

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

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

March 27, 2024 (Approved May 29, 2024)

Current Commissioners Present

Dawn Ortiz-Legg (Vice-Chair)

SLO County Board of Supervisors

Linda Belch

Department of Social Services

Patty Clarkson

Early Care and Education Planning Council

Erica Ruvalcaba-Heredia

Community at Large

Alison Ventura

Community at Large

James Tedford

Medical Representative (AAP, Ch 2)

Bob Watt

Community at Large

Current Commissioners Absent

Penny Borenstein (Chair)

SLO County Public Health Department

James Brescia

SLO County Office of Education

Staff Present

First 5 staff: Wendy Wendt, Jason Wells, Misty Livengood

Commission Counsel: Natalie Frye-Laacke

Call to Order

Vice Chair Ortiz-Legg called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

ITEM 1 - Commissioner Announcements

Commissioner Belch welcomed Nancy Kuster to the meeting (attending on zoom). She is the new Youth Services Division Manager with County Social Services and will be taking over the DSS Commission seat for Ms. Belch starting in July 2024.

Commissioner Ventura announced that she will be attending a conference on April 4th and 5th at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda MD on the topic of the impact of technology on children's development (cognitive, physical and mental health), also as related to parent use of technology. It is possible to attend the conference remotely. Dr. Ventura will share access information with First 5 staff to pass along to Commissioners.

ITEM 2 – Public Comment – Items not on the agenda

Judge Charles Steven Crandall (ret.), of the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Leadership Team in San Luis Obispo County, expressed gratitude to Commissioner Ortiz-Legg for her work to raise awareness on the issue with state and federal legislators. He and his team will present at the June 26, 2024 First 5 San Luis Obispo County Commission Meeting. He requested that in the interim, the Commission gather information on 1) prenatal alcohol exposure and 2) diagnosed cases in the county. His team seeks First 5 engagement on determining “what we are doing now [related to FASD]” and “what we could be doing” in this county.

Raine Rice, mother of a child with FASD, has worked for various organizations in the county, including CASA (now an Advocate Supervisor there) and SELPA. She described the challenges they face as a family securing supports for her daughter in school – “it’s more than a full-time job.” She is glad to see that federal legislation has passed, but says it is not enough. Educators and other providers lack sufficient knowledge on FASD.

Sid Gardner, President of Children and Family Futures in Orange County, was recently part of an assessment in that county on FASD. He urged the SLO County First 5 Commission to assemble what we know on the issue – cases and support systems. He said that data indicates that between 120-190 children each year are born in SLO County with fetal alcohol exposure. As many as 1,800 children in the county’s schools could be living with the condition. All three of First 5 SLO County’s strategic priorities touch FASD. He urged the Commission to ask the question – are we giving appropriate attention to children who may have been exposed to alcohol in utero?

Raechelle Bowlay, Coordinator of the County Early Care and Education Planning Council, updated Commissioners on activities leading up to and including April – Month of the Child/Child Abuse Prevention Month. All seven municipalities and the County of San Luis Obispo will be offering up resolutions throughout the month. She invited Commissioners to attend Children’s Day in the Plaza on Saturday April 6th.

Jami Sanbonmatsu, Chair of the Planning Council [ref. above], commented on her attendance at the Arroyo Grande City Council meeting for the reading of the resolution. She told Commissioners that the Mayor of Arroyo Grande told her that the regular public comments mobilized over the past years by We Are the Care had a significant impact on the City Council and their awareness of child care as a key issue.

Shannon Pimentel, Coordinator for the County Early Learning Center preschool programs, was a site supervisor at Oceano when First 5 funded the school readiness programs in that community. She thanked the Commission publicly for their years of funding support and partnership. The early learning community has been strengthening through the long-standing relationship with First 5.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg asked Judge Crandall if the FASD team has considered hosting a booth at one of the children's day events during April Month of the Child (e.g. Children's Day in the Plaza). He responded no, but agreed that this is a good idea for the future.

ITEM 3 (ACTION ITEM) - Consent Agenda

- a. Approve January 24, 2024 Minutes
- b. Approve Resolution 2024-01 re: Authorizing Signatures with Pacific Premier Bank
- c. Approve Home Visiting Contract with First 5 Santa Barbara County

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 – Presentation on Annual 2022-23 Reports

This agenda item included two sections – 1) a Public Hearing on the First 5 California FY2022-23 Annual Report, and 2) a presentation on the First 5 San Luis Obispo County FY2022-23 Annual Evaluation Report.

