



First 5 Fresno County

2020-2025 DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

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Introduction

At First 5 Fresno County we believe that children thrive when their families thrive. This plan was shaped by the voices of Fresno County families and community partners. It builds on more than two decades of lifting up young children by investing in their families, neighborhoods and the system of services that make up our community. Because when children are healthy, loved and nurtured, we all thrive.



First 5 Fresno County Background

History

In 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10, increasing the state's tax on tobacco products and creating an initiative called "The Children and Families Act." The legislation established First 5 (the California Children and Families Commission), charged with implementing an integrated system of services to support the early development of children from the prenatal stage to five years of age, so they are ready to succeed in school and life. Each California county formed a First 5 – and so was born First 5 Fresno County (F5FC).

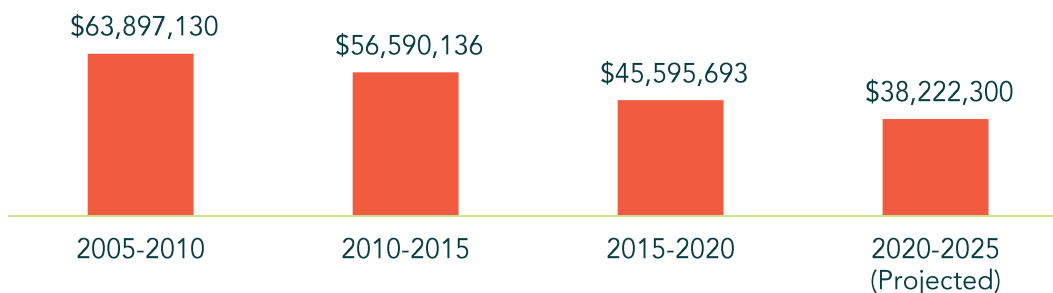
Investments

First 5 Fresno County has invested more than \$300 million in local programs and services for young children and their families over the last 20 years. We continue to partner with the community to fill gaps in the early childhood system of services and raise up the needs of young children, so that families have access to the community-based supports they need. While we will continue to fund an effective and culturally responsive services for families, we will also look ahead to a more sustainable, coordinating role in the early childhood system of care.

Evolving Focus

Proposition 10 revenue has declined as tobacco consumption wanes and is expected to continue to decline by approximately 3-4% per year. Yet, the needs of our families continue to surpass the necessary funding to support them.

Decline in Proposition 10 Revenue by Period



In order to adjust to our new fiscal reality, we have shifted our efforts over time to focus on systems: the integration of all people, policies and places working for our children and families. Strengthening systems helps families thrive and makes each of our Proposition 10 dollars go further. Over these next five years, we will continue investing with a primary focus on early childhood system coordination and sustainability, consistent with our other First 5 counterparts throughout California.

Our 2013-2020 Strategic Plan emphasized preparing children to read at grade level by the 3rd grade. In this spirit, we partnered with the community on initiatives such as the Birth to Third Grade Challenge (B-3), which engaged school districts to understand their role in supporting children in their first five years of life. B-3 began with five school districts and grew to include government, education, housing, justice, and community organizations countywide.

These community partnerships underscored the reality that, in order to have the greatest impact on children and families, we must work together. What started as a focus on 3rd grade reading evolved into adopting the community's Help Me Grow Fresno County Strategic Plan, to create a coordinated system of all the services and assistance available to families in Fresno County and support the healthiest development of young children.



We are invested in a number of crucial efforts and initiatives with an aim to leverage, sustain, and increase our impact. The following areas of investment¹ are examples of how we have embraced our unique role as a county-wide convener and coordinator in the early childhood service system. Moving forward, we are committed to these investments, and to exploring innovative and collaborative ways to improve how our systems operate.

Lighthouse for Children

An innovative community hub for Fresno County families and early childhood professionals offering services, resources and opportunities to transform the first five years of a child's life. The only facility of its kind in the county.

African American Infant Mortality Prevention

Community-driven pilot projects and partnerships to tackle the high rates of infant mortality among the African American community in Fresno County.

Help Me Grow Fresno County

A coordinated system of services and assistance available to families to support the healthiest development of young children.

Quality Counts California

A state-wide Quality Rating and Improvement System providing support for families and early childhood educators to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs.

