



CREATING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

POLICY PLATFORM



Purpose

Guidelines

Statements

Adopted September 2003

by the First 5 Contra Costa

Children and Families Commission

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POLICY PLATFORM STATEMENT

I. PURPOSE

The Policy Platform provides a public statement of the Commission’s positions on selected policy issues, with the intent of providing leadership and building a local consensus and constituency to support children and families living in Contra Costa County.

The Policy Platform provides a list of principles and policy statements agreed to by the Commissioners. These principles and policy statements will help guide First 5 Contra Costa, the Policy and Advocacy Committee and Commission Staff when deciding what issues to work on and for reviewing proposed local ordinances, state and federal legislation, state or local ballot initiatives, and federal, state and local budget issues that affect Contra Costa’s children ages 0 to 5 and their families. Inclusion in the Policy Platform does not mean a policy issue or program area it represents will be or must be funded by Proposition 10.

The Policy Platform is designed to be a living document that evolves each year to fit the interests and needs of the Commission in carrying out its Mission:

“In partnership with parents, caregivers, communities, public and private organizations, advocates and county government - to foster the optimal development of our children, zero to five years of age - the Commission supports a comprehensive, integrated set of sustainable programs, services, and activities designed to improve the health and well-being of our young children, advance their potential to succeed in school, and strengthen the ability of their families and caregivers to provide for their physical, mental and emotional growth.”

II. AUDIENCE

The audiences of the Policy Platform document are:

Primary Audience:

- Commission’s Policy and Advocacy Committee and Staff
- Local Government – All jurisdictions (e.g. legislature, administration – including regulatory and program agencies – city, county, school boards – and courts)
- State Government – Local Assembly Members and State Senators, and all jurisdictions (e.g. legislature, administration – including regulatory and program agencies – and courts)
- Federal Government – Local Congressional House of Representatives and Senators, and all federal jurisdictions (e.g. legislature, administration – including regulatory and program agencies – and courts)
- Business and Labor Leaders
- Community Leaders

Secondary Audience:

- Stakeholder groups (e.g. faith community, service providers, children’s advocacy groups, associations & media)
- General Public

III. GUIDING VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The following Guiding Values & Principles apply to the concepts in the Policy Platform Statements. Policies supported by First 5 Contra Costa should adhere to the following:

A. Core Value Statements

1. All women should have quality prenatal care early and throughout pregnancy.
2. All children should have:
 - 2.1. Quality living environments including clean air and water, good nutrition and safe nurturing homes, free of environmental hazards such as lead, toxins, and tobacco smoke.
 - 2.2. Parents knowledgeable about parenting skills, child development and how to access necessary family support services.
 - 2.3. Homes and families free from all forms of abuse and exposure to violence.
 - 2.4. Safe and livable communities that are free of violence, with safe streets, recreational opportunities, sound economies and work opportunities for families.
 - 2.5. Comprehensive health care including medical, dental and mental health services.
 - 2.6. Quality early care and education programs.
 - 2.7. Equal access to services -- regardless of immigration status -- that are sensitive to and respect cultural, ethnic, economic and geographic differences.
3. All families should have:
 - 3.1. Respect and be kept at the center of policy considerations.
 - 3.2. Equal access to services that are respectful of the cultural, ethnic, economic differences and diversity of family structures.
 - 3.3. Comprehensive health care for all members of the family.
 - 3.4. Safe and affordable housing.
 - 3.5. Employment opportunities that provide livable wages and employers with family friendly policies.
4. All communities should have:
 - 4.1. Policies that demonstrate the value of recognizing and respecting diverse cultures and ethnicities.
 - 4.2. Quality accessible and affordable housing, employment, shopping, integrated and accessible family support services, recreation, and quality early care and education programs.
 - 4.3. Accessible and inclusive governance that embraces the involvement of and provides opportunities for all.

B. Guiding Principles

1. Reduce fragmentation and increase integration of services for children and their families by maximizing available resources, identifying and addressing gaps in service, increasing information flow, providing continuity when clients move or transition from one service to another, and utilizing – whenever possible – universal applications forms.

