

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

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
March 25, 2026 (APPROVED May 27, 2026)

Current Commissioners Present

Dawn Ortiz-Legg (Chair)	SLO County Board of Supervisors
Michelle Auran	Medical Representative (AAP, Ch 2)
Penny Borenstein	SLO County Public Health Department
Patty Clarkson	Early Care and Education Planning Council
Joe Koski	SLO County Office of Education
Nancy Kuster	Department of Social Services
Erica Ruvalcaba	Community at Large
Alison Ventura	Community at Large

Current Commissioners Absent

Leslie Mehigan (Vice Chair)	Community at Large
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Staff Present

First 5 staff: Wendy Wendt, Jason Wells, Misty Livengood, Maggie Payne
Commission Counsel: Craig Steele

Call to Order

Chair Ortiz-Legg called the meeting to order at 3:02 PM.

ITEM 1 – Public Comment – Items not on the agenda

Shana Paulson, Director of CAPSLO Child Care Resource Connection, provided an update on this year's activities. Work to increase access to child care for families. In 2025, referrals were provided for nearly 3,000 children. CCRC is responsible for providing resources to pay for child care – In 2025, \$16 million was distributed to 616 child care businesses on behalf of families. CCRC also oversees a Child Care Food Program (over 400,000 meals served in 2025), a Toy Lending Library, and Professional Development for child care business owners and professionals.

ITEM 2 (ACTION ITEM) - Consent Agenda

- a. Approve January 28, 2026 Minutes
- b. Approve Resolution 2026-01 re: Authorizing Signatures with Columbia Bank
- c. Approve Letter of Agreement with Moss Levy Hartzheim for FY25-26 External Audit

Public Comment: None

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

ITEM 4 – Public Hearing: Presentation on First 5 California Annual Report 2024-25

PUBLIC HEARING – First 5 CA FY2024-25 Annual Report

Associate Director Jason Wells provided a high-level overview of the First 5 CA Annual Report. He 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.

This year’s Annual Report launches with a tribute to Rob Reiner as a founding ambassador and champion for First 5.

The Annual Report highlights a combined \$381 million in county-level First 5 expenditures toward a variety of initiatives supporting both young children and their care givers.

He also pointed out County Highlights, notably p. 88 (First 5 San Luis Obispo County), and several photos that showcased First 5-funded programs in San Luis Obispo County.

Commissioner Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg asked what other county First 5 agencies invest in work with Mixteco-speaking families. Answer: One key example is First 5 Ventura, which has been funding MICOP programs for many years and was one of its seed investors in parent support programs.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg also lifted up the need across the state and here in SLO County to help families with MediCal enrollment. Commissioner Ruvalcaba reinforced this comment, emphasizing the need for clear and consistent messaging.

Ms. Wendt announced that CenCal has contracted with Becca Carsel to fund expansion of her work to great and disseminate simplified messaging regarding MediCal changes.

Public Comment:

Lisa Fraser, Executive Director at Center for Family Strengthening (CFSSLO), commented on the upcoming change to MediCal reenrollment requirements, from annually to every six months. A strategic approach to helping community members weather this and other MediCal changes is being developed as a regional project including San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties. Family Services Agency in Santa Barbara County is taking the lead on developing this “Navigation Hub,” and is partnering with CFSSLO. The partners on this project are interested to connect with First 5 SLO County to share details on its rollout.

ITEM 4 – Recommend Approval of two-year Contract Amendments (nine)

Associate Director Jason Wells presented this item. First 5 SLO County is currently at a midpoint in its current Strategic Planning period. Funded Partner programs are contributing to fulfilling the goals laid out in the Plan. Contracts include an option to amend through the end of the Strategic Plan. At today’s meeting, the following nine programs are being recommended for a two-year amendment. At the May 2026 meeting, an additional four programs will be presented for Commission amendment review and approval.

Organization	Program	Amended Contract Amounts		
		FY 26-27	FY 27-28	Total
Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County	Help Me Grow	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$400,000
Carsel Consulting Group	Health Access Trainer	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$50,000
County of San Luis Obispo (Public Health)	BABES-Lactation Support	\$179,000	\$179,000	\$358,000
County of San Luis Obispo (Public Health)	Children's Oral Health	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$80,000
LINK Family Resource Center	SAFE 0-5 Family Support	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$200,000
Pregnancy and Parenting Support of San Luis Obispo County	Perinatal Mental Health	\$63,000	\$63,000	\$126,000
Optometric Care Associates	Vision Screening	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$24,000
South County Youth Coalition	Parent Pods	\$38,000	\$38,000	\$76,000
Tolosa Children's Dental Center	Children's Dental	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$40,000
Total		\$677,000	\$677,000	\$1,354,000

Commissioner questions:

Commissioner Borenstein asked who is staffing Pregnancy and Parenting Support contract. Answer – The contract covers 1) staff time for Post Partum Warm Line family advocates, and 2) Referrals for free First 5-funded post-partum counseling at the Community Counseling Center.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg questioned whether amending existing contracts runs the risk of only maintaining status quo and not sufficiently responding to emerging needs. She also asked if the most vulnerable regions of the county are getting support. Answer – First 5 Funded Partners are constantly adjusting to meet emerging needs.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg asked for clarification on First 5 funded program reach outside of SLO City. Answer – North County was specifically called out in the Strategic Plan as an area of need; several funded programs are specifically targeted to this area (LINK, Tolosa, MICOP), others specific to South County (e.g. South County Youth Coalition), and virtually all other funded programs having a countywide reach.

Public Comment:

Javier Perez and Sydney Phillips with Help Me Grow (CAPSLO) expressed gratitude for First 5 support of their program.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg made a motion to approve the two program amendments under County Public Health – Oral Health Program Manager, BABES. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ventura and passed 7:0 (Borenstein recused).