Direct Service Programs

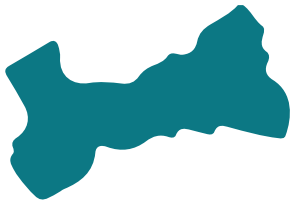
Community-based partnerships to provide home visitation, parent-child developmental learning groups, family literacy, parenting education, mentorship and other health, early learning, and direct supports to families across the county.

Investment Spotlight: Blue Ribbon Equity Panel

In response to the long-standing inequities facing Fresno County African American families, we partnered with the community to create a Blue Ribbon Equity Panel that brings awareness and action to address larger societal issues that historically have led to African American infant mortality. The work of this panel shapes our underlying approach to community investments, as we seek to lift up and address the challenges unique to African American families, while applying what we learn toward the way we serve all our families.

¹ For more details on the goals, strategies, and results of these investments, see the reports in the attached appendices

Snapshot of Fresno County



Of the **971,616** residents in Fresno County, **8%** are children under five.

37%

Families with children under 5 living in poverty

\$48,730

Median household income

22%

Food insecure children that are likely ineligible for

Mothers who received early prenatal care



88%

Children who receive care within a medical home



37%

People delayed or had difficulty obtaining health care



9%

Percent of children born with a low birthweight



8%

Substantiated child abuse rate



8 (per 1,000 children)

Children with two or more adverse experiences



18%

Frequent mental distress (adults)



13%

57% of adults and **55%** of children in Fresno County who need behavioral or mental health services receive them.

Infant mortality rate **7**

Number of all infant deaths (within 1 year), per 1,000 live births.

Preterm birth rate **10%**

Percentage of births with less than 37 weeks of completed gestation

3 and 4 year olds who attend preschool: **33%**



3rd graders reading at grade level: **47%**



Sources: Health Fresno County; County Health Rankings; 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Children Now, 2016-17 California County; Fresno Cradle to Career Partnership 2018 Annual Report; Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health

Strategic Planning Process

The strategies included in this plan are meant to serve as a north-star and roadmap for our efforts moving forward. This Strategic Plan is inspired by parents and the community, and we are committed to honoring their voices.

We view this plan as an opportunity to express our values as an organization and outline our investment priorities for the future. On an annual basis, First 5 Fresno County will review and assess our Strategic Plan to ensure its continued alignment with community priorities and investments.

Gathering Information

Every First 5 commission is required to adopt a Strategic Plan to guide local decision-making for the purpose of strengthening families and improving outcomes for young children in its county.

With the end of our 2013-2020 Strategic Plan in sight, our local commission took an unconventional approach to developing this 2020-2025 plan. In February 2018, we were presented with the opportunity to partner with the Fresno County Cradle to Career Partnership, the Central Valley Community Foundation, Fresno County Superintendent of Schools and Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission to develop a community agenda called the Preconception to Age 5 Blueprint for Funding and Advocacy (Blueprint).

The development of the Blueprint included an analysis of all current funding for children and families in Fresno County and engaged community stakeholders (including parents and professionals) to guide investments impacting children and families across the county.

This Strategic Plan serves as the foundation for the Blueprint and is rooted in the community input we received from stakeholders, over 60% of whom were parents or primary caregivers. Throughout this process, we reached out to our community directly to learn about the most pressing and difficult challenges facing young children and their families.



We were able to identify many key challenges facing families with young children in Fresno County. **These priorities are the heart of our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan²:**

Parents have trouble accessing high quality childcare and early education services for their young children.	Families face many barriers accessing physical, mental, and behavioral health care services.	
	Parents are in need of support to build their understanding of early childhood development.	Families face a number of economic insecurities in their daily lives.
	Many families struggle to find safe community spaces and healthy food options for their children.	
Parents need more support navigating the early childhood service system and ensuring services meet their complex needs.		

Using what we learned from our community members as a guide, we worked to shape our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan around addressing these key challenges in responsive and innovative ways.

This plan was also designed to complement existing community efforts addressing the needs of children and families in Fresno County. Using this plan as a guide, we will advance the priority areas of the Blueprint, Help Me Grow Strategic Plan, First 5 Fresno County Rural Needs Assessment, the African American Infant Mortality in Fresno County report, the Blue Ribbon Equity Panel report, Quality Counts California standards, the Breastfeeding Efforts Needs Assessment, and similar community agendas (see appendices).



² For more detail on these key challenges, and others, please see the Community Engagement Findings Report in Appendix A.

