

GIMME FIVE

Local leaders take time for reading with children

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In Oxnard, a fire chief read “If You Give A Mouse a Cookie” to a group of kids who admired his uniform. On the other end of Ventura County, a wellknown voice from KCLU read Dr. Seuss’ ABC book at a preschool in Thousand Oaks.

They were among about 50 local leaders who participated in the Take 5 and Read to Kids campaign Friday morning. The event was organized by First 5 Ventura County, which provides preschool and other programs for young children and their families.

For Mary Olson, KCLU’s general manager, the event was a chance to promote something she enjoys herself — reading.

“I love, love, love kids,” said Olson, who read to kids at California Lutheran University’s Fredrickson Family Early Childhood Center. “Anytime I can help encourage kids to read, I want to do that.”

The event, in its second year, was held in honor of Claudia Harrison, First Five’s former executive director, who died in October. Before she died, she had asked that parents and others read to children every day.



Above: Mark Lorenzen, fire chief for the Ventura County Fire Department, reads a book to preschoolers Friday at the South Oxnard Childhood Development Center. The event was part of the Take 5 and Read to Kids campaign by First 5 Ventura County, which provides preschool and other programs for young children and their families. Top: Mary Maranville, founder of Students for Eco-Education and Agriculture, reads a book to preschoolers Friday.

PHOTOS BY ANTHONY PLASCENCIA/THE STAR

\$3M in Ventura County mental health cuts proposed

Kathleen Wilson, kathleen.wilson@vcstar.com 2:12 p.m. PT May 9, 2017



(Photo: Contributed photo)

Several programs aiding troubled youths and seriously mentally ill adults will be eliminated or reduced July 1 under a proposal from county officials.

Ventura County Behavioral Health Director Elaine Crandall says she needs to cut \$3 million because reserves are running low from a voter-approved income tax on millionaires amid new demands for funding housing, crisis care and services to foster youths.

"Our needs are shifting," Crandall said this week.

Crandall shared her plans Monday with leaders of a community advisory board after weeks of committee discussions on where the cuts should be made. First Vice Chairman Jerry Harris said the decision was based on how well the programs are meeting contract requirements.

"This was a data-driven evaluation to determine how best to balance the budget," Harris told members of the board's executive committee at their meeting in Oxnard.

The money represents about 2 percent of the agency's total budget of \$180 million, but the reductions will still have an impact, Crandall said.

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Here is a list of the proposed cuts from funds generated by a 1 percent tax on personal income above \$1 million, known formally as the Mental Health Services Act.

- \$980,000 from a peer counseling program operated by Pacific Clinics that serves about 575 clients. Adults in recovery from serious mental illness help others grappling with psychiatric disorders. The equivalent of 10 jobs would be eliminated. The peer counselors may apply for the job of mental health associate offered in the agency.
- \$1.3 million that has funded a parenting program for school-age youths that operates at local campuses. Services for families with children under 6 will continue to be offered by First 5 Ventura County.
- \$450,000 for Solutions Court, a mental health program for youths serving probation for juvenile offenses. The youths are supervised by the court while they receive treatment in the community, diverting them from incarceration. The program has been plagued by low use. Only nine youths are now enrolled.
- \$250,000 to account for low demand in the east county for a program that seeks to prevent chronic psychotic disorders in teenagers and young adults. The reduction affects the offerings in the east county, where 17 individuals are enrolled. Officials plan to expand the contract if demand goes up. Offerings in the west county would be unaffected.

County Probation Director Mark Varela said he was concerned by the plan to shelve the Solutions Court program. Started in 2003 under the name Adelante!, the program was designed to keep youths in the community and divert them from locked detention, he said.

Mental health counselors will continue providing treatment to these youths but not under the court program, Crandall said. The program would be redesigned, she said.

Interface Children & Family Services operates the parenting program called Triple P and the Solutions Court. Interface Executive Director Erik Sternad declined to comment because clients had not yet been informed of the proposed shutdowns but acknowledged that parenting instruction in the school-age years is important.

