



## **FY 2010 – 2015 Public Policy Agenda**

To achieve large scale and lasting change in the lives of children, families and communities, First 5 LA must proactively seek public policy change. First 5 LA will use its unique role to build support for public policies that benefit children prenatal through age 5 and their families throughout Los Angeles County. Through collaboration with stakeholders, local experts and the leadership of Commissioners, First 5 LA will contribute to positive change for children and families. This work highlights that First 5 LA is more than a public foundation; it is an advocacy organization for children.

### **Background**

In June 2009, First 5 LA's Board of Commissioners adopted a strategic plan to guide its work through June 2015. This plan, "Strengthening Families and Communities in L.A. County", focuses the Commission's work around four goals:

- Children are born healthy
- Children maintain a healthy weight
- Children are safe from abuse and neglect
- Children are ready for kindergarten

To pursue these goals, the Commission will utilize a two-pronged approach, engaging in both place-based and countywide efforts to strengthen families and communities. Public policy is one of the strategies highlighted in the strategic plan's countywide approach and operates in close tandem with other countywide strategies including: systems integration, data systems integration, workforce development and public education. Thus, as part of a comprehensive countywide strategy, the public policy agenda offered below is intended to benefit children across the county in addition to those in First 5 LA's targeted geographical areas.

First 5 LA's FY 2009-2015 Strategic Plan acknowledges public policy as a key countywide strategy to help achieve the Commission's four strategic plan goals and related outcomes. Public policy change can play a critical role in sustaining improvements in outcomes for families and communities over time.

Following the adoption of the FY 2009-2015 Strategic Plan, First 5 LA staff initiated an intensive internal and external planning process to identify and focus the Commission's public policy work over the next five years.

Internal planning included a review of the Commission's FY 2007-2009 Public Policy Agenda which involved assessing progress made to date on the agenda, significant

input and consultation with Commissioners and the Commission's policy liaisons, and participating in inter-departmental planning and information exchanges. External planning and public engagement included the First 5 LA Policy Roundtables, a comprehensive policy landscape and literature review, as well as consultation with county officials, other funders, policy experts and grantees. The planning was also informed by national trends, actions in other First 5 Commissions and states, research on the impact of policies related to prenatal to 5 year olds, and First 5 LA's experience as a strategic funder and advocate.

The FY 2010-2015 Public Policy Agenda is designed to build upon the FY 2007-2009 Public Policy Agenda and lessons learned, support the FY 2009-2015 Strategic Plan goals and outcomes, coordinate with other countywide strategies and be responsive to community and stakeholder input, research and trend analysis findings.

### **Selection Criteria**

The attached FY 2010-2015 Public Policy Agenda lays forth 10 policy goals, which support the Strategic Plan's four goals and their related intermediate outcomes. Within each of the 10 goals, specific *policy opportunities* have been identified, where research and analysis suggests action by the Commission, its partners and/or grantees has the potential to result in meaningful advancements for children and their families in L.A. County.

The following criteria were used to select the goals and identify the policy opportunities to be included in the public policy agenda:

- Alignment: Aligns with FY 2009-2015 Strategic Plan goals and outcomes and supports First 5 LA current and planned investments.
- Impact: Demonstrates potential for significant educational, social, health and/or economic benefits for large numbers of children and families.
- Timeliness: Represents an urgent need and/or current window of opportunity for action.
- Feasibility: Potential exists for success in this policy area.
- Prevention Approach: Supports the Commission's focus on prevention and early intervention.
- Value Added: First 5 LA can make a difference in the success of the effort through its contribution.

The 10 public policy goals and supporting policy opportunities have been selected based on these criteria and present a balanced and diverse portfolio of efforts which contains high risk and low risk items, as well as a mix of long, medium and short term time horizons for completion. They are also balanced to ensure inclusion of public policy efforts to address each of the strategic plan goals.

An additional use of the selection criteria above will be to guide staff and the Commission in assessing any additional policy opportunities that may arise within these 10 goals during the course of the strategic plan.

As in the past, the Commission's role in each of the chosen policy goals will range

from “leader” to “partner” to “active participant”, depending upon the existence of other leadership and the value-added of First 5 LA’s voice in the particular effort. Because policy opportunities within each policy goal vary on these criteria, it is not possible to succinctly convey the Commission’s role for each of the 10 goals in this document. As in the past, it is anticipated that many of these efforts will benefit from an “active participant” role; First 5 LA need not take the leadership mantle on most of the goals.

It is also important to acknowledge that at least eight of the ten policy goals are already supported by Commission investments through policy-advocacy grants or initiatives that incorporate a policy aspect. These investments form a base of support from which staff and Commissioners can work on the issues.

