

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

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
January 24, 2024 (Approved March 27, 2024)

Current Commissioners Present

Penny Borenstein, M.D. (Chair – see Item 4)	SLO County Public Health Department
Dawn Ortiz-Legg (Vice Chair – see Item 4)	SLO County Board of Supervisors
Linda Belch	Department of Social Services
Patty Clarkson, Ed.D.	Early Care & Educ. Planning Council
Erica Ruvalcaba-Heredia, Ed.D.	Community at Large
James Tedford, M.D.	Medical Representative (AAP, Ch 2)
Alison Ventura, Ph.D.	Community at Large
Bob Watt	Community at Large

Current Commissioners Absent

James Brescia, Ed.D.	SLO County Office of Education
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Staff Present

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

Call to Order

Vice Chair Borenstein called the meeting to order at 3:11 PM.

ITEM 1 – Commissioner Announcements and Updates

Commissioner Watt announced the opening of the Child Advocacy Center (location at 3220 South Higuera in San Luis Obispo, upstairs from First 5 office). Commissioner Borenstein explained that the CAC is designed to provide trauma-informed, single-location wrap-around services for children who are involved as victims in child abuse-related court cases. Commissioners Ortiz-Legg and Ruvalcaba-Heredia underscored the importance of this new resource.

Commissioner Borenstein announced a home visiting partnership grant between SLO and San Cruz County Maternal Child Adolescent Health programs totaling \$350,000. This is through the California Home Visiting CHVP Innovation 2.0 opportunity. In part the funding will support data analyst staffing for all local home visiting programs based at County Public Health.

Commissioner Belch announced that she is transitioning to a new role at County Department of Social Services as the Division Head for Adult and Homeless Services.

ITEM 2 - Public Comment – Items not on the agenda

Katie Kleinsmith, a CAPSLO Health Wellness Educator on special assignment with the County Office of Education “Community Schools” initiative, described this new effort, which is in the planning grant stage at Paso Robles, Shandon and San Miguel school districts. The initiative is meant to build a “whole child-whole family” focus on school campuses, including reimagining school campuses as community hubs for family engagement, community resources, and enhanced learning services.

ITEM 3 (ACTION ITEM) - Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of the December 6, 2023 Minutes
- b. Approval of FY23-24 Q2 Financial Report
- c. Confirm BOS Commissioner Appointment – Dawn Ortiz -Legg (one-year term Jan-Dec 2024)
- d. Approval of Engagement Letter with Moss Levy Hartzheim for 2023-24 Audit Services

Public Comment: None

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

ITEM 4 (ACTION ITEM) - Election of 2024 Officers: Chair and Vice Chair

Commissioner Borenstein informed that Commissioner Brescia has indicated that he is not planning to continue as Chair, a role he held through 2023. Executive Director Wendy Wendt reminded Commissioners of their annual responsibility (per ordinance and bylaws) to decide on a Chair and Vice Chair. No additional formal parameters are spelled out – i.e. any Commissioner could fill either role.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg indicated that she would be willing to step into the Vice Chair role. Commissioner Borenstein offered to assume the Chair role for one year.

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg made a motion to approve Penny Borenstein as the 2024 Chair. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watt and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Borenstein made a motion to approve Commissioner Ortiz-Legg as the 2024 Vice-Chair. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watt and passed unanimously.

ITEM 5 (ACTION ITEM) – Process for At-Large Commissioner Selection, Identification of At-Large Nominating Committee Members

Ms. Wendt introduced this agenda item. She reminded Commissioners of bylaw changes last year that instituted 1) term limits for some Commissioner seats, including the at-large representatives, medical representatives, and the Early Care and Education Planning Council representative; 2) an opt-in for a second term among the aforementioned Commissioner seats

whose members are in good-standing; and 2) staggered term renewals, initiated by assigning one of the current at-large representatives (Commissioner Watt) to a final one-year term.

The last at-large recruitment process took place in 2019, at which time all three current at-large representatives were selected. In 2023, all three at-large reps opted in for an additional term. Now, with Commissioner Watt's end-of-term approaching, a selection process for one new at-large representative is required. Staff is requesting the Commission to identify an ad hoc nominating committee to participate in this process – including interviewing candidates and forwarding a formal nomination to the full Commission (final approval rests with the County Board of Supervisors).

Commissioners Watt and Ventura indicated interest in serving on this ad hoc committee. Commissioner Watt added that he looks forward to the Commission bringing on fresh eyes, experience, and perspective.

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg moved to appoint Commissioners Watt and Ventura to an ad hoc nominating committee for At-Large Commissioner selection. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ventura and passed unanimously.

