

**Children and Families Commission
of San Luis Obispo County**

WHAT LIFE FOR OUR CHILDREN?

FIRST 5 SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2015
POLICY PLATFORM**

*Let us put our heads together,
and see what life we shall make for our children.*
Sitting Bull



Vision Statement

Children in San Luis Obispo County thrive in nurturing, respectful environments, and enter school healthy and ready to learn.

Mission Statement

The Children and Families Commission of San Luis Obispo County allocates funds and advocates for quality programs and services, supporting children, prenatal to age 5, to ensure that every child is healthy and ready to learn in school.

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2015

POLICY PLATFORM

Ten years into its work the Children and Families Commission of San Luis Obispo (SLO) County (a.k.a. First 5 SLO County) has taken the time to look forward. Through a structured process of community-based planning the Commission has reassessed its mission and its work.

The Strategic Plan 2011-15, *What Life for Our Children?*, represents an evolving vision for an integrated system of advocacy and activity in the Commission's five Initiatives over the next five years aimed at serving our county's children, ages 0 to 5 years, and their families. The five Initiatives are: Health Initiative; Oral Health Initiative; Perinatal Substance Abuse Prevention Initiative; Special Needs Initiative; and School Readiness Initiative.

The Vision Statement of First 5 SLO County is a powerful illustration of the Commission's commitment to the primary importance of young children in our community. First 5 SLO County exists to promote an environment that is *nurturing* and *respectful* of all children. These are profound words. They reflect the dignity of each child. They recognize the right to respect that is each child's birthright. They acknowledge the critical importance of not only providing for children's basic needs, but also for supporting and encouraging a child's complete development: physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, and emotional. The Commission believes that serving children is not enough. We must also recognize that children are individual human beings with something to offer. They deserve to be treated as the assets they are.

The Children and Families Commission of SLO County is committed to advocating for children, ages 0-5, and their families. As a group and as individuals the Commissioners proactively speak for children as a part of their professional and personal lives. But, they are not the only members of First 5 who advocate for young children in SLO County.

In addition to continuing their current roles (e.g., contract development and management, data collection and reporting, and meeting First 5 California/other statewide requirements), First 5 SLO County staff are envisioned to take a greater, more direct, and proactive role in being catalysts for accomplishing the First 5 vision. Toward this end staff may conduct

efforts in the areas of civic and community engagement, policy advocacy, facilitation of collaborative partnerships, fund development and grant writing, new program design and implementation, and marketing and promotional efforts that promote our agenda.

In addition to continuing to engage in formal and informal advocacy, the Commission has developed a Policy Platform. The Policy Platform represents the Commission's positions on selected policy issues. It is the Commission's intention to advocate for children, ages 0-5, and their primary importance in our community, and to provide leadership to, build consensus with, and give support to its partners and other organizations and individuals in SLO County to encourage and support policies that benefit children, ages 0-5, and their families on the local, state, and national levels.

The First 5 SLO County Policy Platform consists of two parts. The first part concerns First 5 SLO County's intention to develop a San Luis Obispo County Young Children's Bill of Rights, and the second part is made up of specific advocacy and policy activities tied to the Commission's five Initiatives.

I. SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY YOUNG CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS

The Young Children's Bill of Rights will outline specific rights due to children, 0-5, based on their age and developmental status that honor their value to the community and their dignity as fellow individual human beings. This Bill of Rights is to be developed in collaboration with local youth-serving partners, and, of course, with input from families and from youth themselves.

The purposes of this effort are fivefold:

- Raise awareness of the fundamental importance of children, ages 0-5, in our community.
- Summarize the Commission's aspirations for our children.
- Delineate essential rights that belong to children.
- Stress the importance of all aspects of development: physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, and emotional.
- Provide a foundation for communitywide advocacy for our children.

II. ADVOCACY AND POLICY IN THE COMMISSION'S INITIATIVES

The second part of the First 5 SLO County Policy Platform is specific local policy objectives that support the five Commission Initiatives. The policy activities are listed by Initiative and by strategy. Many of these activities came directly from the recommendations of the Community Planning Groups. Others come from the ongoing work of the Commission and its partners. The activities are grouped by Initiative and by strategy.