PUBLIC HEARING – First 5 CA FY2022-23 Annual Report

Executive Director Wendy Wendt provided a high-level overview of the Report. She explained that each year First 5 California compiles fiscal and programmatic data from all 58 counties, and provides a state-wide summary of progress in the prior year – both at the county and state levels. She reviewed the Table of Contents, pointed out the Policy Agenda, and flagged key activities (e.g. IMPACT, Refugee Supports, Kits for New Parents). She also pointed out County Highlights, notably p. 46 (First 5 San Luis Obispo County).

Public Comment: None

PRESENTATION: First 5 San Luis Obispo County FY22-23 Annual Evaluation Report

Evaluation Consultants Becca Carsel, Laura Keene and Amanda Welsh presented. Ms. Carsel outlined the audience and purpose of the report – to share progress with the public, and for Commissioners/staff to reflect on impact and to look toward goals with an understanding of the ecosystem within which First 5 operates. The team continues to refine the format, is open to feedback. Ms. Welsh summarized the report's contents – background, findings, highlights, and appendices. The team conducted many interviews and collected data. She reminded of the Theory of Change lens through which the evaluation findings are oriented. Ms. Keene presented on key findings:

Direct Services – Ms. Keene highlighted that funded partners are increasing their attention on leveraging support and relationships with other providers. Service encounters continue to increase post-pandemic. Staffing challenges remain an issue.

Place-based Networking and Policy/Systems Change– Ms. Keene highlighted We Are the Care/ARPA for child care, UndocuSupport and the Pediatric Town Hall. She also underscored

the policy shifts being mobilized through the influence of the Family-Friendly Workplaces Program based at the SLO Chamber of Commerce.

Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg inquired if First 5/We Are the Care are involved with the Uplift Coalition and its work to build equity priorities into regional economic development initiatives. Ms. Wendt replied yes – members of We Are the Care (including First 5) will be attending an upcoming Roundtable on Child Care being hosted by Uplift on April 11. At least three other First 5s will have staff in attendance (Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Benito). Ms. Welsh pointed out that First 5 involvement in conversations like Uplift represents an effective approach to pursuing systems change goals.

Commissioner Watt emphasized the importance of the Family-Friendly Workplaces Program successes. He urged the Commission and staff to continue supporting this work.

Ms. Keene invited Commissioners to reach out with any follow-up questions. Over the summer, the team will be working on next steps to mobilize the evaluation for next year, including how to align it with the new strategic plan.

Public Comment:

Raechelle Bowlay, Coordinator of the Early Learning and Care Planning Council, likes how the Commissioners and staff are at the table across a variety of initiatives. She thanked the evaluation team for capturing this work, and the team overall for dedicating the time to engage in these crucial conversations.

ITEM 5 – Fiscal Years 2024-26 Contracts: Review/Approve Continuing Program Contracts totaling \$922,000 to commence July 1, 2024.

Associate Director presented on this action item. Eight two-year contracts are being submitted today for Commission approval:

Contract Funding Amounts for the Contract Period July 1, 2024-Ending June 30, 2026				
Programs	Organization	Annual	2 Year Contract	Services
BABES	SLO Co PH (WIC)	\$179,000	\$358,000	Breast feeding education and support program at WIC clinics throughout the county.
Health Access Trainers	Carsel Consulting Group	\$25,000	\$50,000	Provide county-wide health access professional development trainings and advocacy.
Oral Health Program Manager	SLO Co PH	\$40,000	\$80,000	Oral health coordination, policy and screening for children and families.
Parents Helping Parents	Parents Helping Parents	\$62,000	\$124,000	Operation of resource library and referral services for families with special needs children.
Parent Learning Pods	South County Youth Coalition	\$60,000	\$120,000	Provide English and Spanish parent-child learning groups.
Perinatal Mental Health Support	Pregnancy and Parenting Support of SLO County	\$63,000	\$126,000	Mental health support and counseling for new parents.
Oral Health Prevention for Children	Tolosa Children's Dental Center	\$20,000	\$40,000	Preventive oral health treatment services for children in the central region of SLO County.
Vision Screening	Gary Englund/Optometric Care Associates	\$12,000	\$24,000	Children's vision screening and referral program at preschool and kindergarten classes.
TOTAL BUDGET		\$461,000	\$922,000	

He explained that all budgets with the exception of Vision Screening are level-funded from the current year (some amounts are rounded up slightly for the purposes of clean funding amounts). Vision Screening has dropped slightly because of lower contact #s. If the program sees an increase, Mr. Wells anticipates returning to the Commission at a future time to recommend a funding adjustment if the budget allows.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg inquired if there are plans to support a parent-pod program in North County. Ms. Wendt reminded that this is in fact a recommended focus for new investment (Ms. Wendt will be presenting on this during Item 6 – Strategic Planning Updates).

