

**FIRST 5 SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION**

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
March 22, 2017 (Approved May 24, 2017)

Current Commissioners Present

Bruce Gibson (Chair)	SLO County Board of Supervisors
Penny Borenstein, M.D. (Vice Chair)	SLO County Public Health Department
James Brescia	SLO County Office of Education
Devin Drake	Department of Social Services
James Forester, DDS	Medical Representative (Central Coast Dental Society)
Janet Murphy	Community at Large
Melinda Sokolowski	Child Care Planning Council
Bob Watt	Community at Large

Current Commissioners Absent

Tracy Schiro	Children's Services Network
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Staff Present

First 5 staff: Wendy Wendt, Jason Wells, Misty Livengood, Ana Plasencia
Commission Evaluator: Tom Keifer
Commission Counsel: Natalie Frye Laacke

Call to Order

Chair Gibson called the meeting to order at 3:03 PM.

ITEM 1 –Chair Comments

Chair Gibson welcomed new Administrative Assistant Ana Plasencia. He also welcomed Natalie Frye Laacke, sitting in for First 5 Counsel Ray Biering, who is helping his wife through chemo treatments. Commissioners expressed concern; thoughts are with him and his wife.

Chair Gibson reminded of the upcoming Board of Supervisors Proclamation on April 4th re Month of the Child.

ITEM 2 – Commissioner Announcements and Updates

Commissioner Watt is retiring from his role as Principal of Cambria Elementary, continuing on as First 5 commissioner.

Chair Gibson congratulated Commissioner Watt.

Commissioner Drake notified that the County was selected to submit a Bring Family Home Grant application; since then DSS has been approved to move on in the process.

ITEM 3 - Public Comment – Items not on the agenda

Kevin Drabinski, CEO of the SLO County Foodbank Coalition, introduced himself and emphasized the common mission with First 5. He invited Commissioners and staff to visit their new facility.

Chair Gibson and Commissioner Watt commented on their history of working with Mr. Drabinski and with the Food Bank, and congratulated him on his appointment the CEO position.

Heather Donovan, Manager of SLO Food Bank Children’s Programs, described several of the current initiatives, such as summer lunches/snacks, Children’s Farmer’s Markets, and programs on pre-school sites.

Commissioner Sokolowski suggested building Food Bank partnerships with programs that provide basic need assistance for families with infants. One example is Cambria-based InfantEssentials, a program serving families countywide and which is interested in connecting with the Food Bank and its distribution centers.

Doug Major, Optomotrist/First 5-funded Vision Screening Project, provided an update. Vision Screenings have benefitted over 75,000 children in the county since the project’s inception over a decade ago. The spending allocated to this program is directly benefiting children. Early detection of vision issues increases early literacy rates.

Commissioner Watt commented that a similar partnership in the schools with the Lion’s Club is commendable, and his kindergartners love it. Chair Gibson added praise for the program.

Raechelle Bowlay-Sutton, Coordinator of the County Child Care Planning Council, announced that April is the Month of the Child and Child Abuse Prevention Month. They are seeking volunteers for Children’s Day in Mission Plaza, April 8th.

Marilu Gomez, Georgia Brown Neighborhood First 5 School Readiness Coordinator, announced Children’s Day in the Park is Sunday April 30th.

Commissioner Murphy announced the Color Blast Fun Run starting at San Luis Obispo High School April 8th.

ITEM 4 (ACTION ITEM) - Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of the January 25, 2017 Minutes
- b. Approval of one-year contract extension with Crosby and Co. for Audit Services
- c. Approval of Office Lease Amendment with Walter Brothers
- d. Receipt and Approval of First 5 CA Annual Report FY 2015-16 as required by the Children and Families Act

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Bruce made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Drake & Watt and passed unanimously.

ITEM 5 -- First 5 and Immigrant Families

Wendy Wendt, Executive Director, gave a status update on the effects of recent immigration policy on local families and across the state, as well as an overview of First 5 activities in response.

At a recent First 5 funded Partner's Meeting, attendees described their observations: Families are not accessing resources with which they used to rely on out of fear of law enforcement. First 5 will continue to live by our core value of supporting children and their families regardless of background including immigration status.