Inclusion in the Policy Platform does not mean a policy issue or program area it represents will be or must be funded by First 5 SLO County, nor does it mean that we will address every issue in the Platform. Nor is the Platform exhaustive; that is, not all policy issues relevant to our Strategic Plan are listed. Indeed, new issues may emerge that have implications for our agenda, and the staff and Commissioners are empowered to meet emerging needs for advocacy and policy work.

The Policy Platform, like the entire Strategic Plan, is a living document. It will evolve year to year to fit the interests and trends of the Commission in carrying out its Mission, and to meet the needs of the children of San Luis Obispo County.

A. HEALTH INITIATIVE

Goal

Children in SLO County are healthy and fit

Strategies

Connecting Children with Health Care: *Activities that work to ensure that all children in the county receive health care in existing programs such as Medi-Cal and from existing providers such as CHC.*

Health Coverage Outreach, Enrollment, Retention, Utilization: *Activities that work to identify, enroll, and retain children in existing health insurance options such as Medi-Cal.*

Health Promotion and Primary Prevention: *Activities that work to promote a healthy lifestyle for children, including exercise and good nutrition.*

Cultural Competency: *Needs to be infused throughout all Commission activities.*

Prioritized Advocacy and Policy Activities by Strategy

Connecting Children with Health Care

- 1) Advocate for and support easy access policies from safety-net providers to maximize the number of uninsured or underinsured children who receive needed health care according to existing provider policies.

Connecting Children with Health Care

Health Coverage Outreach, Enrollment, Retention, Utilization

- 2)* Advocate for and support policies for Family Resource Centers and other organizations working with children, 0-5, to provide training to Family Advocates and other line staff in the navigation of children's health care systems.

* Denotes the two highest priority Advocacy and Policy activities.

- 3) Advocate for and support policies by providers to help children establish eligibility for public health care programs (e.g., physician's offices to routinely complete PM160 [Pink Form]).

Health Promotion and Primary Prevention

- 4)* Advocate for and support broad-based social norm change policies in regards to children's physical fitness and proper nutrition (e.g., availability of soda, healthy snacks, and organized physical activities)
- 5) Advocate for and support efforts by organizations that work with children, 0-5, to establish policies on wellness, including physical activity and good nutrition.

B. ORAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Goal

Children in SLO County have good oral health

Strategies

Community Coordination and Planning: *Activities that promote multidisciplinary collaboration (e.g., coordinating activities, capacity building, and decision making).*

Health Promotion and Primary Prevention: *Activities that work to promote good oral hygiene and to prevent dental disease.*

Oral Health Care: *Activities that work to ensure that all children in the county receive preventive and restorative oral health care.*

Screening and Secondary Prevention/Early Intervention: *Activities that provide early identification of and referrals and/or intervention for oral-health issues.*

Cultural Competency: *Needs to be infused throughout all Commission activities.*

Advocacy and Policy Strategies and Prioritized Activities

Community Coordination and Planning

- 1)* Maintain and support public and policymaker awareness of the importance of access to dental care as a public policy issue.

Health Promotion and Primary Prevention

- 2) Encourage and support communities and/or water districts to fluoridate.

* Denotes the two highest priority Advocacy and Policy activities.

- 3) Encourage and support all health care providers and social service, education, and public health programs to include oral health education and anticipatory guidance in information provided to parents of young children.

Oral Health Care

- 4)* Advocate for and support increased participation in Medi-Cal and Healthy Families by local dentists.
- 5) Advocate for and support increased funding for publicly supported dental coverage.
- 6) Encourage and support safety-net dental clinics to provide basic dental services to high-risk children, ages 0-5.
- 7) Using American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines encourage and support all health care providers to conduct comprehensive dental assessments at well-child visits and refer children to a dental home.

Screening and Secondary Prevention/Early Intervention

- 8) Encourage and support public health programs to include dental screenings and referral services as part of the package of services provided to high-risk clients.

C. PERINATAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION INITIATIVE

Goal

Children in SLO County are born free of exposure to alcohol, tobacco, and/or other drugs

Strategies

Health Promotion and Primary Prevention: *Activities that work to promote a substance-free pregnancy for women in SLO County.*

Screening and Brief Intervention: *Activities that work to identify women who are using substances during pregnancy and to intervene to help them stop doing so.*

Cultural Competency: *Needs to be infused throughout all Commission activities.*

Advocacy and Policy Strategies and Prioritized Activities

Health Promotion and Primary Prevention

- 1) Advocate for and support broad-based social norm change policies in regards to the effects on children of substance use during pregnancy.
- 2) Advocate for and support workplace policies regarding substance use during pregnancy.

* Denotes the two highest priority Advocacy and Policy activities (and ties).

- 3)* Advocate for and support birth and parenting education programs to include a module on the effects on children of substance use during pregnancy.

Screening and Brief Intervention

- 4) Advocate for and support adoption of policy by local medical professional organizations (e.g., hospitals, SLO Medical Association) in support of universal screening of and intervention in substance use during pregnancy.
- 5)* Advocate for and support adoption of policy by local medical providers in support of universal screening of and education in substance use during pregnancy.

D. SPECIAL NEEDS INITIATIVE

Goal

Children in SLO County are screened early for special needs, and receive the individual treatment and family support they need

Strategies

Resources and Support: *Activities that work to provide education and support to parents of children with special needs.*

Screening and Secondary Prevention/Early Intervention: *Activities that provide assessment, treatment, and referrals for children, ages 0-5, with special needs.*

Cultural Competency: *Needs to be infused throughout all Commission activities.*

Advocacy and Policy Strategies and Prioritized Activities

Resources and Support

- 1)* Advocate for and support policies for all youth-serving agencies and organizations regarding inclusion of special needs children.
- 2)* Advocate for and support policies for all youth-serving agencies and organizations regarding referral process for parents of children with special needs.

Screening and Secondary Prevention/Early Intervention

- 3)* Advocate for and support use of a consistent screening tool for all youth-serving agencies and organizations.
- 4) Advocate for and support consistent policies for all youth-serving agencies and organizations regarding the referral of children screened for special needs.

* Denotes the two highest priority Advocacy and Policy activities (and ties).

- 5) Advocate for all youth-serving agencies to focus on all aspects of child development, including physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, and emotional.

E. SCHOOL READINESS INITIATIVE

Goal

Children in SLO County are ready for school, and schools are ready for children

Strategies

Early Care and Education: *Activities that work to provide quality childcare, preschool, or other ECE service.*

Health and Social Services: *Activities that improve child health or provide supportive services.*

Parenting/Family Support: *Activities that provide resources, support, or education that improve family functioning, literacy, self-sufficiency, and/or stability.*

Schools' Capacity: *Activities that increase a school's readiness for children or that improve the educational system.*

Cultural Competency: *Needs to be infused throughout all Commission activities.*

Advocacy and Policy Strategies and Prioritized Activities

Early Care and Education

- 1)* Advocate for and support increased efforts to ensure quality ECE (e.g., continuing education and professional development, accreditation, and policy development).
- 2)* Advocate for and support universal preschool.
- 3) Advocate for and support full-day infant/toddler and preschool programs.

Health and Social Services

- 4) Advocate for and support policies for childcare providers, preschools, and schools to provide training to Family Advocates and other line staff in the navigation of children's health care systems.
- 5) Advocate for and support policies by childcare providers, preschools, and schools to establish policies on wellness, including physical activity and good nutrition.
- 6) Advocate for positive, supportive, and respectful interactions with children by parents, providers, and the community from pregnancy on. Support trainings such

* Denotes the four highest priority Policy & Advocacy activities (and ties).

as the Pyramid Model from the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, that promote nurturing and responsive relationships for all children, 0-5, as well as targeted social and emotional support for children who are at risk.

Parenting/Family Support

- 7)* Advocate for and support infusion of SR-related topics (e.g., family literacy) into birthing and parenting education curricula.
- 8)* Advocate for and support expansion of services for children, ages 0-5, in existing Family Resource Centers.
- 9)* Advocate for and support early literacy programs targeting children, ages 0-5, and their parents.

Schools' Capacity

- 10) Advocate for and support policies in schools that promote communication and coordination with local ECE providers.
- 11) Advocate for and support a countywide discussion of the purpose of public education.