Parents often become less involved as their children age, so anything that can re-engage them is important, said Roger Rice, a former principal of Hueneme High School and a deputy superintendent at the Ventura County Office of Education.

Crandall said the department has been able to maintain spending by tapping into reserves from the millionaires' tax and a separate pot of money created through a state funding shift called "realignment."

But new programs also must be fed, including a state housing initiative for homeless and mentally ill people and a county crisis unit for suicidal children, she said.

Crandall said the budget proposal will be shared with the full Behavioral Health Advisory Board next week. The meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m. May 15 at the Ventura County Behavioral Health building at 1911 Williams Drive in Oxnard.

Crandall is due to make a presentation to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors on May 23. The board has final authority over the county budget.

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HIGHLIGHTING STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Gov. Brown's revised budget plan draws mixed response from early education advocates

MAY 16, 2017 | ASHLEY HOPKINSON



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Though child care advocates were hoping for new investments, they expressed appreciation that Gov. Jerry Brown's May budget revision reinstates almost 3,000 preschool slots and increases child care reimbursement for providers.

While early education advocates say they appreciate Gov. Jerry Brown keeping last year's promise to increase preschool funding – which he proposed postponing when he introduced the 2017-18 budget in January – they were disappointed that the May budget revision didn't include additional money and changes that would allow more low-income families to qualify for subsidized child care.

The budget revision reinstates \$7.9 million in funding to add 2,959 full-day state preschool slots. The revised budget proposal also increases reimbursement rates for child

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care providers. The 2016-17 budget had proposed a 10 percent increase for child care providers who contract directly with the state, but only about 5 percent was implemented. The budget plan now reflects the full 10 percent rate increase outlined in the 2016-17 budget. Overall, the revised budget will restore the \$500 million child care package as outlined in last year's budget.

"We applaud Governor Brown for his wise decision to fulfill last year's commitment to child care and preschool programs," said Ted Lempert, president of Children Now, a nonprofit research and advocacy organization based in Oakland. However, Lempert continued, "... the May revise still misses the mark by failing to leverage available resources to expand funding beyond the baseline commitment last year."

The governor's May revision is a step in the right direction, said Kim Pattillo Brownson, vice president of Policy and Strategy at First 5 LA, an early childhood advocacy organization in Los Angeles County. Still, those changes are just foundational, Pattillo Brownson said. It's time to build on that by prioritizing investments for working families who don't have adequate access to child care, especially for infants and toddlers where the shortage is most severe, she said.

In Los Angeles County, child care centers have the capacity to serve only 13 percent of working parents with infants and toddlers. In addition, Pattillo Brownson said, only 41 percent of kids in that county have access to child care.

"We take those (numbers) really seriously because if they don't have the benefit of early education on the front end, then when they get to K-12 they end up starting behind," she said. "And we know for low-income and children of color, sometimes that means they stay behind."

Advocates say one of the most pressing issues left unaddressed by the budget is the outdated income eligibility limit for families receiving subsidized child care. Families in California qualify for subsidized child care by meeting income limits based on the state median income. However, California has not updated its income eligibility limit since 2011, according to researchers at the California Budget & Policy Center. And even then, that update was based on the state median income from 2005, said Kristin Schumacher, a policy analyst with the organization.

Schumacher said because of the current income limit, even a minor pay raise can mean a family loses its eligibility for subsidized child care and may choose to reduce work hours or turn down a promotion to remain eligible.

“This barrier is encountered by many low-income working parents looking for subsidized care, since they often do not meet the income requirements for eligibility,” stated a recent report titled “The State of Early Care and Education in Los Angeles County.” “With the minimum wage increasing to \$15 per hour by 2021, low-income earning parents who receive slight wage increases may no longer be eligible for subsidized care.”

Pattillo Brownson said it perpetuates a false story that families who begin to earn more on minimum wage are financially stable and no longer need affordable child care. “We know that’s not true, and we need to be on the right side and make sure families making minimum wage can access care for their children,” she said. Estimated changes to income eligibility, if updated based on the new state median, can be found in this report.

