



California Statistics:



State Population	38.2 million
0-5 population	3,036,500
Poverty level	23.8%
# of local collaboratives	58 county commissions
Total State Early Childhood Funding:	Over ^{\$} 3 billion
State/Local Collaborative Total Funding	^{\$} 450.5 million

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First 5 California Initiative

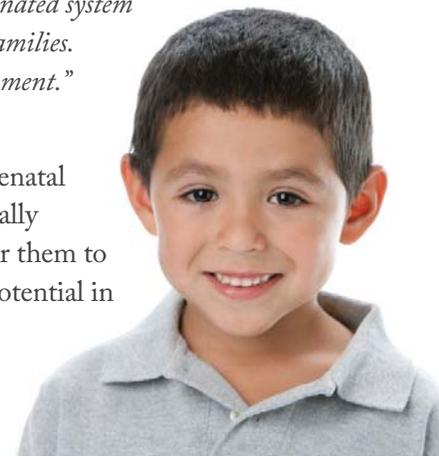
The California Children and Families Commission was created through Proposition 10 and passed by the state's voters in 1998. The Act imposed a \$0.50 tax per pack on cigarettes and other tobacco products sold in California. This provided a significant new funding source to the complex array of existing funding sources for children's services in the state.

The California Children and Families Act (the Act) called for the creation of the State Commission and 58 individual county commissions that work together to address the specific needs of counties and the diverse populations that make up the state. Together with other state programs and funding sources for children and families, the state and local commissions oversee and support the available funding of education, health, and quality early learning and development programs for children from birth to age five and their families.

In 1999 the specific policy requirements for the Commission were placed into law; they are found in the California Health and Safety Code, starting at section 130100. This Commission, later re-branded as First 5 California (F5CA), works statewide with the 58 First 5 county commissions to develop and fund programs for young children that are tailored to the needs of local communities. The original mission of F5CA was to ensure that every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and ready to learn alongside his or her peers as he or she enters kindergarten. The mission was operationalized through the creation of a commission in every county focused on assessment and planning for children from birth until they enter school.

F5CA is currently undergoing a strategic planning process and the Commission has recently adopted a new mission and strategic direction. The current mission of F5CA is to *"Convene, partner in, support, and help lead the movement to create and implement a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated system for California's children prenatal through 5 and their families. Promote, support, and optimize early childhood development."* Strategic Priority Areas (SPAs) are:

SPA 1. Children and Families: Support children prenatal through age 5 by providing culturally and linguistically effective resources, knowledge, and opportunities for them to develop the skills needed to achieve their optimal potential in school and life.





child development programs. The California Department of Social Services also administers a \$403 million child development program for low-income families seeking employment and receiving public assistance.

Funding

Funding for F5CA comes solely from Proposition 10 and the additional state tobacco taxes it generates. The funds flow to F5CA and the 58 county commissions through the State Board of Equalization, which administers the Tobacco Tax Programs. Proposition 10 increased the state's tobacco tax by \$0.50 per pack of cigarettes (and tobacco products) to fund state and county early care and education programs for families and children. This additional tobacco tax provided \$687 million in fiscal year 1999-2000 but much less (\$450.5 million) in FY 13-14 due to successful smoking cessation programs.

SPA 2. System and Network: Provide leadership to the First 5 movement and the development of a support system serving children prenatal through age 5, their families, and communities that results in sustainable and collective impact.

SPA 3. Public Will and Investment: Build public engagement in, investment in, and support of the optimal well-being and development of children prenatal through age 5, their families, and communities.

SPA 4. Institutional Development: Strengthen internal capacity of First 5 California to realize its mission and achieve greater impact.

Note: The detailed goals under each SPA are currently under development and targeted for completion in 2014.

“ F5CA is a government agency that has more flexibility and less bureaucracy than typical large government agencies.”

Eighty percent of the funding is allocated to First 5 county commissions to support local early childhood work in California's counties. The remaining twenty percent of funding is allocated to the State Commission to create and implement programs to educate the public about early childhood issues and to provide technical assistance and support to the county commissions and related programs and projects. Only one percent of the overall funding can be used to support staff positions at the state level.