ITEM 6 – Strategic Planning

Part A: Action to Confirm Non-Renewals

Associate Director Jason Wells introduced this item. At the December 2023 Commission meeting, Commissioners opted to take a formal vote on contract non-renewal recommendations brought forward by staff. The following five current contracts are not being recommended for funding in the next strategic plan: Family Resilience Partnership (LINK), Early Childhood Nature-based Experiences (SLO Botanical Garden), Basic Needs Support (CAPSLO), California State Preschools (SLOCOE), and Home Visiting Coordination (County Department of Public Health).

Public Comment:

Lisa Fraser, Executive Director of the LINK/Center for Family Strengthening, voiced concern regarding the end of the Family Resilience Partnership contract, explaining that the families being served by a dedicated early childhood family advocate rely on the support, and this is a key identified area and population of need in North County. These family advocates are a core part of the SAFE System of Care.

Commissioner Belch explained that she is in support of not continuing the LINK contract, not because it is not a valuable service, but because the funding as contracted through the First 5 COVID-specific RFP was intended for situational relief during the pandemic. The integration within the SAFE System of Care is indeed important, and Commissioner Belch emphasized the opportunity for a strategic conversation with the broader SAFE consortium to determine how best to serve the 0-5 population countywide within the SAFE System.

Commissioners Ortiz-Legg and Borenstein inquired whether Cal AIM funds can/are supports for SAFE System of Care. Ms. Wendt agreed that several of the Cal AIM elements tie in with SAFE work – the new Community Health Worker role, for example. She added that overall, First 5 looks forward to participating in working with SAFE partners to take a system-wide look at 0-5 population access to SAFE system of care, and to determine where within that system First 5 investments are best deployed.

Non-renewal votes were taken in the following order:

Resilient Families (LINK) – Commissioner Ortiz-Legg moved to not renew; Commissioner Ventura seconded. Commissioner Watt recused due to conflict of interest. Motion passed 7:0:1.

Home Visiting Coordination (County Public Health) -- Commissioner Ortiz-Legg moved to not renew; Commissioner Ruvalcaba-Heredia seconded. Commissioner Borenstein recused due to conflict of interest. Motion passed 7:0:1.

CA State Preschools (SLO County Office of Ed.), Basic Needs Support (CAPSLO), Early Childhood Nature-Based Experiences (SLO Botanical Garden) -- Commissioner Ortiz-Legg moved to not renew; Commissioner Ruvalcaba-Heredia seconded. Motion passed 8:0.

Part B: Discussion/Commission Authorization to Develop Contract Renewals

Mr. Wells updated Commissioners that BABES is now being recommended for full renewal with a new two-year contract. Staff and BABES partners remain committed to continuing to strategize on long-term sustainability planning. At the December meeting, Commissioners voted to authorize staff to develop contract drafts for other recommended contract renewals. Today, staff requested the Commission to take action to add BABES to this list.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg moved to authorize staff to develop a contract with the County Public Health Department for continued support of the BABES program. Commissioner Ventura seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0:1 (Commissioner Borenstein recused).

Part C: Staff Update on New Investment Area Planning

Ms. Wendt provided the following updates:

- PARENT EDUCATION/CONNECTION
 - First 5 is scheduling an initial strategic conversation with SAFE partners from County Behavioral Health, Social Services, LINK and CAPSLO to engage in a deeper dive assessment of 0-5 services – current and future.
 - First 5 staff are tracking agency and parent interest and momentum related to family education/connection, will develop concrete recommendations for potential investment and decision-making mechanisms to be presented at future Commission meetings.
- CHILD CARE/EARLY LEARNING

- The Early Care and Education Planning Council anticipates providing advisory guidance to First 5 on optimal investment/s as part of the next strategic plan. Commissioner Clarkson (Planning Council rep on the Commission) will work with staff to activate this conversation.
- EARLY HEALTH FOUNDATIONS
 - Members of the Help Me Grow Steering Committee will be tapped for guidance on a potential First 5 investment toward early intervention (assessment and short-term treatment) for 0-5 year old children presenting with mild-moderate and/or difficult-to-diagnose developmental challenges.

Ms. Wendt also commented on productive conversations she has had with members of the local Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Leadership Team regarding multiple opportunities within the new strategic plan across all priority areas to help reinforce efforts to address FASD through advocacy, family education, early intervention, prevention, etc.

Commissioner Borenstein asked how much funding is available for new investments. Ms. Wendt responded a total of \$700,000 per year.

