



To: Commissioners, First 5 Ventura County
From: Lauren Arzu, Program Manager (On behalf of the Administration Finance Committee)
Date: January 24, 2019
Re: Recommendation to update Policy Platform

Background

In October 2017, the Commission adopted a new Advocacy Policy, which provides guidance on advocacy activities and calls for the adoption and annual updates of a Policy Platform. The Advocacy Policy states that staff determines 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), before engaging in advocacy activities.

Over the past year, F5VC participated in a variety of advocacy activities including signing onto letters of support, meeting with legislators, participating in First 5 Association statewide advocacy activities, and educating the public and policymakers particularly through social media and e-newsletters.

The First 5 Association's (F5AC) 2018 Annual Advocacy Day was particularly successful. On May 2, 2018, F5VC participated in five meetings with legislators and their staff to advocate for "a billion for babies," which was subsequently passed in the state budget process. In addition, the F5AC participated in the "Choose Children" campaign for the 2018 election, telling gubernatorial candidates that early childhood care and education must be a top priority for California. F5VC shared messages through social media in support of the issue-based campaign. Governor Newsom has proposed significant funding increases for early childhood through his budget.

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 is able to engage in timely, strategic advocacy activities. The Policy Platform is closely aligned with our Strategic Plan, and 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.

The proposed Policy Platform updates were reviewed and approved by the Administration Finance Committee, and include additions to address maternal parental mental health, marijuana, and employee benefits (particularly family leave). The Policy Platform will be reviewed by the Commission annually and revised as needed.

Recommendation

The recommendation is to adopt the updated Policy Platform (Attachment 1) that outlines a set of recommendations to support children prenatal through age five and service providers.



2019 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 children prenatal to age and their families have and utilize comprehensive health and dental insurance
 - b. Increase routine screenings for prenatal substance abuse, developmental delays, childhood trauma, and maternal parental mental health, and improve the system for referral and follow-up
 - c. Promote healthy practices such as good oral health, healthy eating, physical activity, and breastfeeding, and avoiding exposure to harmful substances including tobacco and marijuana
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, and improve family leave policies and employee benefits
 - 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 investing in early childhood