



First 5 San Mateo County is entrusted with the strategic investment of nearly \$7 million public dollars each year specifically earmarked to help children and families in our county succeed. We work on behalf of the more than 53,000 children ages zero to five living here to ensure their every need is met, their families are supported and their future is a priority.

First 5 San Mateo County: Working to Increase Quality Child Care Facilities for Children, Newborn to Age 5



Early learning settings play a critical role in nurturing children’s social, emotional and cognitive development, and are an essential component of any strategy to promote school readiness and success in all aspects of life. In San Mateo County, 71% of children live in families where all parents work; however, there is a severe shortage of child care and early learning programs for these children to attend.

In 2015, child care facilities in San Mateo County had capacity to meet just 68% of the demand for care. By 2025, this number is expected to go down to 62%. Families – already struggling to make ends meet – are spending 31-34% of their net income on child care, and many parents are driving long distances each day to drop their young children off or pick them up from child care facilities.

In San Mateo County, the shortage of quality child care centers is fueled by a number of factors, including:

- Highly competitive real estate market
- Limited financing for construction
- Complicated planning and permitting process

10,789

The number of children impacted by the shortage of child care facilities in San Mateo County in 2015

13,981

The number of children that will be impacted by the shortage of child care facilities in San Mateo County in 2025

69%

of San Mateo County child care providers have waitlists

97%

of full-time infant programs are at capacity

88%

of full-time preschools are at capacity

In the past year alone, four child care sites in San Mateo County were facing closure due to the demand for real estate. This translates into a loss of services for 259 children. While the majority of childcare providers have said that they would consider expanding their services, 55% said that the greatest barrier would be difficulty finding an appropriate location in the competitive real estate market.

As a result of this severe shortage, San Mateo County is missing out on millions of dollars in state funding. Each year, the county turns down \$1 million that would support subsidized care for 4,600 children simply because there is no space for these children within the county's existing child care supply.

Our Impact

First 5 San Mateo County has a strong history of working with other organizations to address the shortage of quality early care and education in San Mateo County. From 2001-2012, we stewarded an Early Learning Facilities Grants program that improved and expanded the number of quality child care and early learning spaces. Funded by First 5 San Mateo and the San Mateo County Human Services Office in partnership with Rebuilding Together Peninsula, the grant resulted in 1,800 new spaces being created for children in 150 centers and family child care homes. In addition, more than 50 child care center renovations were completed in San Mateo County.

In April 2016, we collaborated with First 5 California to award more than \$1.6 million in grants to increase the number of high quality early learning settings for children ages 0-5, including \$1,298,826 to the San Mateo County Office of Education and \$318,328 to the Child Care Coordinating Council of San Mateo County, Inc.

In addition, members of the commission and staff have joined with other public and private leaders to form the San Mateo County Early Care and Education Facilities Task Force. With the completion of an Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment earlier this year, the task force is currently analyzing a variety of strategies to address the child care shortage, including:

- Inclusion of child care in new development
- Redesignating and repurposing existing space
- Removing zoning and permitting barriers
- Securing public financing
- Incorporating child care-friendly policies in city's general plans

Further, First 5 San Mateo County advocated to the City of San Mateo for the inclusion of a child care facility in the new Hillside Terraces development project.

"Quality child care must be part of our civic dialogue to ensure that our families are supported and our communities thrive."

— **Dave Pine**, San Mateo County Supervisor and First 5 San Mateo County Commissioner & **Kitty Lopez**, executive director at First 5 San Mateo County, Daily Journal OP-ED

"For the last one year since we moved to San Carlos we have been driving an extra hour every week to drop/pick up our daughter from daycare. We could really be spending this time with our daughter."

— **parent**, San Carlos, CA

The shortage of quality child care centers is not just an early childhood development issue, but a public infrastructure issue, linked to housing, employment and transportation, and we need all sectors of our community to work together to address it.