Commissioner Watt reminded of the good work being done around parent education/connection by the Center for Family Strengthening staff who manage the Parent Connection resource hub and website.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

Judge (ret.) Charles Stevens Crandall, member of the FASD Leadership Team, thanked Ms. Wendt for meeting together to discuss common interests and opportunities with First 5. He appreciated learning the level of First 5 support – financial and programmatic – over the years, including over \$1 million to launch Martha's Place Children's Assessment and Treatment Center over a decade ago. He articulated two concrete asks that the Leadership Team is currently involved with: 1) creation of FASD Centers for Excellence, which would be supported through pending federal legislation, and 2) launch of a state-level agency/initiative focused on systems alignment/enhancement as related to FASD. He has met with Assemblymember Dawn Addis' team on this.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg commented that she has learned much about this issue and is interested in staying connected with the work.

Commissioner Belch recommended agendaizing FASD as a topic at a future Commission meeting.

ITEM 7 – Staff Reports

Misty Livengood, Communications and Outreach Coordinator, provided the following updates:

- The First 5 Association Annual Meeting and Advocacy Day is coming up February 5-7th. Three legislative/budget asks will be the focus of meetings with elected officials and their staff: 1) a one-time \$100 million General Fund request to help offset steepening

declines in tobacco tax revenues to support county-level First 5 investments and activities; 2) creation of a statewide systems work group to assess need and opportunity focused on the prenatal-three year old age stage; 3) Governor's budget funding to launch implementation of already-legislated continuous Medi-Cal eligibility for children aged 0-5.

- First 5 CA Annual Summit in Oakland on March 25-27: First 5 SLO County staff will be teaming up with SLO Chamber staff and counterparts from First 5 Sonoma County and the Santa Rosa Metro Chamber to present a workshop on "The Power of Partnerships – How First 5's and Chambers of Commerce are Driving Change for Children and Families."
- Funded Partner program updates:
 - The Health Access Training Project hosted an event on "Making Sense of Changes to Medi-Cal" earlier today, which was attended by over 100 people.
 - Center for Family Strengthening's Parent Connection and SLO Help Me Grow are partnering up to offer a "Play with Me" series.
 - Talk.Read.Sing.Time Facebook Live sessions are back in action every Wednesday with Marilu Gomez.
- Month of the Child/Child Abuse Prevention Month is coming up in April, with many plans in motion for activities and events countywide. First 5 is part of the overall promotion effort and is a sponsor for several of the events.

Executive Director Wendy Wendt provided the following updates:

- The California State Association of Counties (CSAC) issued a survey in December 2023 to all 58 counties on the topic of early childhood development and County activities in this area. County of SLO requested First 5 SLO County to coordinate the local survey response, which compiled information from several County departments, Early Care and Education Planning Council, CAPSLO, and County Office of Education. CSAC leadership is anticipating a policy agenda that includes emphasis on County and State roles in advancing early childhood development, including child care.
- The Help Me Grow Steering Committee has mobilized a subcommittee to assess healthcare workforce gaps in pediatric care – including specialty care, early intervention, and behavioral health.
- Ms. Wendt participated in the 2024 Homeless Point in Time Count as a volunteer in Morro Bay.
- Tony Huffaker, new Martha's Place Program Supervisor, is in attendance at the Commission meeting. Ms. Wendt welcomed him to his new role.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Lisa Fraser, Executive Director of Center for Family Strengthening, thanked Commissioners for listening to community members' perspectives on early childhood needs, and for having a platform for discussion.

ITEM 8 – Presentation: Findings and Recommendations from San Luis Obispo Mexican Indigenous Community Study (SLOMICS)

Joel Diring of Diring and Associates and Silvano Vasquez of the Mixteco Indigenous Community Organizing Project (MICOP) co-presented initial findings from the SLOMICS study. Fernanda Lucas, Director the Promotores Collaborative, provided interpretation services.

The study seeks to develop a deeper understanding regarding the local Mixteco-speaking communities living and working in San Luis Obispo County. A total of 325 Mexican indigenous residents were interviewed between April and August 2023. Preliminary findings were first presented at a community event in North County in October 2023. Following are key elements of these findings:

- 82% of those interviewed reside in North County – predominantly in Paso Robles and San Miguel
- 87% have arrived in the past four years
- Average age of interviewees is 29 years.
- Education: 21% have no formal education; 44% have a grade school education; 10% graduated from high school
- 95% have farmworker employment – 82% in vineyards, 17% in strawberry fields
- 80% have incomes below \$2,500/month
- 65% are parents with children in the home; of these, 87% have children under 5
- Living conditions are often crowded – the average household has at least 7 individuals, and as many as fourteen.
- 64% do not have enough to eat.
- Health Care: 54% have never had a physical exam; 65% have never had a dental exam; 84% have never had an eye exam
- 30% access Community Health Centers for health care services; 22% have used a pharmacy; 14% have been to a hospital; 65% visit curanderos for traditional health care supports.
- 85% have no health insurance
- Community health concerns include excessive heat, smoke and pesticide exposure; other workplace safety risks; nutrition, children’s health, dental health and vaccines.
- WhatsApp and text messages are the top two ways community members receive health information.
- Community members are concerned about drinking water quality and commonly purchase bottled water (estimated 1.7 million gallons/year).

