

State Legislative Agenda Criteria Approved

First 5 LA's Commission recently approved criteria for developing the agency's 2015 Legislative Agenda and received a state policy update on new legislative opportunities for 2015.

During the March 12 Commission meeting, First 5 LA Policy Manager Stacy Lee presented, and the Board approved, the following criteria to help First 5 LA determine which bills to support during the 2015 state legislative and budget season:

- Opportunities to advance First 5 LA priorities related to early learning and home visiting;
- Policies that directly affect First 5 LA (e.g., tobacco taxes, bills or proposals that affect Proposition 10);
- Near-term opportunities related to the new Strategic Plan; and
- Opportunities that support First 5 LA's current investments (e.g., oral health, vision)

First 5 LA staff will submit a formal list of bills to the Commission later this spring for adoption as the 2015 First 5 LA Legislative Agenda. This will enable First 5 LA to continue to make strides toward advancing its advocacy goals in the near term, while allowing the agency the time to further develop its policy agenda, informed by the bill development process.

Also at the March 12 meeting, the Commission received an update on state policy and sustainability efforts as well as new legislative opportunities for 2015 from John Benton of [California Strategies](#), which advocates for First 5 LA's policy agenda in Sacramento.

Highlights include:

2014-2015 Successes

Last June, Gov. Jerry Brown signed a 2014-15 budget that added more than \$250 million to California's child care programs; this represents the largest expansion for child care programs in the state budget since it was reduced by \$1 billion between 2008 and 2012. Along with other early childhood advocates, First 5 LA testified at hearings and met with legislators to educate them on the importance of fully funding quality early care and education. First 5 LA also convened an early learning coalition that identified mutual early learning advocacy goals to support.

Last session, Gov. Brown also signed into law AB 1174 (Bocanegra), which expands the Virtual Dental Home, an [innovative program](#) that uses telehealth technology to bring dental services directly to patients in community settings, such as preschools and elementary schools. Not only was First 5 LA one of the principal funders of the Virtual Dental Home pilot in Los Angeles, the agency took an active role in supporting AB 1174, writing letters of support, and meeting with elected officials and staff, throughout the two years the bill was in the Legislature.

A pilot program focused on mobile vision programs was approved with the passage of the FY 2014-15 State Budget. Two of First 5 LA's vision provider grantees, [Vision to Learn](#) and the UCLA [Jules Stein Eye Institute](#), have been tapped for the pilot by [LA Care](#) to provide eye exams and glasses to children through school districts.

HIGHLIGHTS

- State Legislative Agenda Criteria Approved
- Welcome Baby Model Changes Approved
- Expiring Initiatives Assessment: Healthy Kids Insurance Program (LA Care)

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2015-2016 Priorities and Opportunities

First 5 LA has emerged as a leader in the state’s Early Care and Education (ECE) Coalition (which includes [Early Edge California](#), the [Advancement Project](#), [Children Now](#) and the [First 5 Association of California](#)), which is advocating for better ECE access, affordability and quality in the 2015-16 state budget. Focal points include:

- 21,000 new 4-year-old state preschool slots for Fiscal Year 2015-16
- Moving state preschool into Proposition 98
- Adding 10,000 general child care slots and 10,000 alternative payment slots for babies/toddlers
- Increasing the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) block grant and extending it to providers for infants and toddlers
- A statewide focus to support additional local quality efforts

There is also an opening to try to find opportunities to align First 5 LA’s home visiting and health-related investments with those of [Medi-Cal](#) to support sustainability.

As the legislative session continues to unfold this year, First 5 LA will emphasize the importance of having child advocates and coalition partners collaborate on a unified agenda and message in order to increase investments for children in CA – especially for priority areas such as early care and education and home visiting.

Click [here](#) to see Lee’s and Benton’s full presentation.

Welcome Baby Model Changes Approved

The Commission unanimously approved two changes to the Welcome Baby model: replacing a 2-month phone call with a 2-month home visit for low- to moderate-risk *Best Start* families and providing a Registered Nurse (RN) visit to high-risk *Best Start* families before the transition to Select Home Visiting, the intensive home visiting programs funded by First 5 LA.

Through First 5 LA’s free, voluntary [Welcome Baby Initiative](#), pregnant women and new moms in the 14 [Best Start Communities](#) receive information, support and a trusted partner to help them through the journey of pregnancy and early parenthood. Currently, 13 hospitals in Los Angeles County participate in Welcome Baby. Working with a hospital liaison, nurse and parent coach, each Welcome Baby participant receives phone calls, home visits and an in hospital visit to evaluate the child’s health and development, screen for maternal depression, encourage bonding and provide tips on everything from breastfeeding to home safety.

Slated for implementation in Fiscal Year 2015-2016, the changes are intended to increase both the effectiveness of the program model in reaching the proposed outcomes and the likelihood of success for the anticipated evaluation studies.

