



COMMUNITY PROFILE

FIRST 5 Ventura County



Fast Facts

ORIGIN

First 5 Ventura County is part of a statewide initiative established under the California Children and Families Act of 1998 (Proposition 10) and funded through an increased tax on cigarettes and tobacco products. The intent of the Act is to facilitate the development of a comprehensive, integrated system of services and information focused on children from the prenatal period through age five, with a dual purpose of enhancing optimal early childhood development and ensuring that children are ready for school. In partnership with parents, school districts, community leaders, and social and healthcare agencies, First 5 Ventura County works to fill the gaps through its network of essential services for young children and their families—a network that strengthens futures for children, families and communities.

GOALS

First 5 Ventura County's goals are informed by the following strategic priorities:

1. Children grow up healthy.
2. Children enter school ready to learn — cognitively, social-emotionally and physically.
3. Parents have the knowledge and resources they need to provide a nurturing environment.
4. Communities are engaged in supporting and prioritizing children.

KEY STRATEGIES

First 5 Ventura County programming combines three broad elements:

- **Neighborhoods for Learning (NfLs)**—This place-based initiative in 11 communities throughout Ventura County provides an array of services to local communities in the areas of early learning, health and family strengthening through 25 Family Resource Centers. The Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework is universally used by the NfLs to design and implement services for families.
- **Regional Deployment of Health Professionals**—Through contracts with county agencies, public health educators and mental health professionals are deployed to NfLs for parent education, including positive parenting through the evidence-based Triple P program, developmental screenings and obesity prevention, and to provide case management resources to NfL staff and the families they serve
- **Countywide Services**—Several additional services are contracted countywide and are available to NfL populations and/or special populations. Examples include Help Me Grow, oral health, 2-1-1 information and referral for health and human services, a promotora model to help bridge services for indigenous populations, preschool spaces and quality improvements for preschools.

LEAD AGENCY

First 5 Ventura County

MISSION

To promote school readiness through investments in health, early learning and family strengthening, benefiting children from prenatal to 5 years of age.

INITIATIVE BUDGET

\$12.5 million FY 2015-2016

START DATE

1998

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Ventura County, CA

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Population
835,790 (2014 ACS)

Population Under 5
52,655 (2014 ACS)

Percent of Children in Poverty
16.2% (2014 ACS)

Percent of Newborns at Low Birth Weight
6.3% (2013, CA Dept. of Public Health)

Percent of Children in Food-Insecure Households
20.8% (2013, Feeding America)

CONTACT

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INNOVATION OF NOTE

In Ventura County there are 11 **Neighborhoods for Learning (NfLs)** that operate as platforms for implementing community-based early learning, health and family strengthening services. Each NfL has its own governing board and lead contract agency, most often a school district.

Over the past 15 years, the initiative has primarily evolved through ever-expanding partnerships, integration of services in community-based settings and increasing parent participation. NfL resources may include early learning activities for children birth to age three, preschools or preschool scholarships and family resource centers. Through partnerships with the Ventura County Health Care Agency and other local organizations, First 5 Ventura County provides community-based access to health services, dental treatment, developmental check-ups, behavioral health and parent education. Parents access these resources through their local NfL, reducing barriers and increasing access to essential services.

+ EARLY CHILDHOOD-LINC

An initiative of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, **Early Childhood-LINC** (Learning and Innovation Network for Communities) is developed by and for communities. Our mission is to support families and improve results for young children in communities across the country with a focus on accelerating the development of effective, integrated, local early childhood systems.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

APPROACH

First 5 Ventura County's Results-Based Accountability framework incorporates desired outcomes, indicators used to measure progress and accountability frameworks to monitor programmatic investments. In FY 2014-15, the Commission implemented a point-in-time parent survey to assess the overall impact of First 5 Ventura County services, along with program improvement surveys to provide quality feedback to First 5 funded partners. Annual reports are issued by the Commission to ensure optimal allocation of public resources, continuous quality improvement, and to guide strategic decision-making.

INDICATORS

A 2014-2015 point-in-time survey of parents receiving services found:

Services are reaching those families who are most likely to benefit from services:

- 65% of children are birth to three
- 33% of the parents/caregivers reported having less than a high school education
- Only 17% had a Bachelor's degree or higher
- Almost half of families earned less than \$20,000 per year

In addition:

- 97% of families report having health insurance and a usual place of care
- 78% of families report having a regular dentist and having taken their child for a dental exam
- 71% of families report reading to their children 3-6 days per week, with parents who receive more services reporting higher reading rates
- 70% of children were school ready in all domains measured by the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), exhibiting an overall 50% growth rate since entering preschool

STRUCTURE & LEADERSHIP

First 5 Ventura County is governed by a nine-member Commission that includes a cross-section of public and private stakeholders. A strong committee structure is also in place to assure regular community input and to fully vet issues related to the Commission's administrative practices, investments in current programs and continuous identification of gap areas.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

At the community level, each of the NfLs has its own governing board made up of community representatives, including a minimum of two parent members. First 5 Ventura County also invests in parent leadership training countywide to further build parent confidence and to prepare parents for leadership opportunities in their community. Close to 60 parents have been trained, with 16 having also participated in a "Train the Trainer" series.

FINANCING

The bulk of First 5 Ventura County's funding comes from the state tobacco tax revenues created through Proposition 10. As anticipated, this has become a declining revenue source. Therefore, the Commission has augmented these resources through leveraged funding from state and federal grant sources (e.g., Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge). The Commission's funded partners also utilize Prop 10 dollars to draw down additional federal and state funds, which contribute toward the program as matching funds. A small proportion of the total budget comes from private foundations for specific projects.



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