The presenters concluded with key recommendations that link with other current work:

- Address health care access by assisting community members sign on for Medi-Cal coverage
- Increase capacity within health care sector for cultural competence and effective communication in specific Mixteco variants
- Improve food access through existing services
- Address concerns related to water quality

- Incorporate overcrowding as an issue within county housing/homeless planning and policy development
- Promote/develop community service access for immigrant community members

The presenters also offered the following new direction recommendations:

- Develop new communication strategies
- Build a plan for services for young children and families
- Enhance educational opportunities
- Invest in climate resilience
- Develop novel strategies to sustain research and planning into the future

The research team is gearing up to disseminate the report widely, to launch a webpage, and to work on the above strategies with providers/agencies/community members.

Discussion ensued (note – includes public comments):

Commissioner Watt emphasized the importance of schools supporting this population. Mr. Vasquez pointed out that it is a challenge that there are few interpreters. He also pointed out that Mixteco speaking students often avoid speaking their native language for fear of being bullied/discriminated against. He wants to find ways to empower students to feel proud of who they are.

Commissioner Ventura asked what strategies are recommended related to food insecurity. Mr. Diring highlighted opportunities/efforts with WIC (many families are eligible and/or enrolled), and CalFresh. Mr. Vasquez pointed out that part of the challenge with food and nutrition is that people do not have enough money to buy nutritious food.

Commissioner Tedford asked if there is a stigma related to going to see a doctor. Mr. Vasquez responded that expense is more the issue, and also a traditional reliance on natural remedies. Mr. Diring commented that the goal should be to connect traditional and “western” practitioners and practices.

Leslie Mehigan, Lactation Consultant at Twin Cities Hospital, articulated a concern about the lack of prenatal care and limited contact with pediatricians by families with children. She has also observed early shift to formula feeding because of workplace demands for new mothers.

Mr. Diring commented that unfortunately there was no question on the survey related to child care. Commissioner Ruvalcaba-Heredia noted that many older children are in charge of taking care of younger siblings (this was especially a trend during COVID).

Fernanda Lucas, Director of the Promotores Collaborative, asked if overcrowding is due to expense, or because housing is hard to find. Mr. Diring responded that both are factors. Mr. Vasquez added that lack of credit or sufficient funds for rental deposits are further barriers. Mr. Diring also pointed out that housing subsidy programs like Section 8 are not an option for most families.

Dr. Doug Major, Optometric Care Associates, offered to ensure access to vision screening in this community through the First 5 and the Lions Club programs.

Mr. Vasquez estimated that there are as many as 2,000 or more Mixteco community members living in San Luis Obispo County.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ITEM 9: Executive Director Evaluation: Process Introduction

First 5 Legal Counsel representative Natalie Frye-Laacke introduced this item, is seeking direction from the Commission regarding the annual evaluation for the Executive Director, specifically whether the Commission would like a 360 process, or just input from Commissioners plus self-evaluation documents submitted by the Executive Director.

Commissioners Borenstein and Watt inquired whether an every-year evaluation is needed. Ms. Frye-Laacke responded that this is at the discretion of the Commission, but reminded them that staff compensation increases are tied to positive personnel evaluations.

Commissioner Belch commented on the value of consistent annual reviews for current and future Executive Directors.

Commissioner Ventura suggested that the level of intensity and detail could be adjusted if prior year personnel evaluation was strong for a continuing Executive Director. Ms. Laacke offered the option to assign Commissioners a brief paragraph of feedback for Ms. Wendt, and she could provide a self-evaluation narrative update.

Ms. Wendt commented that an annual evaluation is helpful; she gleans valuable feedback and guidance from Commissioners each year. She welcomes the exercise for her professional growth and ongoing communication with Commissioners.

Legal Counsel will proceed with the Executive Director evaluation process, to be concluded at the March 27, 2024 Commission meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ITEM 10: Future Agenda Items

FASD Presentation at a Commission meeting prior to the end of the fiscal year.
Commissioner Letter of Support related to FASD legislative asks.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ITEM 11 – Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:31 p.m.