More details behind the changes can be found [here](#).

Expiring Initiatives Assessment: Healthy Kids Insurance Program (LA Care)

As part of the implementation of the new 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, staff has embarked on an expiring initiatives assessment process to review programmatic investments expiring during the next Strategic Plan period, identify remaining resources, evaluate the alignment of that initiative with new the Strategic Plan, and make recommendations to the Commission about continuing, revising or sunsetting the effort.

Among these expiring investments is the [Healthy Kids Insurance Program](#), administered by [LA Care](#). Funded by First 5 LA since 2003, this program provides access to low- or no-cost health insurance for children ages 0-5 in L.A. County who are not eligible for Medi-Cal or other health insurance programs. Due to successful outreach to enroll young children in other insurance programs, the program’s enrollment is currently only 349 children.

The current four year allocation was approved in 2011 at \$12.9 million. An unspent balance of \$9.2 million is expected as of June 30, 2015, when the initiative is set to expire.

Of the 349 children enrolled in Healthy Kids, approximately 200 meet eligibility for [MyHealthLA](#) (MHLA) program, the County’s medically indigent program currently serving children aged 6 to 18. First 5 LA, LA Care and L.A. County Department of Health

Services (DHS) have been exploring transitioning children currently enrolled in Healthy Kids into DHS' MHLA program. For those not eligible for MHLA, staff is reviewing options to connect these children to the County's safety-net system, including community clinics or to Kaiser's Child Health Plan.

Through review and confirmation from both LA Care and DHS, staff determined that a 6-month contract extension would provide the appropriate amount of time to complete the transition process. Due to LA Care's unique position as an insurer for a substantial number of children, First 5 LA and LA Care staff are exploring options to re-purpose the \$9.2 million remaining dollars to invest in a program that aligns with the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. Staff are looking at opportunities to invest in strengthening systems coordination and integration to reduce barriers to developmental screenings and/or oral health services.

First 5 LA staff will seek the Board's approval of the 6-month contract extension for Healthy Kids at the April 2015 Commission meeting.

Contract Amendments Approved

The Board approved three amendments totaling \$594,884 from the Place-Based Investment Area for additional funding in order to increase the facilitation support needed by the *Best Start* Community Partnerships to implement [Learning by Doing](#).

The contractors for these amendments are Community Action Resource Exchange (\$246,975), Jose Montano Lizarraga DBA Contexto Cultural (\$50,572), and [Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership](#) (\$297,337).

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Kim Belshé first directed Commissioners to a master narrative created by Public Affairs, which provides an "elevator pitch" on who we are, why our work matters and the change First 5 LA is seeking to make for families with young children. She encouraged Commissioners to think of themselves as "brand ambassadors."

Belshé also pointed out a [new bilingual brochure for parents](#) that provides a resource for where parents can go to pursue information on First 5 LA's key initiatives and other work. In addition to distributing these brochures to new parents through Welcome Baby and via [First 5 California's Kit for New Parents](#), First 5 LA is partnering with WIC sites, public libraries and other organizations to provide this resource to parents with young children.

Belshé also lauded the [Best Start Communities](#) and Public Affairs teams for the creation of a special Monday Morning Report that focused on efforts within *Best Start* Communities, including personal profiles and [a lead article](#) by *Best Start* Director Rafael González.

Finally, Belshé said, staff are "really rolling up their sleeves" in preparing the organization to execute the new 2015-2020 Strategic Plan through the creation of the Transformation Management Office (TMO). The TMO provides First 5 LA staff with a framework to sequence, organize and prioritize our work, with the goal of the following:

- On time and on budget implementation of the Strategic Plan's priority outcomes
- An organization structure aligned to the Strategic Plan
- A prepared and equipped workforce that can execute the Strategic Plan
- Business processes that support the implementation of the Strategic Plan

Belshé noted that First 5 LA's new Strategic Plan and Commission guidance calls for First 5 LA to do its work differently – with a greater emphasis on policy, advocacy, systems change, and collaboration. Board agendas reflect this changing orientation, including the March 12 meeting. At the March 12 meeting, Commissioners heard from Christina Altmayer, Executive Director of the Children & Families Commission of Orange County, regarding Orange County's implementation of [Help Me Grow](#), a systems framework that **connects** at-risk children with the developmental screening and related services they need to support their optimal development.

As another example, in the Expiring Initiatives agenda item, the Commission was updated about our current work with LA Care to support insurance coverage of 350 young children and the potential for future work with LA Care to strengthen systems coordination and integration to reduce barriers families face to such services as developmental screening and oral health care.

More details about these efforts and other Strategic Plan related efforts will be shared with Commissioners at the next few Commission and Program and Planning meetings to help inform the development of activity aligned with the new Strategic Plan.