Strategic Planning Framework

First 5 Fresno County's main goal, above all else, is helping our families thrive. In everything we do, we commit to honoring and supporting our families. Our vision, mission, and values reflect this commitment, and our investment areas and strategies are designed to convert our commitment into action.

Vision. We envision a future where all children and their families are healthy, loved, and nurtured.

Mission. We run after this vision by partnering with our community to create a seamless system of quality, accessible services that support the well-being of every child and family.

Values. Every aspect of our work is guided by our underlying beliefs and commitments.



We believe that...

- Children develop in the context of their families and communities
- Every person has innate dignity and worth
- Families and communities are the ultimate experts on their needs
- Relationships are at the heart of strong systems and families
- We are a piece, not the whole, of the solution

And so we will...

- Engage and amplify the voices of families and communities
- Be culturally responsive, respectful, honest, fair, and ethical
- Build intentional, rather than transactional, relationships
- Lift up the needs of our most underserved children and families including, but not limited to: undocumented individuals, dual language learners, rural families, single parents, children with special needs, and low-income households
- Prioritize sustainable, innovative solutions that leverage and build on local strengths, wisdom, and resources
- Hold ourselves and our partners to the highest standards of quality

Investment Areas

Guided by our values and the community engagement process, we work toward our mission of a seamless system of quality, accessible services by investing in families, communities and systems. Each of these areas are fundamentally related and represent key elements of a child's life essential to their wellbeing.

Families . Our primary goal, above all else, is helping families thrive across the county. To us, this looks like every family having the resources they need to support their child's development, so children grow up ready to succeed in school and in life.

Communities . Families flourish in safe, stable, and engaged neighborhoods. Strong communities provide the social support and environment needed to give children the best start possible.

Systems . Any successful approach to addressing the key challenges facing Fresno County families will require a systemic change. We see the system as the people, policies, and places representing each agency, organization, and business that serves Fresno County families. From private businesses to community-based agencies, libraries to law enforcement, schools to hospitals, we all can make things work better for families.



Strategies



Communication

We will pursue communication strategies to highlight the importance of early childhood development, and to ensure that young children and their families are connected to the services they need.



Advocacy

We will engage with decision-makers at all levels to promote family-centered policies that improve the well-being of children.



Collaboration

We will strengthen connections and information-sharing between community partners in all sectors, to ensure complimentary rather than duplicative service delivery.



Skill-Building

We will support professionals and parents to ensure they have the knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively care for young children.



Innovation & Learning

We will seek out innovative and reflective approaches to confront persistent community challenges.

Indicators of Progress

As one piece of the early childhood system in Fresno County, we understand that our investments cannot be made or measured in a vacuum. We are dependent upon our partners to collectively meet the needs of families. We will look to community-developed performance measures and local data to track progress at the county level. Our strategies moving forward are designed to help move the needle in these crucial areas, and we will be tracking them closely along the way.

Example indicators include:

- ✓ Families with children under 5 living in poverty
- ✓ Food insecurity
- ✓ Infant mortality rate
- ✓ Preterm birth rate
- ✓ Mothers receiving early prenatal care
- ✓ Children who receive care in a medical home
- ✓ 3 and 4 year olds who attend preschool
- ✓ 3rd graders reading at grade level
- ✓ Violent crime rate
- ✓ Substantiated child abuse rate
- ✓ Children with two or more adverse experiences
- ✓ Children who have received a standardized developmental screening
- ✓ Children who are successfully referred or linked to services as a result of screening and assessment
- ✓ Children receiving IDEA early intervention services

Acknowledgements

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- Kari Gilbert, Vice Chair
- Hugo Morales, Treasurer/Secretary
- Dawan Utecht
- Shantay Davies-Balch

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Other Partners

- Harder+Company Community Research
- Central Valley Community Foundation
- Fresno County Cradle to Career Partnership
- Fresno County Superintendent of Schools
- Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission



Appendices

Appendix A: Community Engagement Key Findings Report

Appendix B: Help Me Grow Fresno County Strategic Plan

Appendix C: African American Infant Mortality Report

Appendix D: Fresno County Rural Needs Assessment

Appendix E: School Readiness Longitudinal Study

Appendix F: Blue Ribbon Equity Panel Report

Appendix G: Breastfeeding Needs Assessment