2. Provide funding that is sustainable, that builds on existing resources from local, state and federal sources, and that is adequate to allow programs to function at capacity for all that need them.
3. Increase equal access for every child to services - regardless of immigration status - by providing multiple access points sensitive to geography, special social and economic issues, addressing varying hours and transportation needs, and by ensuring culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse service delivery.
4. Promote family friendly policies for places of employment.
5. Maintain confidentiality and protect client personal information if sharing data, in order to enhance trust in the services delivery system - perceived and actual.
6. Provide a catalyst for change when necessary to increase children’s well-being by seeking creative solutions, encouraging innovation, supporting on-going development of and utilization of scientifically based promising practices, and by valuing and maintaining result focused evaluation and accountability at all levels.
7. Encourage collaboration among all segments of the community.
8. Encourage broad systems change that allows and encourages adaptation for new, emerging, and promising practices.

IV. POLICY PLATFORM ISSUE STATEMENTS

The Policy Platform Issue Statements are listed in the four categories that parallel the core issues identified in the Commission’s Strategic Plan affecting children and their families.

The policy statements below are not all inclusive, but provide an overall guide for policy decision making. The policy statements address the question “what would we like to see happen in the future for all children and families – during the next 3, 5 or 10 years.”

- IV. A - E **Improve Child Health – Child Health**
- IV. F - K **Improve Family Functioning – Safe, Nurturing Families and Communities**
- IV. L – N **Improve Child Development – Children Learning and Ready for School**
- IV. O – T **Improve Systems for Families – Integrated, Accessible, and Culturally Appropriate Services**

IV. A-E CHILD HEALTH

IV. A – E Broad Results Statement: Contra Costa’s children and families will be healthy.

First 5 Contra Costa supports local, state and federal legislation, regulation, court, and public and private business policies that:

Item	Statement
IV. A	Increase early access to <u>quality perinatal care</u> and services for all pregnant women of all ages. including: prenatal, intra-partum and post-partum care; parenting education; promotion of

Item	Statement
	parent-infant attachments; good nutrition; breastfeeding education and support; dental care; screening and intervention for post-partum depression; family planning; education about SIDS “back to sleep” and shaken baby syndrome; and care that addresses abstaining from using tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.
IV. B	Increase the percentage of children ages 0-5 that have an established <u>medical home</u> ¹ and <u>dental home</u> that promotes quality preventive health care; provides comprehensive health care; provides mental health, parenting education, and well-child primary care; and also provides screening for developmental or special needs issues that may require further assessment, treatment and support services.
IV. C	Promote actions that increase the percentage of children that receive <u>immunizations on time</u> .
IV. D	Promote access to <u>early screening</u> , appropriate identification, and early intervention services for at-risk children due to developmental delay, mental/behavioral health issues, parental substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse/neglect, physical disabilities and chronic medical conditions.
IV. E	Promote and ensure <u>safe and healthy living environments</u> for all children and families at home, in the community, and in child care, including: improving nutrition; providing clean water and air; decreasing exposure to tobacco smoke, environmental pollutants, access to firearms, burn and fire dangers; eliminating exposure to domestic violence and child abuse; and increasing the use of bicycle helmets, appropriate vehicle safety restraints, promotion of backyard four-sided pool fencing, working smoke detectors, and safe playgrounds and recreation programs.

IV. F-K SAFE, NURTURING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

IV. F - K Broad Results Statement: Improve Family Functioning: Support Safe, Nurturing Families and Communities

First 5 Contra Costa supports local, state and federal legislation, regulation, court, and public and private business policies that:

Item	Statement
IV. F	Promote healthy, competent and supported children and families through <u>quality parent-child interactions</u> to improve child behavioral functioning, increase the success of parents as the child’s first educator, increase parent and child literacy, reduce parent isolation, promote

¹ The term “medical home” has been defined by the American Academy of Pediatrics as the doctor’s office or clinic where a child is seen consistently for regular health checkups and illness, and where their records are kept, including immunization records. It is one thing to be enrolled in a health insurance program such as MediCal or Healthy Families; it is more important to be enrolled and utilizing a consistent place of service. “Dental home” is a similar term, but refers to the dentist office or clinic where a child’s dental care is consistently provided and regular checkups occur, and where the children’s dental health records are kept. For more information on “medical home” go to www.AAP.org (use search for “medical home docs”) or www.aap.org/advocacy/archives/julymedhome.htm

