

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

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

December 7, 2022 APPROVED

Current Commissioners Present

James Brescia, EdD (Chair)	SLO County Office of Education
Penny Borenstein, MD (Vice Chair)	SLO County Public Health Department
Linda Belch	Department of Social Services
Erica Ruvalcaba-Heredia, EdD	Community at Large
James Tedford, MD	Medical Representative
Alison Ventura, PhD	Community at Large
Bob Watt	Community at Large

Commissioners Absent/Excused

Bruce Gibson	SLO County Board of Supervisors
Melinda Sokolowski	Child Care Planning Council

Staff Present

First 5 staff: Wendy Wendt, Jason Wells, Misty Livengood, Kris Roudebush
Commission Counsel: Natalie Frye-Laacke

Call to Order

Chair Brescia called the meeting to order at 3:02 PM.

ITEM 1 – Commissioner Announcements and Updates

Commissioner Belch – Announced a conversation with Child Development and Family Studies program at Cuesta College re: career pathways in social services. Commissioner Brescia suggested connecting with CTE staff at the County Office of Education.

Commissioner Ruvalcaba-Heredia announced work on curriculum for Promotores toward a [for^{ma}](#) certificate with a specialization.

Commissioner Ventura announced proposed USDA changes to the WIC food program. There is a comment period open through late Feb 23. The goal is to better align WIC food packages with USDA guidelines; also an aim to make the packages more accessible; increase in fruits and veggies; foods that are more culturally relevant. If of interest to your groups, you can jump on the website.

Commissioner Tedford offered congratulations to Commissioner Gibson on retaining his seat on the County Board of Supervisors.

Commissioner Brescia announced that construction on an Early Care and Education center on the SLOCOE site is moving ahead.

ITEM 2 - Public Comment – Items not on the agenda

None.

ITEM 3 (ACTION ITEM) - Consent Agenda

- a) Approve October 28, 2022 minutes

Public Comment: NONE

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

ITEM 4 – Staff Updates

Associate Director Jason Wells presented on workforce challenges in local child serving professions. Conducted a survey of all funded partners, many of whom are struggling to recruit/retain staff in key positions.

Commissioner Watt – Workforce challenges are ubiquitous across the board.

Commissioner Borenstein – Santa Barbara County recently offered a generous signing bonus for a new psychologist position. 56% of all SLO County Public Health Department employees have less than a 3 year tenure; there is also a 20% vacancy rate.

Commissioner Belch – Cuesta students want to do internships, but faculty don't know how to place them. Service agencies can help with that. Another factor is the expansion of remote work opportunities. Creates new challenges to find local boots-on-the-ground workforce.

Executive Director Wendy Wendt – This is an important consideration as we enter into the First 5 strategic planning process.

Communications Coordinator Misty Livengood provided updates on various activities at First 5:

- Nature Nights at the SLO Botanical Garden.
- Hands on Heroes @ Work ad in the Central Coast Journal – December is a full-year retrospective.
- Atascadero Chamber Family Friendly Workplace workshop – postponed until early in the new year.
- MyChildCarePlan.org – First 5 helping to push out messaging.
- General messaging – focused on family-friendly holiday events.
- CAPSLO has received a \$5 million grant from Bezos Fund to address homelessness.
- Annual Child Care Planning Council Meeting -- January 20, 2023.
- Health Access Training Project Newsletter – encourage Commissioners to join this email list.

- Kits for New Parents – outreach to new partners (oral health, French Hospital prenatal ed, foster/adoption)
- Central First 5 Region Race Equity Diversity Inclusion (REDI) Workshop coming up December 9, 2022. Staff plus Commissioner Belch will attend (to be held at Paso Robles Housing Authority; 30+ staff/Commissioners from Kings, Kern, Fresno, Madera, Merced, and Mariposa Counties will also attend).