State-Level Governance

F5CA is a government agency that has more flexibility and less bureaucracy than typical large government agencies. The F5CA Commission provides oversight for the initiative and is made up of seven members appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Senate Rules Committee. The Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency appoints an ex-officio member to the Commission. F5CA partners with the California Department of Education (CDE) and other state agencies on early education and healthy development initiatives and issues. In addition to F5CA funds, CDE currently has a \$1.6 billion budget devoted to

First 5 County Commissions operate independently from the State Commission and must fund programs in accordance with strategic plans established through broad community processes. Roughly two-thirds of county commission funds are reinvested in public services, including in school districts, departments of public health, libraries, and other public services. Other funds are disbursed through contracts with non-profit, community-based agencies across the state. County commissions are also focused on securing other sources of funding, including federal match and foundation partnerships.

State Level Staffing

F5CA currently has a staff of 44. The staff positions are as follows:

- Executive Director and Executive Office (7)
- Program Management (11)
- External Affairs, Media and Communications (5)
- Research & Evaluation (5)
- Information Technology (4)
- Administration Services (8)
- Contracts and Procurement (4)

Age range

F5CA's programs focus on children from the prenatal period through age five. While most of its services support children before they reach kindergarten, it has the flexibility to serve kindergartners as needed. For example, First 5 Amador (County) identified oral health as a need and provided screenings, fluoride treatment, and other services to all the county's preschoolers and kindergartners prior to reaching age 6, to assure that all children entered school without untreated dental problems.

Advocacy

At the state level, advocacy efforts focus on educating the public about early childhood issues. First 5 CA is required by the Proposition 10 language to allocate its funds (which account for 20% of the annual statewide revenues) to specific accounts. Six percent of the statewide revenues are to be spent by the State Commission on media and outreach. This is accomplished through print media, television and radio, social media, and other messaging in six languages, reflecting the rich diversity of California.

At the county level, commissions engage in advocacy to varying degrees. The First 5 Association of California is a membership organization of the 58 First 5 county commissions and assists with advocacy efforts, focusing on both regional and state-level advocacy to ensure both the health of the statewide movement and a focus on integrated systems of care for young children. County commissions also emphasize public exposure to information about child growth and development and educate the public about what First 5 commissions do and what is needed in their county. First 5 local commission staff build relationships and networks and engage allies in building support for school readiness services.

Local Collaboratives Overview

Each county established a local commission, as required by Proposition 10, by mid-2000, as funding began to flow to counties. Counties were required to establish either a county department or an independent public agency to receive and oversee funds. The counties split essentially evenly in terms of their choice of the two models.

The details of each county's model varies and, as independent entities, the commissions are not subject to regulatory control by the State Commission except on state matching funds programs and on requirements of the Act. The Act requires county commissions to submit annual audits and to complete annual performance reports for public consumption. In some county models, the First 5 commission staff works for the county while, in others, staff members are contractors to the commission. In some, the commissions are independent organizations. All decisions about the local models and their operations are made at the county level.

Broad guidance about the makeup and types of expertise of local commissioners is included in the Act, which says the following: "The county commission shall be appointed by the board of supervisors and shall consist of at least five but not more than nine members. Two members of the county commission shall be from among the county health officer and persons responsible for management of the following county functions: children's services; public health service; behavioral health services; social services; and tobacco and other substance abuse prevention and treatment services. One member of the county commission shall be a member of the board of supervisors. The remaining members of the county commission shall be persons from the following categories: recipients of services included in the county strategic plan; educators specializing in early childhood development; representatives of a local child care resource or referral agency, or a local child care coordinating group; representatives of a local organization for prevention or early intervention for families at risk; representatives



of community-based organizations that have the goal of promoting nurturing and early childhood development; representatives of local school districts; and representatives of local medical, pediatric, or obstetric associations or societies.”

Local Staffing

While most local commissions have a full time executive director, the number of additional staff is based on funding and the scope of work of each commission. For example, First 5 Los Angeles, the county with the largest number of young children, has an operating budget of approximately \$200 million, 122 staff, and approximately 134,000 live births each year, while First 5 Siskiyou, a geographically large rural county, has an annual budget of approximately \$550,000 and approximately 460 live births per year. First 5 Siskiyou has an Executive Director and one full-time staff position. For smaller population counties, one full-time or, perhaps, two part-time employees is typical, in combination with some part-time administrative assistance and program coordination. In larger counties, staff typically resembles that of nonprofits and may include members with programmatic, communications, fiscal, evaluation and technology expertise.

