tells Us:

Through early identification, children are more likely to receive targeted preventative services that can mitigate the impact of developmental delays and disabilities. However,

 **1,462** infants & toddlers

in our county are estimated to have developmental needs and have yet to be identified and connected to services (p. 41).


Developmental screening is a critical step in identifying children with needs, but not all children receive screenings routinely. In fact, state Medi-Cal screening rates were only at 28.8% in 2021 (p19) and while local county rates have improved significantly since then, still

 only about half of Medi-Cal enrolled children in Contra Costa receive an early screening before age 3.¹

In addition, once a concern is identified, families must be able to access early intervention services quickly. Anecdotal feedback from focus groups and interviews indicates a fragmented system with long waitlists and limited resources (p. 34).

How the Data Applies to Our Work:

First 5 Contra Costa aims to boost developmental screening rates for young children by supporting [screening implementation and training](#) pediatricians, child care staff and school district teams to administer screenings. We also fund the [Help Me Grow Program](#), to interpret screening results and connect parents with support services.

 **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.

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