Commissioner Kuster made a motion to approve the remaining contract amendments – CAPSLO (Help Me Grow), Carsel Consulting Group (Health Access Training Project), LINK Family Resource Center (0-5 Family Advocates), Pregnancy and Parenting Support of San Luis Obispo County (Perinatal Mental Health), Optometric Care Associates (Vision Screening), South County Youth Coalition (Parent Pods), and Tolosa Children’s Dental Center. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ventura and passed unanimously.

ITEM 5 – Update on At-Large Commissioner Recruitment/Selection Process

Ms. Wendt presented on this item. Two of the three at-large Commissioner representatives’ terms are due to end in July 2026 – Erica Ruvalcaba and Alison Ventura. This is a bittersweet moment. Term limits were instituted by the Commission as a mechanism to keep open opportunities for new leadership over time. Unfortunately, this also comes with the reality of saying goodbye to the experience and talents of longstanding Commissioners.

According to First 5 bylaws and County ordinance, at-large Commissioners need to have some type of expertise, background and/or lived experience related to early childhood supports. An open call for applications to fill the two at-large seats will open soon, available on-line at the First 5 website and circulated through First 5 networks.

Two current Commissioners are invited to join a Review Committee, which will interview viable candidates and forward nominees to the full Commissioner at the June 24, 2026 meeting. The Commission will vote on a pair of formal nominations, which will in turn be forwarded to the County Board of Supervisors for final approval over the summer.

Commissioners Auran and Ruvalcaba volunteered to be on the Review Committee.

Public Comment: None.

ITEM 6 – ARPA Child Care Investment

Raechelle Bowlay, SLO County Early Care & Education Planning Council Coordinator, presented on this item.

In 2022, the County Board of Supervisors dedicated \$3 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support and stabilize the child care system. This was a historic investment into the essential work of the local child care system. San Luis Obispo County was one of the first counties that dedicated ARPA money to child care, after which other Counties followed suit. Many other County investments included restrictions. The SLO County investment was flexible, and deployed to the County Office of Education/Early Care and Education Planning Council for administration and monitoring of disbursement.

The funds were divided among three categories – Stabilization, Expansion, and Workforce Development.

Stabilization grants were non-competitive and open to any licensed child care program in active operation. A total of 287 providers were awarded grants, accounting for 89% of all licensed programs in the county.

Expansion grants were competitive, and required evidence of plans to increase capacity (19 programs total), and/or license expansion (18 programs total).

Workforce development investments added to support for two existing training and professional development initiatives to build recruitment and retention in the early care and education field – Ticket to Teach and Quality Counts.

Commissioner Questions:

Commissioner Borenstein asked where things go from here in terms of sustaining capacity. Answer: There are examples of creative work springboarding off of the ARPA investment. For example, the City of Atascadero is exploring the possibility of offering a revolving loan fund for child care.

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg thanked Ms. Bowlay for the presentation, and requested a shorter version at an upcoming Board of Supervisors meeting. There is interest on the Board in knowing how their investment was used.

ITEM 7 – Staff Reports

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

- Month of the Child Preview – Nipomo, Paso Robles, San Miguel Children’s Days
- First 5 Association Advocacy Day
- Child Abuse Prevention Flag Raising
- Pediatric Town Hall – April 29, 2026
- First 5 CA Stronger Starts Road Show
- Central Coast Childbirth Network Wellness Expo
- Parents Helping Parents Toilet Training Workshop
- South County Youth Coalition Pods spring cohort
- CAPSLO Parent Cafes
- MICOP Graduation
- Tolosa Movie Night
- First 5 System Stabilization Grants
- Commissioner Ventura “Ed Talk” hosted by First 5 Santa Barbara – April 30, 2026
- Erica Ruvalcaba – Named a Santa Barbara County Woman of the Year by Senator Monique Limón

Maggie Payne provided the following updates:

- The Uplift Grant has five months remaining, with three regional projects in motion:
 - A Child Care Coalition Manifesto
 - A municipal child care land-use policy initiative
 - External communications planning and outreach

- The Pediatric Town Hall is coming April 29, 2026, Embassy Suites in San Luis Obispo
 - *Help Us Grow; Connecting Care From Pregnancy Through Early Childhood*
 - Event Sponsors: CenCal, Adventist Health, Dignity/French Hospital, CHC, County of SLO, SLO Medical and Education Research Foundation
 - Featured Speakers
 - California Surgeon General Dr. Diana Ramos
 - American Academy of Pediatrics Chapter 2 President Dr. Melissa Ruiz
 - California Medical Association President Dr. René Bravo
 - Resource Fair, Panel Discussion

Commissioner Mehigan inquired if the New Parent Kit program has received supplies. Ms. Livengood responded that we are still awaiting an update from First 5 CA.

Public Comment: None.

ITEM 8 – Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Ventura presentation at the June 24 Commission meeting.

Commissioner Ortiz-Legg expressed concern about how parents protect or don't protect their children from the elements (e.g. hats during hot or cold days). Mr. Wells suggested posting social media messages on summer safety, including skin protection, water safety, etc. Commissioner Ruvalcaba added a suggestion to include statistics. Dr. Auran pointed out that the American Academy of Pediatrics has good recommendations that could be drawn from, perhaps also sound bites from local pediatricians.

Public Comment: None.

ITEM 9: Executive Director Evaluation – Closed Session

The Commission adjourned to closed session pursuant to Government Code section 54957(b)(1), to consider PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE – Executive Director.

Commissioners returned from Closed Session. Commission Counsel Craig Steele announced that there is nothing to report.

Public Comment: None

ITEM 10: Adjournment 5:28 PM