Local Collaborative Funding

County commissions have a close association with their local partner agencies (school district, public health, social services, etc.) and a few have assumed other responsibilities related to their community, funded by their county government or through other local funding. First 5 CA funds make up the largest proportion of First 5 local commission budgets and the local commissions also receive grant funding, as well as state and local government funds, based on their size and infrastructure. Most have a close association with county government and many have assumed other responsibilities related to their community,

which are funded by their county government or other local funding. County First 5 allocations of tobacco tax revenue in fiscal year 2012-13 ranged from \$94 million for the largest county, Los Angeles, to \$2,800 for the smallest county, Alpine.

Technical Assistance and Support to Counties

Local First 5 county commissions receive technical support and assistance through F5CA and the First 5 Association. F5CA is now involved in a strategic planning process focusing on its internal environment and building external partnerships, and may include changes and improvements in the technical support it will provide to local First 5 commissions. Currently F5CA provides support on its signature programs for counties that choose to participate. In addition, it provides webinars on programmatic implementation issues and assists local commissions with communications and outreach issues. Working in partnership with the First 5 Association, it sponsors quarterly technical assistance meetings for the local commissions. It also communicates almost daily with the Association to plan ways to jointly support the state and local work. Regional groups of 10 counties were formed by the Association and meet via conference call as well as in face-to-face meetings. The local directors often spoke about feeling isolated, especially in rural areas, and they find these small group meetings very beneficial for learning and sharing what works across counties.

Local Collaborative Snapshot

Two rural counties are highlighted in this profile, Amador County in the central part of the state, and Siskiyou County in the northernmost part of the state. Amador County covers an area of 605 square miles and Siskiyou covers 6,347 square miles.

There are similarities among these rural First 5 initiatives. They each focus on community partnerships and the value of relationships. They emphasize the value of local decision-making, based on an understanding of the culture and needs of a community. And they stress the importance of being able to test things out and make changes when their strategies don't work. Recently, transportation was identified as a great need in one of the more rural parts of Amador County. Responding to that need for children and families, First 5 Amador set up a public van schedule



for the community, only to discover that the families didn't want to use public transportation, preferring to depend on their own family and community members for this service. Therefore, Amador First 5 had the flexibility to change its approach and quickly made the decision to revise its plan based on a more successful strategy for that community.

Another example of responding to a specific, unique need of Amador County was the need and desire of the community for a parent cooperative preschool as a resource to the community. A true partnership was created between First 5 Amador and the community that resulted in the leasing of space from the Miwok Tribe and naming the building after one of their former early childhood leaders. First 5 Amador has its offices in the building, along with the cooperative preschool. First 5 Amador provides rent and four scholarships for the preschool. The preschool is now approximately six years old and very popular. Participating families have organized successful fundraising events, resulting in equipment purchases for playground improvements, funding for other small needs, and, now, additional scholarships. Families from all walks of life participate and these events are a focal point for children and families in the community.

In addition, the space provides a quasi-community center with meeting space for comprehensive early childhood planning and other community meetings and events. This site and its activities have raised the awareness of early childhood issues in the community. A large sign on the fence in front of the building highlights this awareness as it poses the question that was typical in ancient African communities when they greeted each other, "And how are the children?" In Amador, everyone is encouraged to answer that question.

Siskiyou County created family resource centers in all parts of the large, rural county as its vehicle to serve young children and their families. Family and Community Resource Centers are the primary, though not the exclusive, source for the identification of needs and how best to meet those needs. They start and drive the process in direct partnership with First 5 Siskiyou Children and Families Commission and are guided by a policy document, "Essential Elements for First 5 Funded Family



First 5 Amador provides rent and four scholarships for the preschool. The preschool is now approximately six years old and very popular.

and Community Resource Centers." Because the needs and approaches are locally determined, each resource and referral center operates slightly differently from the others. They are close partners with other children and family services and often are the point of entry for families seeking services for their children. Each of the 10 centers, supported by First 5 Siskiyou, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and raises both public and private money to address the needs of the community.

