



STRATEGIC PLAN

A Countywide Strategy to Strengthen
Early Childhood and Family Well-Being



2027-2030

THE RIVERSIDE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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1 OVERVIEW



First 5 Riverside County exists because the earliest years matter. From pregnancy through age five, children are building the foundation for lifelong health, learning, relationships, and well-being. When families are supported early, children are more likely to thrive, and Riverside County is stronger.

Families do not experience child care, health care, housing, food, transportation, parenting stress, and child development as separate systems. They experience them as real life, often all at once. Riverside County has recognized the need for a more coordinated, compassionate, and easier-to-navigate service experience. Through Integrated Service Delivery, RivCoONE, the Whole Person Health Score, shared consent, and coordinated referrals, the County is building better ways for residents to connect to support without having to start over at every door.

This work is grounded in equity. In 2020, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors declared racism and inequity a public health crisis and called for action to address systemic barriers. For First 5 Riverside County, equity means strengthening trusted access points, improving navigation, and helping families connect to support earlier.

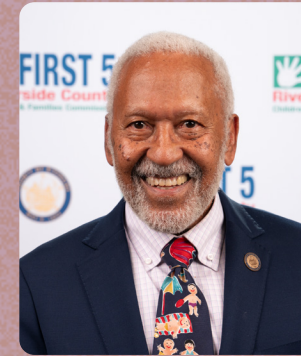
State voters passed Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Act of 1998, creating a dedicated tobacco tax funding stream for early childhood development. The Riverside County Board of Supervisors subsequently established the Riverside County Children & Families Commission, also known as First 5 Riverside County. Since its inception, First 5 Riverside County has invested more than \$505

million in local programs and systems that support young children and their families. Since FY 2015–16, First 5 Riverside County has also identified and accessed an additional \$66 million in federal, state, and inter-county funding to expand integrated whole child and whole family strategies. Together, these funding strategies have brought approximately \$571 million into Riverside County for children prenatal through age five and their families.

This 2027–2030 Strategic Plan is a refinement, not a reset. It preserves the Commission’s core vision, mission, values, goal areas, and system-change results while updating the plan to reflect what First 5 Riverside County has learned through implementation, partnership, family and provider input, fiscal planning, and changing county and state conditions.

For 2027–2030, First 5 Riverside County will continue strengthening the network around children and families. This includes Family Resource Centers, RivCoONE Connect, the Whole Person Health Score, coordinated referrals, and warm handoffs, public education, shared data, braided funding, and stronger cross-sector accountability. These tools and partnerships help families connect to support earlier, reduce barriers, strengthen protective factors, and make public systems easier to navigate.

Everything First 5 Riverside County does depends on partnership. The agency’s role is to align resources, strengthen trusted access points, support public systems, and invest in strategies that help children and families thrive.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR COMMISSION CHAIR

Riverside County’s greatest strength is its people. We are home to families from many backgrounds, communities, and life experiences, and every child deserves the chance to grow up safe, healthy, loved, and ready to thrive.

As a county, we have a responsibility to look after our youngest children and the families who care for them. That means investing early, listening to families, and creating communities where children can learn, play, develop, and be protected from preventable harm. Whether we are talking about child care, health, safe sleep, drowning prevention, or family support, the goal is the same: to give children the strongest possible start.

I am proud of the work First 5 Riverside County is doing with partners across our county. This work reflects the heart of public service. It is about families’ lives, children’s futures, and the kind of community we are building together.

–Supervisor Chuck Washington

District 3 Supervisor

First 5 Riverside County Commission Chair, 2026

About the Commission: Public Stewardship and Community Direction

First 5 Riverside County is governed by the Riverside County Children & Families Commission. The Commission was established by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors after California voters approved Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Act of 1998.

The Commission is responsible for setting local direction for Proposition 10 investments that support children prenatal through age five and their families. Through public meetings, annual plan review, budget approval, contract and investment decisions, and ongoing oversight, Commissioners help ensure that First 5 Riverside County resources are used strategically, responsibly, and in ways that reflect the needs of Riverside County families.

Commissioners bring public leadership, health expertise, County systems knowledge, early childhood perspective, and community understanding to this work. Individual Commissioners bring different roles and experiences, but the Commission provides direction through formal action as a public body.

First 5 Riverside County staff support the Commission by developing recommendations, implementing

approved strategies, managing contracts and operations, coordinating with partners, tracking results, and reporting progress. Staff carry Commission direction forward.

First 5 Riverside County also operates within the larger County structure. This creates an important connection between Commission priorities, County systems, and Board of Supervisors direction. The Board of Supervisors appoints Commissioners and may also allocate County, state, federal, or other funds to First 5 Riverside County for aligned efforts. The Commission’s role is to steward Proposition 10 and other approved resources in ways that strengthen early childhood development, family well-being, and countywide systems alignment.

Commission meetings are open to the public. This public meeting structure supports transparency, community participation, fiscal accountability, and shared responsibility for Riverside County’s youngest children.

