



First 5 Advocacy Day 2020 First 5 LA Priorities

Quality Early Learning - Child Care

The pandemic of COVID-19 has amplified how child care services are vital to supporting essential workers' (including frontline medical workers, first responders, and grocery workers) ability to have their children in a safe and healthy environment while they serve our communities. Our state's child care system, however, was already struggling to adequately meet the needs of families prior to our current pandemic. With long waitlists, inadequate funding, the additional challenges providers face has put a strain on the already fragile system.

ASK: In partnership with the California Early Care and Education (ECE) Coalition, First 5 LA asks the Legislature to support:

- **Release of federal (Child Care Development Block Grant) CCDBG funds** and repurpose already appropriated state one-time child care funds to expand child care access to essential workers. California received \$350 M in CCDBG funding, with \$133 M for LA County, and has one-time remaining funds allocated in the 2019-2020 budget which can be repurposed for emergency child care.
- **Extend hold harmless provision** provided under Senate Bill (SB) 117 until the end of COVID-19 pandemic, which would waive reporting and attendance requirements for child care programs. The extension of the hold harmless provision would add stability to the child care system by ensuring child care providers can plan for and endure the uncertainty that COVID-19 will continue to bring.
- **Prioritize ECE funding** as a state economic recovery strategy. As the Governor and Legislature work to develop a workload budget, it will critically important that we acknowledge child care as a vital resource to our economy and not just as a state emergency response strategy. Child care has been and continues to be the backbone of our economy and will ensure California can bear and recover from the expected recession, allowing parents to return to work and keep society functioning.

Families Support - Home Visiting

Like every service delivery sector, families served through Home Visiting programs are facing new challenges that are exacerbated by COVID 19. In order to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and hardest to reach, home visitors need flexibility and additional resources. Home Visiting programs have begun pivoting to accommodate new ways of reaching families, including expanding telehealth and virtual home visits. Family supports such as Home Visiting is more important now more than ever, as families who already faced complex needs have been thrust into chaos and greater social isolation due to COVID-19. Home visitors are a critical link of support for families who are facing a variety of challenges that will be exacerbated by this crisis.

ASK: First 5 LA asks the Legislature to urge the Newsom Administration to provide emergency flexibility to help preserve these valuable programs:

- **Funding flexibility to use funds to train home visitors** to deliver services through technology that enables home visits from a distance, as well as providing tangible needs for families including technology, formula, diapers, etc.



- **Allow virtual visits to be considered home visits** through the end of the calendar year to safely preserve valuable relationships without being penalized.
- **Maintain all funding for staffing levels** of Home Visiting programs regardless of potential temporary reductions in enrollment to preserve the existing home visiting infrastructure so that families can again be supported in the future as enrollment normalizes and grows.

Health - Telehealth

Telehealth limits physical interactions between patient and provider, protecting both from unknowingly spreading or contracting the COVID-19 virus. Telehealth also allows families the opportunity to receive mental health supports, which are crucial during a time in which many will face increased stress, anxiety, and even trauma. The ability for providers to screen a patient for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) via telehealth per new state guidance in response to COVID-19 is particularly vital, as traumatic experiences, such as a family member getting sick or losing their job due to COVID-19, can damage optimal brain development during a crucial period for growth. Telehealth helps expand access to vital physical and mental health services for vulnerable children and families.

ASK: First 5 LA asks the Legislature to continue supporting telehealth even after the immediate COVID-19 crisis passes. We further ask the Legislature to provide on-going flexibility allowing Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and Rural Health Clinics (RHC) to establish new patients directly through telehealth.