While Brown’s new budget proposal does not change income eligibility for child care, it includes sizable increases in child care provider payments. The new plan allots \$160.3 million to provide increases for child care providers for the State Preschool Program and those who contract directly with the state, and an additional \$42.2 million for other child care providers.

January’s proposed budget sought to freeze reimbursement rates in 2017-18 for child care providers. At the time, child care advocates said freezing reimbursement rates could cause some facilities to close.

Child care advocates like Deborah Kong, interim executive director of Early Edge California, said she was pleased to see the governor “keep his promise to California’s youngest children” by investing in early childhood educators and caregivers. Kong said this is the first step on a long path to ensure early child care professionals receive the reimbursement they need.

“All of the adults who care for our youngest learners need to be fairly compensated and not at poverty-level wages,” Kong said. But it’s also important to go a step beyond compensation and ensure that those employees also have adequate opportunities for professional development, she said.

Though small changes to policy can affect training opportunities for early educators, funding is still important, she said. “When we talk about how are we doing in providing quality, that’s not just a financial question, but quality does cost money,” Kong said.

 Comments

From: First5CA [mailto:first5ca@ccfc.ca.gov]

Sent: Friday, May 12, 2017 10:34 AM

To: First5CA <first5ca@ccfc.ca.gov>

Subject: State Budget Needs to Act on 2.5 Billion New Opportunities to Invest in Early Learning

For Immediate Release

May 11, 2017

Contact: Erin Gabel
916.708.8895

State Budget Needs to Act on 2.5 Billion New Opportunities to Invest in Early Learning

SACRAMENTO –The Administration’s May Revise budget proposal for FY 2017–18, as released today, restores \$210 million in child care rates promised in last year’s budget deal. The Executive Director of First 5 California, Camille Maben, said the May Revise misses a new opportunity to build a stronger economy for generations to come.

Maben continued, “Out of \$2.5 billion in increases between the January and May state revenue forecasts, there is room for increased investments in child care if there is political will. Unfortunately, 70,000 fewer children are served today than in 2007, and an estimated 1.2 million eligible children lack access to care that could change their lives and keep their parents in stable employment. The final State Budget must include a modernization of child care eligibility and modest investments in child care access—California cannot afford to miss this investment.”

According to a new study by researchers at the University of Southern California and the University of Chicago, high-quality early childhood development programs can deliver an annual return of 13 percent per child on upfront costs through better outcomes in education, health, employment, and social behavior in the decades that follow. The findings show high-quality early childhood programs can increase economic mobility for two generations by freeing working parents to build their careers and increase wages over time, while their children develop a broad range of foundational skills that can lead to lifelong success.

The May Revise fully funds last year’s multi-year budget deal for per-child funding rates for state child care programs with a \$210 million adjustment to the January Budget. However, the May Revise does not fully fund the previous year’s budget deal for preschool slots, or provide any increased access for infants and toddlers.

During the recession, California slashed more than \$1 billion in funds and froze eligibility for subsidized child care programs for low-income working parents. Those cuts eliminated child care and preschool for tens of thousands of children. Cuts to child care alone totaled nearly \$1.1 billion in fiscal years 2007–08 through 2011–12, according to budget estimates from the Legislative Analyst’s Office.

Child care advocates across the state are relieved the May Revise restores last year’s budget deal for per-child rate increases, as well as a cost-of-living adjustment. With the Administration’s renewed support for rate increases included in the May Revise, the last month of the legislative debate will focus on increasing children’s access to high-quality child care.

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About First 5 California

First 5 California was established in 1998 when voters passed Proposition 10, which taxes tobacco products to fund services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. First 5 programs and resources are designed to educate and support teachers, parents, and caregivers in the critical role they play during a child’s first five years – to help California kids receive the best possible start in life and thrive. For more information, please visit www.ccfc.ca.gov.