



CALIFORNIA
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
FOUNDATION

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

**OUR FOCUS, OUR FUTURE
2025-2030**





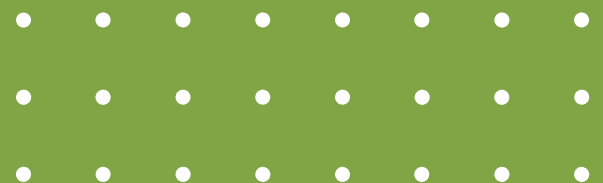
WHO WE ARE

Vision

California's youngest children and their families are healthy, happy, and have all they need to thrive in school and life.

Purpose

First 5 Association of California leads collective learning, transformative policy development, and necessary advocacy to strengthen the early childhood system for California's children and families.



CORE VALUES



We are guided by a set of core values which inform the work we do every single day.

These reflect a set of ethics and principles we see in ourselves, as we advance our purpose and commitment to California's youngest children and their families.



STEADFAST

We reliably move toward our goals while navigating changing contexts.



(COM)PASSION

We are intensely passionate about our work and we show up with empathy, thoughtfulness, and curiosity.



ROOTED IN DIVERSITY

Everything we do is human-centered, deeply and firmly guided by multiple perspectives – especially perspectives that are currently and historically marginalized.



VISIONARY ACTION

We are proactive trailblazers who see the big picture and innovate solutions for the future.

Recognizing the first five years of life set the foundation for human development, in 1998, California voters approved Proposition 10.

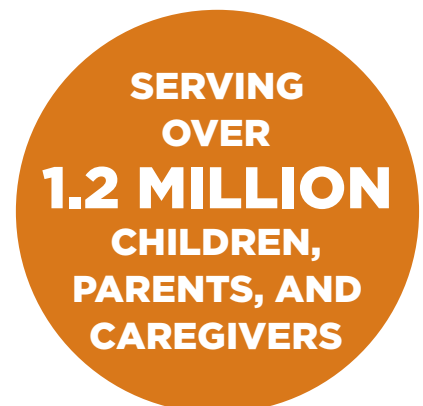
Proposition 10 created an integrated, comprehensive, and collaborative system of information and services focused on early childhood development, with an emphasis on local decision-making.

This system is realized through a state First 5 California Commission and local “First 5 Commissions” in each of California’s 58 counties which collectively serve over 1.2 million children, parents, and caregivers every year.

Together, these First 5 Commissions represent the only statewide network of organizations with the sole focus on the comprehensive health and well-being of California’s children prenatal to age five.

First 5 Association was created in 2000 as a membership and advocacy organization to uplift the voices and experiences of California’s First 5 Network and the local families and young children they serve. The Association bridges local family and child experiences to policy change and implementation while supporting and strengthening the First 5 network.

First 5 Association’s primary audiences include the 58 county First 5 Commissions, federal, state, and local public officials; child policy advocates and thought leaders; and investors in early childhood development.



COMMITMENTS



We connect and leverage the 58 county First 5 Network to the early childhood and family ecosystem by seeking out, building, and nurturing relationships in service of California’s children and families.

We improve our systems by embedding race, equity, diversity, and inclusion (REDI) principles in all aspects of our work, both internally and externally.

We are guided by the voices, power, and expertise of the rich tapestry of the families, cultures, and communities of California.

We prioritize children and families who are currently, historically, and strategically excluded and face disproportionate impacts due to systemic racism, wealth inequality, and natural disasters. Specifically, we prioritize Black and Indigenous communities, communities of color, communities with high wealth disparity, rural communities, and communities with low access to child and family services.

GOAL AREAS



1. Early Childhood and Family Policy

First 5 Association works to advance state and federal public policies and funding that support California's young children and families. Our policy work is informed by local communities and local First 5 Commissions and is grounded in a whole child/whole family lens.

Our goal is to have public policies and investments in place that center equity, prevention, systems building, and coordination to build a comprehensive and integrated early childhood systems of care. Specific areas of policy focus include:



Economically Secure Families: Supporting families' basic needs. Improving the economic conditions of families with young children. Closing income and wealth gaps in California to promote the health and well-being of children and their families.



Comprehensive Health & Development: Improving the physical health, mental health, and well-being of young children. Strengthening the systems of early identification and referral. Addressing racial inequities in maternal and infant health. Reducing exposure to trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences.



Early Care and Education: Increasing access to affordable, high quality child care and early learning programs. Supporting the child care and early care and education workforce, inclusive of equitable and competitive compensation.

2. First 5 County Network and Early Childhood System

California's 58 county First 5 Commissions represent the only statewide network solely focused on the comprehensive health and well-being of the state's youngest children.

Our goal is that the First 5 County Network is thriving and its members are essential leaders, conveners, builders, innovators, and local implementers of California's early childhood system of care.

This ensures that the First 5 County Network continues to provide foundational infrastructure and local early childhood leadership in every community in California, and realizes increased opportunities and improved outcomes for our youngest children and their families.

3. Leadership Development and Learning

First 5 Association develops and implements comprehensive leadership development programs and learning opportunities for members of the First 5 Network, the early childhood field, and other sector leaders.

Our goal is to have more leaders in California who prioritize the health and well-being of young children and their families—and have the knowledge, tools, and experiences to create sustained change.





Policy Research and Development

We research and develop public policies to improve early childhood systems in California. Our work is grounded in the experience of local First 5s and California's communities. Our policy and funding solutions are innovative, actionable, and meaningful.



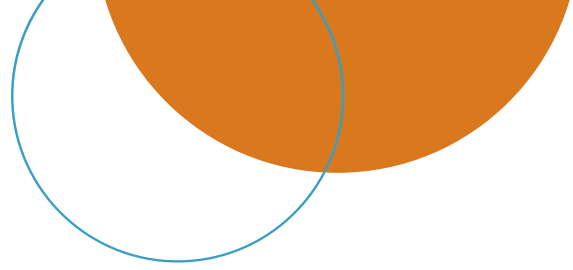
Government Affairs and Advocacy

We engage in sustained state and federal policy and funding advocacy to advance our policy and systems change priorities and promote the First 5 Network. This includes advocating for policies we develop and effective administration and implementation of existing policies. We also support policies advanced by our partners through collaboration in coalition efforts and responsive advocacy on legislative and budget proposals from the field. We ensure our advocacy efforts are informed by, and coordinated with, local First 5s and other local leaders.



Relationships and Influence

We cultivate and nurture key strategic relationships with local and statewide organizations, advocates, state agencies, and officials in order to advance our policy and systems change priorities. This includes engaging and educating public officials and candidates who seek public office.



Leadership Development and Learning Opportunities

We provide training and learning opportunities to California's First 5 staff and early childhood leaders to build their knowledge, skills, and capacity to lead on early childhood issues.



First 5 Network Support

We provide strategic support to the 58 county First 5 Network through statewide advocacy efforts; staff orientation, peer exchanges and peer support; and dissemination of information, best practices and other relevant resources. We also recognize that small and rural counties often face distinct challenges that require additional support. We provide value-added contract support to First 5 Commissions that align with our purpose, capabilities, and capacity.



Strategic Communications

We communicate our policy and systems change goals to our primary audiences and reinforce First 5's leadership role in California's early childhood system of care. We bring context to our communications by addressing principles of race, equity, and the "why" that drive our positions.

THEORY OF CHANGE

