



Memo

To: Commissioners, First 5 Ventura County

From: Administration/Finance Committee

Date: January 18, 2018

Re: Recommendation to adopt Policy Platform

Background

On October 19, 2017 the Commission adopted a new Advocacy Policy (Attachment 1). The Advocacy Policy provides guideline and parameters around advocacy activities and proposes the development and adoption of a Policy Platform (Attachment 2). The Advocacy Policy states that staff will determine whether a policy matter is in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Policy Platform, and how the issue will affect children prenatal through age five and their families, and/or First 5 Ventura County (F5VC) and our community partners, before engaging in advocacy activities.

The Policy Platform is designed to outline a comprehensive set of recommendations to support children prenatal through age five, their families, and service providers. Using the Policy Platform as a guide, F5VC staff will be able to engage in timely, strategic advocacy activities. The Policy Platform outlines a policy agenda for F5VC that can be shared with champions of early learning throughout Ventura County to maximize our impact through collaboration and consistency in messaging.

This Policy Platform was reviewed and approved by the Administration Finance Committee, and will be reviewed by the Commission annually in the Fall and revised as needed. Staff will work to build support in these public policies areas to benefit children prenatal through age five and their families throughout Ventura County.

Recommendation

The recommendation is to adopt the proposed Policy platform that outlines a set of recommendations to support children prenatal through age five and service providers.



POLICY FOR ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

BACKGROUND

First 5 Ventura County (F5VC) strategic investments place greater emphasis on systems change and capacity building. The Commission's FY 2015-20 Strategic Plan calls for advocating for young children and families by building a shared vision and creating public/political will for programs for young children. This policy establishes the parameters for advocacy activities and expressly permits First 5 Ventura County to advocate for young children strategically, proactively, and in a timely manner.

CRITERIA FOR ENGAGING IN POLICY AND ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

- The Commission remains non-partisan.
- The Commission develops and endorses a Policy Platform to guide F5VC advocacy efforts and identify relevant policy areas. The Policy Platform is aligned with the following four priorities identified in the F5VC Strategic Plan:
 - Children grow up healthy
 - Children enter school ready to learn
 - Parents have the knowledge and resources they need
 - Communities are engaged in supporting and prioritizing children
- The Commission may take positions on federal, state and local policy matters, which may include legislation, regulations, local ordinances, and ballot measures, that affect:
 - Ventura County's children, prenatal to age five and their families
 - F5VC's ability to work towards its mission
 - F5VC's status or its operations, including opportunities to preserve, increase, and expand funding streams dedicated to early childhood
- The Commission may develop positions:
 - Proactively – taking a leadership role to convene stakeholders on a policy matter
 - Reactively – responding to a proposed policy matter

PROCESS FOR ACTING ON POLICY MATTERS

The Executive Director shall determine whether a policy matter is in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Policy Platform, how the issue will affect children prenatal to age five and their families, and/or First 5 Ventura County. If the policy matter is in alignment, staff shall research how similar organizations supporting young children are advocating on the issue, particularly the

position being taken by the First 5 Association and First 5 California, and then the Executive Director shall determine which activities to engage in.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AUTHORITY

The Executive Director has the authority delegated by the Commission to engage in advocacy activities, including but not limited to:

- Provide testimony at public hearings
- Provide written comments and/or letters on proposed policy matters and ballot measures
- Meet with legislators and elected officials
- Write or co-sign letters to legislators and policy makers
- Collaborate with county agencies, funders, nonprofits, etc.
- Interact with the media
- Educate the public and policymakers (trainings, white papers, educational forums)
- Develop parent leadership
- Convene experts
- Publish policy and advocacy related information on the website, in newsletters, and on social media

The Executive Director and the Commission Chair shall have signature authority on letters and written comments. Both the Executive Director and Commission Chair shall co-sign letters and written comments whenever possible.

The Executive Director shall report on policy and advocacy actions taken at regularly scheduled Commission meetings and provide copies of any signed letters.



2018 POLICY PLATFORM

F5VC's Policy Priorities are aligned with the four strategic priorities and goals outlined in our 2015 – 2020 Strategic Plan. These priorities are intended to help us achieve the vision that all children thrive in healthy, supported environments.

1. Children Grow Up Healthy
 - a. Ensure all kids prenatal to age 5 and their families have and utilize comprehensive health and dental insurance
 - b. Increase routine screenings for prenatal substance abuse, developmental delays, and childhood trauma, and improve the system for referral and follow-up
 - c. Promote healthy practices such as good oral health, healthy eating, physical activity, and breastfeeding
2. Children Enter School Ready to Learn
 - a. Promote the importance of the early years (prenatal – age three) including home visitation programs and developmental screenings, optimum attachment and bonding, and early literacy experiences
 - b. Increase access to high quality early education and preschool programs for young children and their families, including facilities, funding, and available spaces
 - c. Strengthen the compensation and professional qualification of the early childhood development and education workforce
3. Parents Have the Knowledge and Resources They Need
 - a. Increase parent and caregiver knowledge, understanding, and awareness of opportunities for early childhood development, healthy lifestyles, and the impact of trauma and toxic stress
 - b. Increase social connections and support for parents
 - c. Provide parents, families, and the community with relevant, timely and culturally appropriate information, services, and support
4. Communities are Engaged in Supporting and Prioritizing Children
 - a. Support communities to prioritize the health, education, and well-being of young children
 - b. Address childhood poverty, abuse, and neglect
 - c. Increase awareness among policymakers and business owners around the importance of early childhood

First 5 builds the early childhood systems and supports needed to ensure California's young children are healthy, safe, and ready to succeed in school. This is accomplished by:

RESILIENT FAMILIES



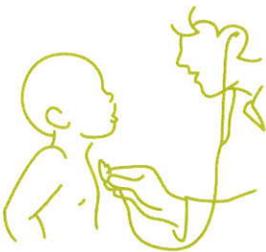
VISION:

Promote parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of crisis, and knowledge of parenting and child development.

POLICY GOALS:

- Expand access to evidence-based family strengthening programs, including home visiting and parent education, to optimize child development and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect.
- Strengthen the social safety net to build family resiliency and promote self-sufficiency.
- Support community hubs for integrated services and crisis supports for children and families.
- Support parent engagement on child brain development, including Talk. Read. Sing.

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT



VISION:

Build a family-centered health system that prioritizes prevention.

POLICY GOALS:

- Ensure all pregnant mothers and children ages 0-5 have affordable and comprehensive health insurance.
- Increase use of essential Medi-Cal services, especially dental, mental health, and vision services.
- Increase coordination across systems of care to connect young children to screening and early intervention, including through the expansion of Help Me Grow.
- Expand availability and geographic spread of health care providers and professionals.

QUALITY EARLY LEARNING



VISION:

Ensure children are healthy and have the social-emotional and cognitive skills to enter kindergarten ready to learn.

POLICY GOALS:

- Increase supply of high-quality early learning programs for children 0-5.
- Embed high-quality standards in all state-funded early learning programs and support state and local efforts to meet them.
- Promote affordability of early learning programs, while ensuring fair workforce compensation.

SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE



VISION:

Fulfill the voter-approved Proposition 10 mandate: *"To create a comprehensive and integrated delivery system of information and services to promote early childhood development."*

POLICY GOAL:

- Explore and advance alternative revenue sources for children's services.
- Improve and integrate county data systems to track and evaluate children's outcomes.
- Regulate tobacco products.
- Mitigate public health risks that widely affect children's health and wellbeing.