### **First 5 LA’s Public Policy Activities**

The Commission plays an important role in the public policy arena. The knowledge, expertise, professional positions and civic leadership status represented by the Commissioners themselves are valuable resources to bring to bear in achieving First 5 LA’s public policy goals. The research, advocacy, policy development and public education capabilities within the organization add to the wealth of intellectual capital and resources that the Commission brings to the table, beyond its grant-making function.

Policy change will only be accomplished through the closely interconnected efforts and multiple talents within the organization who work in close collaboration with a variety of external stakeholders and grantees. The coordination of efforts with other countywide strategies, including public education, systems integration and the research agenda will enhance First 5 LA’s effectiveness in achieving its policy goals. The Commission’s public policy efforts will be pursued through the following activities:

- ❖ **Policy Development:** Research and analysis of issues, proposals, and legislation; environmental assessments of the policy landscape; collection of original policy research; and formulation of policy recommendations and positions. Convening and consulting experts and grantees as well as engagement in coalitions and task forces will inform this work.
- ❖ **Issue Education:** Efforts to build public will among key stakeholders and the general public would include conducting issue education campaigns; sponsoring forums, trainings and policy conferences; publishing white papers, policy briefs and fact sheets; and collecting and sharing research to document the need for policy change.
- ❖ **Advocacy:** Convening and consulting stakeholders to collaborate on advocacy strategies; creating media visibility for policy positions; engaging grantees in issue education; direct communications with policymakers; and promoting leadership development in advocacy in our targeted communities as well as at the countywide levels.

- ❖ **Public Policy Grantmaking:** Funding to support policy goals, including funding for: coalitions, projects to identify policy solutions, regional or local campaigns to build support for the Policy Agenda goals, professional advocates, leadership development in policy and advocacy, efforts to build media visibility on problems and potential solutions, and research to inform and create movement towards policy change related to the 10 policy goals.
- ❖ **Collaboration:** First 5 LA recognizes the critical role partnerships and coalitions play in advancing our policy goals and improving systems. As such, First 5 LA will identify and actively participate in existing collaborations and seek out new and expanded partnerships and relationships with County agencies, other funders, nonprofits and community-based organizations.

It is anticipated that much of the work to implement this agenda will require continued effort beyond 2015. The necessity of a long-term commitment is confirmed by an extensive literature review, which indicated that funders should allow 5 to 10 years of advocacy work to see public policy change.

## **FY 2010 – 2015 Public Policy Agenda:** **Policy Goals and Related Policy Opportunities**

*First 5 LA will advocate for the following ten policy goals. The bulleted items below each policy goal are specific “policy opportunities” First 5 LA will pursue towards achieving that policy goal.*

### **Promote Comprehensive, Affordable Health Insurance for All**

*Policy opportunities include:*

- Health care reform legislation that provides children and families improved access to comprehensive, affordable, quality care, including preventive services.
- Protection and extension of State Children’s Health Insurance Program to at least 2019.
- Restoration of state funding for medical coverage and services for children and pregnant women, including but not limited to:
  - Outreach to enroll children within hard-to-reach populations; and
  - Dental coverage for pregnant women and 0-5 population.
- Automatic insurance enrollment at hospitals for all newborns.
- Adequate Medi-Cal coverage and reimbursement rates for key services, including but not limited to:
  - Mental health screenings and referrals by primary care providers; and
  - Substance abuse treatment services.

## **Increase Access to Healthy Food Options and Physical Activity**

*Policy opportunities include:*

### ***Increased Access to Healthy Food Options:***

- Increased access to nutritious meals for children through federal food programs, including Child and Adult Care Food, School Lunch, Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Supplemental Nutrition Access Program (SNAP, known as Food Stamps).
- Improved nutritional quality of the menus and food available through subsidized food programs.
- A sugared beverage tax to be used for children's health.
- Provider education on and use of nutrition standards in child care settings; and inclusion of nutrition standards as one of the criteria for high quality in child care rating systems locally and those being developed by the state.

### ***Increased Physical Activity Opportunities in Neighborhoods and Early Care and Education Settings:***

- Improved infrastructure and community design to increase opportunities to walk, bike, run and play in communities.
- The promotion of physical activity standards in child care settings and child care rating systems.
- Inclusion of green space and other physical activity areas in the design of new school-based child care centers under LAUSD bond measures.
- Enhanced safety in existing public parks and physical activity spaces.
- Increased public play spaces with recreational equipment appropriate for toddlers.