Mr. Wells added that two other contracts are still in progress. Help Me Grow (CAPSLO) will be presented for review/approval at the May 2024 Commission meeting. The Family-Friendly Workplaces Program is contingent on the SLO Chamber securing the other half of the funding (currently County of San Luis Obispo)).

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg commented that, considering the deficit budget the County is facing and given that their commitment was for only three years, she doubts that the Board of Supervisors will reinvest.

Mr. Wells pointed out that the Family-Friendly Workplaces Program has been a centerpiece for the Chamber and for our region. It is gaining momentum with employers throughout the county.

Ms. Wendt added that while the Chamber is looking into other funding options, it is not sufficient. She welcomed Commissioner input into problem solving and advocacy, especially as North County focus on the need for more child care is beginning to take off. City staff in that municipality have articulated the connection between economic development and child care.

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Watt moved to approve contracts with the County Public Health Department for BABES and Oral Health Program Manager (details in the table above). Commissioner Tedford seconded the vote. The motion passed 6:0:1 (Commissioner Ortiz-Legg recused).

Commissioner Ventura moved to approve contracts with the Tolosa Children's Dental Center for Oral Health Prevention for Children (details in the table above). Commissioner Belch seconded the vote. The motion passed 6:0:1 (Commissioner Tedford recused).

Commissioner Ruvalcaba-Heredia moved to approve contracts with Carsel Consulting Group (Health Access Trainers), Parents Helping Parents, South County Youth Coalition (Parent Pods), Pregnancy and Parenting Support of SLO County (Perinatal Mental Health Support), and Optometric Care Associates (Vision Screening) (details in the table above). Commissioner Clarkson seconded the vote. The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 6 – Update on Strategic Planning Process

Ms. Wendt presented on this item, in two segments.

- 1) Plan Narrative – First Reading. Ms. Wendt provided an overview of the Plan narrative document draft. She encouraged Commissioners to review and provide feedback as needed over the next month. A final formatted version will be submitted for review and approval at the May 2024 Commission meeting.

Discussion:

Commissioner Watt commended staff, Commissioners and evaluation team for an inclusive process that has led to this product.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg requested that the final document include a geographic mapping of communities, needs, child populations, etc. as a visual to accompany planned focus areas.

- 2) New Investment Areas – Progress Updates. Ms. Wendt reminded Commissioners that approximately \$700,000 in annual expenditures is currently identified in the Long-Range Financial Plan for program investment over the next four-year plan. Opportunities identified and in the beginning stages of planning include:
 - a. (EARLY HEALTH FOUNDATIONS) early intervention supports for children with mild-moderate developmental concerns – Ms. Wendt informed that members of the Help Me Grow Steering Committee will provide guidance how to develop this investment opportunity.
 - b. (PARENT CONNECTION/EDUCATION) expanded investment in parent play/support group experiences in new areas of the county – Ms. Wendt suggested that this investment could be optimally determined through an RFP process.
 - c. (PARENT CONNECTION/EDUCATION) investment in SAFE System of Care to ensure equitable access to services throughout childhood, including the prenatal-5 year old population and families – Commissioner Belch summarized a convening on March 1st which included herself, First 5 staff, and representatives from County Behavioral Health, Martha’s Place, CAPSLO and the LINK to discuss status and future potential for SAFE services with this age group. The currently-funded LINK model that has accessed First 5 funds to support 0-5 focused family advocates has been valuable. There may also be other ways to broaden First 5’s investment in the SAFE System of Care.
 - d. (EARLY CARE AND LEARNING) investment in child care systems building. Commissioner Clarkson described a convening on March 20th that included herself, First 5 staff, and an identified ad hoc committee of the Early Care and Education Planning Council. At this gathering the group shared perspectives on optimal areas for potential First 5 investment to address the “Trilemma” of child care – high quality, affordable/accessible, and fair compensation for the child care workforce. More planning based on the input generated is forthcoming.

