



**2021 Policy Agenda**  
02/22/21

First 5 believes that all of California's youngest children deserve to be healthy, safe, and ready to succeed in school and life. Grounded in **a whole child/whole family framework** that advances **equity, prevention** and **systems coordination**, First 5 seeks to build comprehensive and integrated early childhood systems of care, with an intentional focus on **Prenatal-3** during this critical stage of child development.

First 5 aims to advance state and federal policy frameworks that foster systems of care that *proactively* support the wellbeing of young children and families and focus on those farthest from opportunity, recognizing the disproportionate impacts that systemic racism, COVID-19, lack of economic opportunity, and natural disasters have had on communities of color and low-income communities.

**I. Resilient Families**

- Strengthen families through family-centered, community-based, culturally and linguistically responsive, trauma-informed approaches and buffering supports, including expanded access to home visiting and support to parents/caregivers to be their child's first teacher.
- Strengthen families by improving economic security, including expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit, Paid Family Leave, and other policies that promote economic opportunity.
- Support community and neighborhood hubs, such as Family Resource Centers and other models, to increase immediate access to basic needs and promote integrated systems that result in more accessible and responsive services for children and families.
- Ensure access to services for all families regardless of their immigration status.

**II. Comprehensive Health & Development**

- Improve the health, mental health, and wellbeing of young children by advancing prevention, care coordination, screenings, and multi-generational supports through Medi-Cal, as well as continuous eligibility for preventive and postpartum care.
- Strengthen the systems of early identification and referral to appropriate intervention services for young children, including through Help Me Grow.
- Address racial inequities in maternal and infant health, particularly black maternal and infant health.
- Reduce and mitigate exposure to trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) through supports that promote healthy social-emotional development and overall family wellbeing and resilience.

### **III. Quality Early Learning**

- Increase access to early learning programs across the mixed delivery system for children 0–5.
- Support the early care and education workforce by increasing compensation, providing professional development opportunities, and valuing diversity and increasing equity across the field.
- Stabilize, strengthen and scale early learning systems that are accessible and affordable for all families, including through advancing key elements of the state’s Master Plan for Early Learning and Care.
- Promote equitable access to and participation in quality improvement systems, recognizing that quality exists in all locations where caregivers are supported and nurturing relationships between provider/caregivers and child are present.

### **IV. Sustainability & Scale**

- Explore and advance additional revenue sources for ensuring comprehensive, integrated systems and services to children and families.
- Ensure that local First 5 commissions can continue to provide the foundational infrastructure, leadership and partnership in communities throughout California in order to realize improved opportunity and outcomes for our youngest children and their families.
- Regulate tobacco products and promote smoking cessation.
- Improve and integrate data systems to track and evaluate children’s outcomes.