## **Promote Reductions in Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Use by Parents/Caregivers**

*Policy opportunities include:*

- Early screening of pregnant women for substance abuse and effective service referrals.
- Expanded residential alcohol and substance abuse rehabilitation options for pregnant women, as well as resources for their children while the mother is in treatment.
- Reduced second hand smoke exposure to pregnant women and young children through increased tobacco taxes and municipal code changes/smoking bans.

## **Expand Access to and Improve Quality of Early Care and Education Programs**

*Policy opportunities include:*

### ***Increased Access to Early Care and Education:***

- Increased resources for infant/toddler care in federal, state and local funding, such as a set-aside in the Child Care and Development Block Grant.
- Adequate and appropriate use of existing Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) bond funds for preschool facility development and representation of the early care and education field on the LAUSD School Construction Bond Citizens' Oversight Committee.

### ***Improved Quality of Early Care and Education:***

- Approval of Early Learning Challenge Grant funds for California.
- Incentives to License-Exempt care providers to engage in voluntary quality improvement and/or licensing through the state's Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory Committee (ELQIS.)
- Improved state monitoring of licensed care programs.
- Implementation of tiered reimbursement rates for ECE providers that reward higher levels of quality programming.

## **Expand Voluntary Home Visiting**

*Policy opportunities include:*

- Passage of federal legislation, either as part of health care reform or separate legislation that funds home visitations and supporting services.
- Coverage of home visitation services by private health insurers.
- Increased flexibility in federal and state funding streams to support home visitation, including investments in innovative program models.

## **Support Integration and Sharing of Data**

*Policy opportunities include:*

- Integrated data systems in Los Angeles County that will enhance service coordination and prevention efforts for children and families.
- Establishment of a unique identifier for children to effectively track their progress from pre-kindergarten through high school and document cost savings produced by preschool investments.
- Identification and resolution of legal, regulatory and policy barriers that prevent data sharing and integration that would benefit children 0-5 and their families.

## **Strengthen the Prenatal to 5 Workforce**

*Policy opportunities include:*

- An increase in the quantity and diversity of the prenatal to 5 workforce.
- Countywide adoption of a set of workforce core competencies to establish minimum training standards for workforce serving young children and families.
- Enhanced provider education to improve recognition and referrals for challenges faced by parents, including mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and gang involvement.
- Provider education loan forgiveness programs for prenatal to 5 workforce sectors experiencing a lack of providers.
- Increased coordination and systems improvement of the early care and education career development system within Los Angeles County.

## **Increase Supports for Breast Feeding**

*Policy opportunities include:*

- An increase in the number of designated Baby Friendly Hospitals in Los Angeles County.
- Private health insurance coverage of breast pumps and lactation support.
- Federal investments in breastfeeding supports, such as peer counselors and WIC breastfeeding incentives.

## **Expand Early Identification and Intervention**

*Policy opportunities include:*

- Universal screening for children through 36 months of age to ensure early identification of developmental and/or behavioral concerns including:
  - Use of validated screening tools as approved by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
  - Timely and comprehensive screenings and referrals to treatment for children entering and currently in the DCFS system.
  - Screening at locations other than pediatricians' offices, including early care and education sites, mental health clinics and during home visits, with a particular emphasis on screening children between 24 - 36 months, when many children are not seen by a pediatrician.
  - State level early childhood education rating systems to mandate and/or incentivize providers to use screening tools in early care and education settings.
- Effective referral procedures implemented for all screening sites.
- Reinstatement of state funding for Early Start/ IDEA Part C early intervention services for children 0-3 and link to early care and education providers.

## **Promote Family Strengthening Principles and Prevention Practices in the Child Welfare System**

*Policy opportunities include:*

- Submission and approval of L.A. County's application for continued federal waiver beyond the 2012 expiration related to usage of the Title IV-E foster care funds for prevention services.
- Full funding for the reauthorization Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).
- Placement in available high quality early care and education programs for at-risk children and continuity of services when placements change. Populations targeted would include 0-5 year olds in foster care, the children of teens in foster care, or probation or who are emancipated foster youth, homeless, children in kinship care, and children with special needs.
- Increased coordination of prevention and intervention services, including up-front assessments, between DCFS and other critical service providers who work with the parents of young children, including:
  - Domestic violence service providers for families at-risk of or experiencing domestic violence;
  - Substance abuse service providers to strengthen early screening and referrals of pregnant women;
  - Mental health providers to conduct screenings and referrals of pregnant women and mothers for perinatal depression and other mental health issues for women;
  - Gang intervention service providers for families at-risk of or involved with gangs;
  - Probation Department in support of children of probation youth;
  - Sheriff and law enforcement in support of children of parents in prison.