Ms. Wendt provided the following updates:

- Added detail on REDI workshop, designed to give counties a chance to share “roses and buds” – i.e. accomplishments and areas for work in the context of REDI.
- Recently attended First 5 Association Board Retreat; topics included governance; clarity on roles of Association/First 5 Policy Center. Also conversation on sustainability in the wake of Proposition 31 (Tobacco Flavor Ban). Over the next five years, SLO County is anticipated to be down an additional \$1 million in First 5 revenue as a direct effect of the flavor ban. From a public health perspective, this shift further away from smoking is a great sign; now First 5, the state, and local communities need to consider alternative funding mechanisms to continue supporting early childhood innovation. California State Association of Counties (CSAC) is interested in helping advocate for continued support for First 5 and its contribution to improving the lives of young children and families. Commissioner Gibson is part of the CSAC leadership team.

Public Comment: NONE

ITEM 5: Shared Services Alliance Amendments

Jason Wells provided a brief summary: First 5 California (F5CA) has offered a one-year no-cost extension. There is an amendment forthcoming from F5CA, with an attached amendment with CAPSLO. Staff requests Commission to authorize Ms. Wendt and Commission Chair to sign when the amendments are finalized by F5CA.

Shana Paulson, Child Care Resource Connection Director with CAPSLO commented that SLO county’s SSA project is ahead of the other grantees in terms of implementation. She is grateful the project is able to have the funding spread out over three years.

Public Comment: NONE

Commissioner Ventura made a motion to authorize Executive Director to sign SSA amendments with F5CA and CAPSLO after consultation/confirmation by Commission Chair and First 5 Legal Counsel. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ruvalcaba-Heredia and passed unanimously.

ITEM 6: Home Visiting Coordination

Mr. Wells introduced Sarah Lack, Director of Nursing and Nancy Sutton, Program Manager for Home Visiting (both at County Public Health Department)

Mr. Wells summarized the history of First 5 funding support for home visiting, starting with F5 CA Home Visiting Coordination contract that went to County Public Health, and a local First 5

Thrive grant. Because of an extension of the F5CA funding, during the first year of the local Thrive grant Department of Public Health did not need to draw down F5 SLO County funds. Now as the state grant has sunsetted, there is an opportunity to use the local funds to continue the work, and to adjust budget and evolve a new approach to the program. There is also a cost savings due to a delayed start to the program. Nancy Sutton is the new staff member on the project, and has hit the ground running.

Local First 5 Thrive funds will still go to personnel and operating costs. A new data system -- Octavia (local product) – is used, and it is already also incorporated into the Public Health Department's whole-person care program.

Ms. Lack expressed thanks for the opportunity to present further explanation; is excited to move forward with the work.

Commissioner Borenstein – Speaking as Public Health Director, it's been great to see all the momentum around this. Many of us have had a dream of at least one home visit for every new mom in the county. There is an expansion of state funding coming too. How can we make sure that every family has *one* HV case manager? In trying to be more efficient, we also get to expand.

Ms. Lack -- I'm passionate about public health. In health care, there typically is not much room for nurses delivering innovative services, EXCEPT in public health. How do we deliver critical quality services. State funding – six-year allocation anticipated from the state. We are moving toward the goal of Universal Voluntary Home Visiting.

Commissioner Ventura -- would there be logic to using the cost savings from the Thrive Grant (\$300,000) to address the staff recruitment and retention challenges that were outlined by Mr. Wells during staff report?

Mr. Wells responded that it is not advisable to alter the budget tonight; however, if it feels logical, this could be brought back to the Commission at a future date.

Commissioner Borenstein – Across the board, let's keep this as a possibility.

Commissioner Watt – Home visits are stressful and sometimes difficult to come down from for the professional staff providing the service. We need to make sure our direct services staff have time for self-care. This is another strategy for us to consider related to retention/support for staff in our field.

Commissioner Brescia – It isn't our place to tell programs what to do. The Commission would be willing to have flexibility on unspent funds. If we're going to try to change practice, it can't come from a Commission mandate; it has to come from the agencies.

Mr. Wells – One thing to clarify is that the First 5 Thrive grant does not pay for home visiting itself; it pays for coordination. One of the things built in is a local symposium on home visiting and travel/symposium costs for local staff.

Commissioner Watt made a motion to approve the First 5 Thrive contract amendment to the home visiting coordination contract with County Public Health. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ruvalcaba-Heredia and passed 6-0 (Commissioner Borenstein recused).