Commissioner Forester expressed concern about the potential for families to be split up with an increase in deportations.

Commissioner Watt described about an experience in Cambria when families were reluctant to attend a school meeting because they were worried about enforcement.

Ms. Wendt called upon the Health Access Training (HAT) Project to describe their perspective and recent work on the issue.

Joel Diringer (HAT) commented that a forum on immigrant rights was recently held at the Pacheco Elementary School with 500 people in attendance, including many parents. Becca Carsel, also of HAT, announced an upcoming First 5-funded forum for providers on "Supporting Immigrant Families during Turbulent Times" that will include a presentation by local parent educator Ximena Ames. The forum, to be repeated in Arroyo Grande, Paso Robles, and San Luis Obispo, will provide information on how to help families to access services/resources & guide them through times of sustained stress & how to perform self-care.

Ms. Wendt explained that several county First 5's are looking into what is needed to preserve or create new policies that allow us to continue supporting the needs of immigrant families. First 5 Santa Barbara is participating in an effort at the First 5 Association to compile anonymous stories on the immigrant family experience in today's climate. The First 5 Contra Costa County website has begun posting resources on the topic that lend themselves to the HAT forums described above.

Commissioner Sokolowski commented on the importance of educating providers and individuals regarding U-Visa protections for victims of domestic violence who are undocumented immigrants. She added that DA's office is interested to assist in this matter.

Commissioner Brescia stated that we must take a proactive approach in the schools in order to protect confidential student information. There is no reason for schools to continue keeping data about students that could be an identifier if not legally mandated.

Commissioner Watt asked who can advocate for families. We need to look at who families trust, such as family advocates, support them and work with them.

Vice-Chair Borenstein presented a public health example that points to dangers of the new approach to illegal immigration. People with undocumented status who contract communicable diseases are at risk due to fear of being pushed into the shadows, not getting treated, and putting the larger population at risk.

Chair Gibson asked that staff and Commissioners continue to keep this item on the agenda in order to provide advocacy and assistance as events and policies unfold in the near future.

Commissioner Drake reminded that people's information who are already in the "system" (e.g. DSS clients) can't be removed from the database, so they should continue accessing services for which they are eligible because this doesn't put them at any greater risk and the services can be vital to them and their children.

Public Comment:

Mr. Diringer pointed out that First 5's role should be about helping families manage stress in the face of uncertainty. We can't guarantee that records will remain confidential in the future. Marilu Gomez commented that two information sessions were held at the Paso Robles public school district, with more than 100 people at each event. It was emphasized that school is a safe place for children. She knows two children whose parents were deported. The school district is supporting them as part of the McKinney Vento Homeless Services Act.

Chair Gibson commented that at the county level, we are far from being ready to have an informed/sensitive policy discussion right now. We need to develop the narrative as to what the effect is on immigrant families. First 5 may need to consider how to put extra effort to help our partners to do their jobs and ask them what they need from us. Finally, we need to stay close to statewide efforts as the state is in conflict with federal authority. We have to stick together.

Commissioner Brescia underscored that there is a proactive approach across the schools, confirmed by our policy on confidential records and retention. For example, birth certificates are not retained. He encouraged colleague agencies to look at their record policies and to consider making adjustments that are legal and that also protect the privacy of clients. Chair Gibson give direction to First 5 staff to continue tracking this issue.

ITEM 6 - Advocacy in Action: Introduction to Family Friendly Workplace Practice, Policy

Christina LeFevre, Instructor in Women and Gender Studies at Cal Poly and a First 5 policy consultant, gave a presentation that reinforces several of First 5 SLO County's advocacy goals and agenda. She introduced herself as part of the "sandwich generation" with young children and also with elderly parents who need care. In her Cal Poly lectures, she asks students, "What do you think is the biggest issue facing feminist today?" The answer is predominantly – Work-Life Balance. Her presentation went on to highlight the tool kit of family-friendly policies

and government policies, and focused on why it is important to promote these practices.

Following the presentation, Wendy Wendt commented that at both the national and local level we are starting to experience a shift in employee expectations, and employer practice in hearts and minds of the business community. More and more, family-friendly workplaces are being seen as cultivating worker and consumer loyalty, and as “the right thing to do.” This topic will be added as an agenda item for the foreseeable future.