Pros and Cons of California's State/Local Model

Pros

- A dedicated funding stream was created, separate from the State General Fund, for children from the prenatal period through age five.
- The model has more flexibility than any other program in the state, which allows both the state and local commissions to do things differently and test out new ideas at the state and local levels.
- The model allows strategies to meet local needs and the strategies can be changed as the community changes.
- Focusing on human resources available in a county provides the potential to build a robust system of services for young children with limited financial resources.
- Funding is protected since changes to Proposition 10 must go back to the state's voters or the legislature. If a new law is passed which affects Proposition 10 programs, the legislature must certify that any changes will further and not hinder the purposes of Proposition 10.

- The law requires the First 5 State Commission to approve all state-level funding and expenditures, and once funding is allocated to the counties, such approval is required by county commissions.
- While some First 5 county commissions are independent of the county government systems, they are closely connected.

Cons

- County commissions typically design their own programs to meet local needs. As independent commissions, they may design their own local programs and evaluations that may or may not be directly comparable across the 58 county commissions in the state.
- For the Signature Programs sponsored by the State Commission, statewide program outcomes are measured. For example, in the Child Signature Program (CSP), ERS and CLASS™ instruments are used to evaluate the quality of early care for select classrooms in the 10 counties participating in the more intensive CSP programs. In the Teacher Signature Program (CARES Plus), an annual online survey is sent to all 5,000 individual participants in 35 counties, and the CLASS™ instrument is used to assess improvement for participants selected by the evaluation design. Because county commissions may or may not opt to engage with state commission-sponsored programs, data and outcomes, as well as services, are limited to counties that participate.
- Because it is a comprehensive, holistic approach, the needs of the community and involvement with all related entities can be overwhelming.
- When funding is reduced due to smoking cessation, figuring out how to adjust the budget or reduce programs without compromising quality or access is difficult.
- With diminishing resources, it is challenging to try to be everything to everybody.
- Effective systems are dependent on local expertise and the local political environment and effectiveness is dependent on the strengths and weaknesses of local commissions. This potentially leads to weak or ineffective program strategies and less than desired outcomes in some counties.



First 5 California has implemented three signature programs: the Parent Signature Program, the Child Signature Program, and the Teacher Signature Program.

- Leadership can be based on county politics because of broad guidelines for commissioners.
- It is challenging to have every First 5 county operate as its own entity, especially in the smaller counties. Smaller counties should consider working together under a regional approach.
 - It is difficult to obtain private funding in very small counties, limiting their ability to expand services.
 - In rural communities, it is sometimes difficult to find individuals with strong early childhood education backgrounds; in some counties, there are no colleges or universities in the area, making it challenging to recruit well qualified staff.

Performance Measurement

First 5 California has implemented three signature programs: the Parent Signature Program (Kit for New Parents and Parents website), the Child Signature Program, and the Teacher Signature Program (CARES Plus). The F5CA evaluation program has centered on its signature programs. The Child Signature Program collects data on teacher demographics, child demographics, and quality-related assessment instruments, including Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS™). Collection of child-level outcome data, for the domains of language, math, and social-emotional development is planned for a later phase of the program. The CARES Plus program collects data on teacher demographics and observations of sampled participants using CLASS™ to assess

effectiveness of different training tracks (components) for improving participant interactions in the classroom.

The F5CA Annual Report uses results and services categories for fiscal and program accounting to aggregate information from county commissions statewide. The four results areas are:

1. improved family functioning;
2. improved child development;
3. improved child health; and
4. improved systems of care.

Counties conduct independent evaluations of their own programs. However, it is not a requirement for them to do so. Because there is limited money for evaluation at the county level, in addition to the state's signature programs, county commissions try to use service models with an already existing research base of evidence. They often partner with colleges and universities in their area to provide cost-effective support and evaluation.

The F5CA and the First 5 Association are currently assisting counties in thinking about common statewide indicators.

