



## **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.