Commissioner Drake stated that the focus for this type of advocacy needs to be on education; many employers do not entirely understand the impact this can have on creating a positive work place.

Commissioner Watt commented that we need to highlight the economic benefits to employers. Targeting women in influential positions is important. What are we losing out on when someone has a skill set they are not bringing to the table?

Ms. LeFevre added that we also need to ask what our men lose out on without family-friendly policies in place. For example, what about increasing opportunities for paternity leave?

Commissioner Forester offered his perspective as a father who doesn't have the time to take care of children the way he wishes. Meanwhile, his wife has been unable to fully contribute to her profession. What are we missing in the work place for people to succeed?

Chair Gibson hopes that in the future we will live in a working society where a job is not valued merely for punching in and out.

Vice-Chair Borenstein offered a comment on the “good and evil” of technology when it comes to the workforce. With technology we have created for ourselves a society that has an impossible bar. At what point is it too much for people; when can we recognize what a full time job is supposed to look like?

Public Comment: None

ITEM 7 – Systems-Change in Action: An Introduction to Help Me Grow

Executive Director Wendy Wendt & Health Access Trainer Becca Carsel presented on the Help me Grow (HMG) Model as a potential framework for strengthening and aligning supports for families San Luis Obispo County as they raise young children, track their developmental milestones, and seek/access screening and care if delays or other challenges present themselves.

Ms. Carsel emphasized the importance of early prevention/intervention. She added that the HMG model works to simplify things for parents and providers in the face of a complicated web of education/screening/referral/treatment options.

Commissioner Sokolowski reminded that any HMG planning process needs to include the county's SAFE system of care.

Ms Carsel has collected information from providers involved in this issue. First 5 staff proposes to host an exploratory convening of local stakeholders, facilitated by an outside expert with a background building HMG in other counties. We need to determine how First 5 SLO County can braid an investment in HMG with other local resources.

Commissioner Forester would like to see medical providers, including dentists, involved in this planning process.

Commissioners Borenstein expressed that a basic knowledge of the model is needed in order to better execute it.

Commissioner Murphy commented that this is an exciting new opportunity for this organization to continue to help children and families. She reminded that mental and social-emotional health should be central to the discussion and planning effort for HMG.

Public Comment:

Pam Dudley, Division Manager at County Public Health, observed that the HMG model encompasses all children and many other people who need these resources She is a big advocate for early intervention.

Raechelle Bowlay-Sutton, Coordinator of the County Child Care Planning Council, commented that providers need training to know how best to refer families.

Ms. Wendt asked for concrete staff direction from the Commission, based on what they heard today regarding HMG.

Chair Gibson responded that we need to be able to understand the resources available and how to better implement these goals. If this is going to stick, it seems that First 5 needs to realign its efforts. This goes back to our strategic plan. Staff are directed to engage a community planning conversation to further explore the HMG concept, and to report back to the Commission at future meetings.

ITEM 8 --- Staff Reports

(Chair Gibson excused himself from the meeting. Vice-Chair Borenstein assumed oversight).

Communications/Outreach Officer Misty Livengood presented on recent activities and on various Month of the Child events coming up. Advocacy Day was a success, as well as the resolution for Dental Health Month. April 8th is Children's Day in the Plaza, as well as a talk on atypical feeding development. Eight First 5 sponsorships have been awarded as part of the next program. The First 5 CA "Talk Read Sing" Express will be in town on April 12th and 13th – first at the SLO Public Library and then at downtown SLO Farmers Market.

Child Care Planning Council of SLO County is working with partners to put on the 38th annual Children's Day in the Plaza on April 8th. First 5 will also staff at both events. Atascadero and Nipomo will close out the month with children's events, as well as Earth Day on April 22nd.

Associate Director Jason Wells gave an update on the RFP Timeline for Family Advocacy Services. He explained that several organizations teamed up to submit one integrated application. Staff plans to bring a recommendation to the next meeting. The program is still on track to be funded starting July 1.

Mr. Wells expressed that staff is pleased to have the new IMPACT Administrator, Kris Roudenbush, on the First 5 team.

Public Comment: None

ITEM 9 – Adjourn

5:29 PM