Major Accomplishments

- **Statewide coverage and focus:** F5CA is a statewide initiative that includes all 58 counties and has created a commission in each county to focus on the needs of young children and their families.
- **Innovation:** Counties are able to try new strategies and approaches to serving children and families and better meet their specific needs. This innovation was critical to California's work and approach in creating a successful federal *Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC)* application. The application drew heavily on F5 state and local programs and investments to highlight current areas of success within California, including local Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and Quality Improvement Systems.
- **Dedicates local dollars to young children:** F5CA has encouraged counties to dedicate local private dollars and support to young children's needs and increased leveraging at the state and local level.
- **Structure allows for money to be accessed more easily in order to serve children and families:** F5CA is less bureaucratic and more flexible than typical government programs and is better able to meet immediate needs.



- **Structure creates a feedback loop between the state and local governments to respond to policy changes in a very timely way.** This immediate feedback loop facilitates quality information and engagement to improve state policy. This feedback allowed the state to create and implement the RTT-ELC QRIS more quickly and effectively and to ensure it met local needs.
- **Increase in community-based programs throughout all the counties in California.** Almost every community now has access to books, family resource centers, and other services for their children.
- **Major improvements to dental health of young children.** In many counties, the reduction of untreated decay and unhealthy teeth is significant. In Siskiyou County, the percentage of children under age four with severe cavities has been reduced from 75% to 4%.
- **There have been major systems changes at the county level.** First 5 jumpstarts programs and then other efforts take over. One example of this is the work First 5 has done to coordinate dentists to attend kindergarten registration to identify children who will be starting school with dental problems. Now the dental community coordinates that work.
- **Increased quality of early learning programs.** To develop the early care and education workforce, the CARES Plus program provides training and professional development related to improving quality. In the last fiscal year, 4,800 teachers in 34 counties participated in CARES Plus, effectively reaching more than 100,000 children. In a survey conducted by First 5 California, 80% or more of the teachers who responded reported that the program was very useful for their professional development, would enable them to stay in the ECE field, and that the program would have a positive impact on children in their care.

- **Families are better aware of programs and services for their children.** First 5 State and county commissions and their websites are the hub for information for parents and families.
- **More children are starting elementary school having preschool experiences and learning skills.**

Key Components to Success at the State Level

- Building collaborative partnerships with other State agencies providing children’s services
- Building relationships with lawmakers and educating them and their staff regarding children’s issues
- Working with stakeholder groups to help form cohesive public policy initiatives
- Focusing on quality early learning and development at all levels of government and programs

Key Components to Success at the Local Level

- We live in a giving community and the community supports our work in many ways.
- The Commission led the community on the vision for young children.
- We have committed volunteers who care about the community and young children.
- We have a very collaborative community. Everyone is around a neutral table to talk about children’s needs and strengths, where we can partner, and how we can leverage and share what’s going on. First 5 serves as the convener of this group.

Overall Lessons Learned

- Don’t make assumptions that the people in charge know what is best for any community. You have to assess and learn the community’s needs and listen to the people to really understand the issues.
- Always learn about and partner in communities before making any decisions about them or for them.
- The fact that community members rely on each other is an important lesson and should be built upon.
- Spend money on evaluation from the beginning of an initiative and constantly re-evaluate what you’re doing and how you are measuring indicators of success.

- Ensure a practice-police feedback loop that utilizes evaluation findings to operationalize continuous quality improvement of programs and services.
- Don’t rush into providing services. Take time to learn about the communities’ needs, get needed stakeholders to the table, build relationships, plan thoughtfully, and be strategic.
- Create an environment that values relationship building.
- Include business and corporate leadership to help in the design of structures, programs and processes. Think of your work as a business venture in order to sustain it.
- Put effort into building relationships because when collaboratives don’t work, it is because the relationships are not working.
- Honor diversity and tolerate differences when working in communities.
- Develop this kind of work with the state and locals together. You will have a better product in the end.
- Implement lessons learned from already successful models.

Interviews

Camille Maben, *Executive Director*
First 5 California

Diane Levin, *Chief Deputy Director*
First 5 California

Sarah Neville-Morgan, *Deputy Director*
First 5 California

Nina Machado, *Executive Director*
First 5 Amador

Karen Pautz, *Executive Director*
First 5 Siskiyou

Resources

- [First 5 California website](#)
- [First 5 California Association website](#)
- [First 5 Amador website](#)
- [First 5 Siskiyou website](#)
- [Proposition 10](#)