ITEM 7: Presentation: Child Care Capacity Building Progress

Ms. Wendt introduced this item. Three presenters are here to update Commissioners on progress being made to uplift and support quality child care as a critical element of community health – both for children and families and for the economy.

- Raechelle Bowlay, Child Care Planning Council Coordinator, presented on local American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that have been designated by the County and several Cities to support child care. The County has allocated \$3 million, to be distributed in three rounds of funding via the County Office of Education. The first round will be non-competitive grants to any licensed care provider who applies (191 grants totaling \$635,375 have already gone out). A second round will be competitive grants for start-up and expansion projects; a third round will focus on funding workforce development in the child care sector (pipeline and professional development). Ms. Wendt added that City ARPA allocations are also in the mix, including Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach and Pismo Beach.
- Mika Buchanan, Child Care Resource Connection manager at CAPSLO overseeing the county's Alternative Payment program, presented on subsidized care. She described eligibility parameters within the multiple programs she administers. Overall, subsidized care pumps significant money back into the local economy in addition to enabling many local families to access quality care. Funding for subsidized care has increased dramatically during COVID—prior to the pandemic, the annual allocation was just over \$11 million. This year, it is nearly \$16.5 million. However, this surge in funding is not anticipated to be permanent, but instead is in part a result of COVID-era supplemental support to counties.
- Kris Roudebush, Special Projects Coordinator at First 5, gave an update on the status of We are the Care, and the Collaborative Child Care Study. First 5 and Planning Council/Child Care Resource Connection are in the process of socializing a summary of "Roles for Local Government in Building Capacity in Child Care," with a goal to present in early 2023 to the San Luis Obispo City Council.

Public Comment: None

ITEM 8: Commissioner Terms

Ms. Wendt presented on this item. Staff has been analyzing the current practice for selecting Commissioners, and is considering several update opportunities to present to the Commission for approval – all with a combined goal to ensure equity, efficiency, and a balance of institutional knowledge with new and evolving leadership. This year, 6 of the 9 Commission seats are potentially due to change (*three at-large; *medical rep; Child Care Planning Council designee; County Supervisor), with 4* seats requiring an application and interview process. Staff is requesting formation of an ad hoc Commissioner committee to look at update options, including potential changes to the length of Commission terms, addition of term limits, and a mechanism to create more staggering of Commissioner term start and end dates.

Commissioner Brescia pointed out that several of these potential changes would necessitate an update to the local County Ordinance and First 5 bylaws. This will take some time, hence the early attention to this work.

Commissioners Watt, Ventura and Borenstein offered to join this ad hoc Committee. The Committee will meet to determine options, and will present for Commission consideration/approval at the January 2023 meeting.

Public Comment: None.

ITEM 9: Strategic Plan 2024+ Process Preview

Ms. Wendt provided an overview on the strategic planning timeline and process. The current Strategic Plan sunsets in June 2024. Staff proposes the first half of 2023 to focus on compiling data and community perspectives on need and opportunity as related to First 5. The June 2023 Commission meeting would include a strategic planning workshop to build priorities/strategies. Summer months would be dedicated to building a Plan document, to be ratified in the fall of 2023. This will leave time prior to the conclusion of the current Plan to pursue any new initiatives, including potential grant/contracting/procurement/organizational changes. Equity is a central question that should drive the strategic plan and process – how do priorities get set? What voices help shape those priorities? How do we ensure that First 5 resources are effectively directed to the communities – families/children/organizations – that need them the most, and in an impactful way?

Staff is requesting the formation of an ad hoc Strategic Plan Design committee.

Commissioner Belch volunteered to join this committee, and also recommended embedding elements of the current strategic plan into the next one.

Commissioner Borenstein suggested using the Public Health Department Community Health Assessment results as a data set to inform the First 5 strategic plan.

Ad hoc Committee on Strategic Plan Design: Commissioners Belch, Ruvalcaba-Heredia, Watt.

Public Comment: None.

ITEM 10 – Adjourn

5:17 p.m.