Item	Statement
	family self sufficiency while meeting the needs of young children, encourage promising practice strategies to keep children in safe nurturing families, and honor the unique needs and strengths of each family.
IV. G	Provide families with access to services to ensure children are safe from parental abuse and neglect, the effects of parental domestic violence, and the effects of parental substance abuse.
IV. H	Promote economic strategies that increase the number of <u>families earning a living wage</u> (including childcare workers), including supporting tax credits (i.e., earned income tax credit and childcare credit), to help families thrive, be stable and self sufficient.
IV. I	Promote <u>family-friendly workplaces</u> by supporting employer policies that are sensitive to and accommodate the cultural and language needs of their employees, and that offer flexible schedules, benefits and services (e.g., childcare, lactation facilities, and parental leave policies for children’s health appointments and teachers-parent conferences, etc.).
IV. J	Provide families with <u>integrated family support services</u> such as in-home support programs, family resource centers, resource and referral services, and that support accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate programs for literacy, adult education, job placement, affordable housing, substance abuse prevention and treatment, and parent education (e.g., parenting skills, child and brain development, and how to access necessary family support services).
IV. K	Promote <u>neighborhood revitalization</u> efforts that increase the capacity of individuals, families, organizations, and communities to support children and families, that co-locate and/or link schools, parks, libraries and the operation of effective family support systems, including – but not limited to – Family Resource Centers, and that increase affordable housing, improve access to essential retail services (e.g. food, shopping) and improve public transportation.

IV. L-N CHILD LEARNING AND READY FOR SCHOOL

IV. L - N Broad Result Statement: Strategic Result Area: Improved Child Development: Children Learning and Ready for School

First 5 Contra Costa supports local, state and federal legislation, regulation, court, and public and private business policies that:

Item	Statement
IV. L	Promote a quality <u>early care and education</u> system that takes into account the social, emotional and cognitive needs of children; that allows all children, including children with special needs, access to accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate early care and

Item	Statement
	education programs; that increases the percentage of quality and accredited providers; and that promotes recruitment, retention, and educational opportunities for a diverse early care and education work force.
IV. M	Promote the development of programs that elevate the <u>quality of the entire early care system</u> including exempt providers.
IV. N	Promote <u>linkages and collaboration</u> among kindergarten, schools, early care, parents, and relevant community organizations to <u>best prepare children for school</u> .

IV. O-T SYSTEMS FOR FAMILIES – INTEGRATED, ACCESSIBLE, AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES

IV. O - T Broad Results Statement: Improved Systems for Families: Integrated, Accessible, and Culturally Appropriate Services.

First 5 Contra Costa supports local, state and federal legislation, regulation, court, and public and private business policies that:

Item	Statement
IV. O	<u>Maximize existing funding</u> and support for programs to allow them to function at their optimal capacity to meet existing needs.
IV. P	Promote the development of <u>multicultural education</u> and public awareness campaigns to increase parents’, caregivers’, elected officials’, and the general public’s knowledge of early childhood issues <u>including, health and safety, community safety, child development, parent-child bonding,</u> parenting practices, and early care and education.
IV. Q	Promote <u>parent education</u> and peer support programs linked to home visitation, family resource centers, and early care programs.
IV. R	Support <u>county wide resource and referral</u> activities that provide parents and caregivers easy access (e.g., website and telephone) to information about existing family support programs.
IV. S	Resist <u>realignment</u> of children’s programs solely for the purpose of budget cuts. If any program is realigned require maintenance of statewide uniform principles, standards and outcomes, and access to certain guaranteed services; provide sufficient funding to support implementation of realigned programs including caseload growth; and maximize local flexibility to enhance access.
IV. T	<u>Integrate new information</u> about promising practices <u>into existing programs</u> in order to <u>sustain and enhance existing programs</u> with a proven track record.