

2022 POLICY AGENDA

FOR THE WHOLE CHILD AND FAMILY



First 5 Association of California (First 5) believes that all of California's youngest children deserve to be healthy, safe, and ready to succeed in school and life. Grounded in a whole child / whole family framework that advances equity, prevention strategies and systems coordination, First 5 seeks to build comprehensive and integrated early childhood systems of care, with an intentional focus on prenatal to age 3 as a critical stage of child development.

First 5 focuses on systems change, particularly across sectors, with an intention to shift the conditions that hold problems in place, to achieve meaningful and lasting social change.

First 5 aims to advance state and federal policy frameworks that foster systems of care that proactively support the wellbeing of young children and families; systems that reach those farthest from opportunity, recognizing the disproportionate impacts that systemic racism, COVID-19, lack of economic opportunity, and natural disasters have had, and continue to have, on communities of color and low-income communities. These include:

Policy Priorities



Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)

Mental health supports for young children and their families are vitally important to promoting resilience and social-emotional health and addressing the unique needs of infants and young children experiencing toxic stress and ACEs.



Resilient Families

Family-strengthening programs, like home visiting, improve birth outcomes, promote resilience and reduce parental stress, teach positive parenting techniques, and nurture stable, healthy, loving attachments for infants and their caregivers.



Comprehensive Health & Development

High-quality and accessible developmental and health screenings, and timely connection to early intervention services when needed, improve life-long outcomes for children. Family-centered healthcare services that prioritize prevention are fundamental for young children's healthy development.



Quality Early Learning

High-quality early childhood care and education facilitates social-emotional learning and helps young children build critical early literacy and math skills, setting them on the path for school readiness and long-term academic success.

INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH (IECMH)

- » Increase access to community-based IECMH programs that are prevention-focused, help mitigate trauma, promote resilience, and identify concerns early.
 - » Secure increased investments in the workforce to create a robust network of providers trained in IECMH.
 - » Support investments in the implementation of the new dyadic care Medi-Cal benefit, including technical assistance for local community partners, peer navigators, pediatric health care providers and others.
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RESILIENT FAMILIES

- » Build and expand upon state and local systems that provide family strengthening services rooted in the cultural and linguistic diversity of communities, such as home visiting.
 - » Expand and strengthen the home visiting workforce through additional professional development resources, in coordination with local early childhood systems building efforts, with the goal of ensuring home visitors represent the diversity of California's families.
 - » Increase cross-system coordination to ensure families are offered the most relevant and effective services available in a timely manner.
 - » Increase family economic supports, so that families can provide stable, thriving homes in which to raise children.
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COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- » Improve the physical health, mental health, and overall wellbeing of young children by advancing prevention services, care coordination, screenings, and multi-generational supports through Medi-Cal, including continuous Medi-Cal enrollment for children ages 0 to 5.
 - » Strengthen the systems of early identification and referral to appropriate intervention services for young children.
 - » Reduce racial inequities in maternal and infant health outcomes, including through removing systemic barriers to care for people of color, eliminating systemic racist practices, and increasing culturally relevant services for birthing people.
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QUALITY EARLY LEARNING

- » Stabilize, strengthen, and scale early care and learning opportunities, with a focus on infant and toddler care.
 - » Promote increased access and affordability across the mixed delivery system, workforce support, system strengthening, and equitable access to quality improvement support to promote nurturing relationships between provider/caregivers and child.
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