Ms. Wendt concluded with an anticipated timeline for completion of the Strategic Plan process:

- MARCH
 - First round of contract renewals
 - First read of draft narrative
 - New investment planning groups convene
- APRIL
 - Continued new investment planning
 - Format/finalize draft narrative
- MAY
 - Second round of contract renewals
 - Review/approve Plan Narrative
 - Issue RFP(s) for new investments if warranted

- JUNE/JULY
 - First round of new contract approvals (pending)
 - Launch new Strategic Planning Period

Public Comment:

Carrie Collins, LINK Family Resource Center/Center for Family Strengthening, has been showcasing the SAFE System of Care at state and regional conferences. She is in strong support of building SAFE capacity countywide for the 0-5 population.

Raechelle Bowlay, Early Care and Education Planning Council Coordinator, expressed thanks for engaging in an in-depth planning discussion with the Planning Council.

ITEM 7 – Staff Reports

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

- April is Month of the Child. Ms. Livengood provided an overview of core activities throughout the month. She has issued a press release, and has begun a series of social media blasts.
- Overview of other family-centric events happening throughout the county.
- First 5 California Child Health Education and Care Summit – Staff returned yesterday from this event, held in Oakland. First 5 SLO County and SLO Chamber joined with counterparts from First 5 Sonoma and Santa Rosa Metro Chamber to co-present a session on “The Power of Partnerships: How First 5s and Chambers of Commerce are Driving Change for Children and Families.”
- Commissioner Ventura joined staff at the First 5 Association’s annual meeting and Advocacy Day in Sacramento. Our local team joined regional colleagues at meetings with legislators and staff at the offices of Senator Laird, Senator Limón, Assembly member Addis and Assembly member Hart. Topics addressed included 1) the need for implementation dollars to be included in the Governor’s Budget to fund continuous MediCal eligibility for children 0-5, 2) an ask for the creation of a state working group to focus on systems alignment for children 0-3 (now a new bill – AB2982), and 3) a push for inclusion in the Governor’s budget one-time funding to help address declining First 5 tax revenue.
- Marilu Gomez continues her 11 am Wednesday morning bilingual Talk Read Sing time.
- Ms. Livengood concluded with photos of south county Parent Pods and her recent visit to French Hospital’s Belles and Babies class.

Wendy Wendt provided the following updates:

- Recent visit with Dawn Addis’ district Director, Andrea Chmelik. Assembly member Addis is interested in signing on to AB2982.
- Conversation with Orange County First 5 Executive Director about FASD work. Ms. Wendt will connect with a local consultant who has developed a needs assessment.
- The May 15 CenCal Steering Committee will focus on children’s issues. First 5 has been invited to help facilitate part of this meeting.
- On two occasions in the past month, First 5 staff have arranged visits with programs and colleagues in North County, including Lillian Larsen Elementary School, San Miguel

Library, Cuesta College North Campus Children’s Center, MICOP, CAPSLO Help Me Grow, LINK Family Resource Center, City of Paso Robles Economic Development Director, and Must Charities.

- The First 5 Children’s Policy Center has a grant through the Pritzker Foundation, which includes a focus on the new Community Health Worker MediCal benefit and how it is rolling out in the Central Valley. San Luis Obispo County (via First 5) has been invited to participate in activities related to this work.
- A Help Me Grow steering committee work group is examining health care workforce challenges in the area of pediatrics – specialty care and early intervention.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg underscored the pediatric shortage. She also inquired about MediCal enrollment among undocumented immigrants. She is concerned that many living in SLO County are not enrolling in SLO County (compared to higher enrollment numbers in Santa Barbara County). She requested staff to look into this.

Public Comment: None.

ITEM 8 – Future Agenda Items

- FASD Presentation at the June 2024 Commission Meeting
- Family-Friendly Workplaces – A more detailed presentation on First 5 Evaluation Team findings as summarized in the Evaluation Report presentation.
- Commissioner Ventura to present on learnings from the conference on the effects of Digital Media on child development (see Agenda Item 1 – Commissioner Announcements – above)

Public Comment: None.

ITEM 9: Executive Director Evaluation – Closed Session

Commissioners returned from Closed Session. Commission Counsel Natalie Frye-Laacke announced that there is nothing to report.

Public Comment: None

ITEM 10: Adjournment

5:42 PM