In this plan, “First 5 Riverside County” refers to the Commission’s adopted direction and the staff, partnerships, programs, and operations that carry that direction forward.

2 ANNUAL STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW



The Riverside County Children & Families Commission reviews its strategic plan each year. This helps ensure investments stay focused, responsive, and aligned with the needs of young children and families.

The Commission adopted the 2023–2026 Strategic Plan to guide investments in early learning, health and development, resilient families, and countywide impact. Since then, Riverside County has strengthened Family Resource Centers, expanded prevention efforts, improved referral pathways, and deepened coordination across County departments and community partners.

This 2027–2030 Strategic Plan is a refinement, not a reset. It keeps the Commission’s vision, mission, values, and four goal areas. It also updates the plan to reflect what First 5 Riverside County has learned through implementation, family and provider input, fiscal planning, and changing county and state conditions.

First 5 Riverside County is most effective when it helps systems work better together. Direct services remain important. Long-term impact also depends on trusted access points, shared responsibility, strong partnerships, aligned funding, and easier ways for families to connect to support.

This refinement clarifies First 5 Riverside County’s role in three ways:

1. Strengthening the county’s prevention and early support network

2. Serving as a fiscal intermediary and strategic funding partner

3. Working as an embedded systems partner with County departments and community organizations

The goal is to make the plan clearer, more current, and more useful for the next phase of work. Family Resource Centers, RivCoONE Connect, the Whole Person Health Score, shared data, warm handoffs, prevention communications, and braided funding will continue to help families receive support earlier and with less burden.



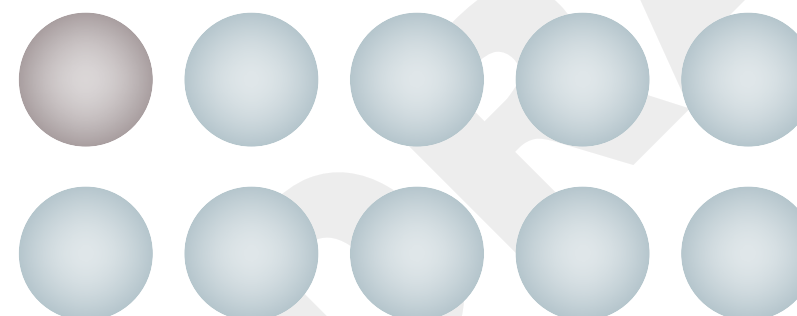
Riverside County Profile

4th Largest county in California

10th Largest county in the U.S.

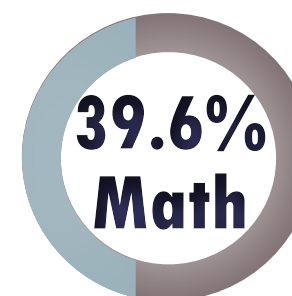
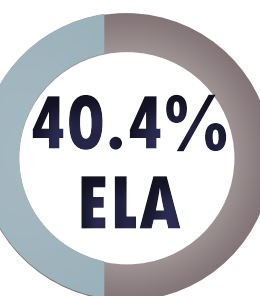


2.5M+ Residents
Large County, Large Responsibility

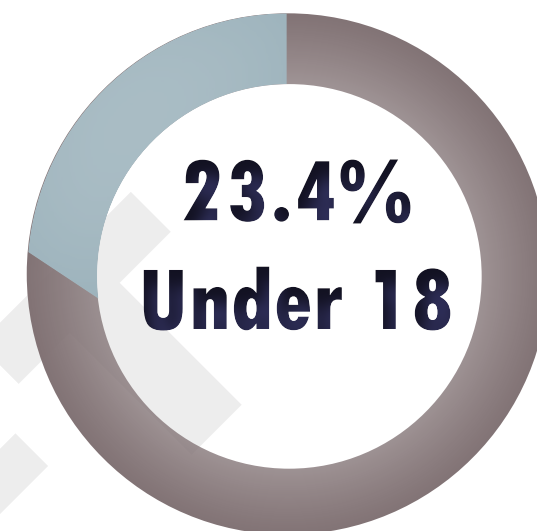


1 in 10 Babies Born Preterm
Early Health Starts Before Birth

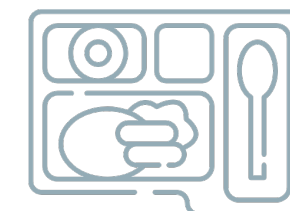
Third Grade



Early Foundations Matter



Children are a Major County Population



310K+ Student FRPM Eligible

Family Economic Pressure is Real



1,654 Licensed Child Care Facilities
Capacity Still Rebuilding

Riverside County is one of the largest and most diverse counties in California. More than 2.5 million people live across urban centers, suburban communities, rural and agricultural regions, desert communities, mountain areas, unincorporated communities, and tribal lands. For families with young children, access to child care, health care, transportation, safe places to play, and trusted local support can look very different depending on where they live.

The county is also home to a large population of young children and families. In 2025, approximately 161,000 children birth through age five lived in Riverside County. Children and youth under age 18 make up nearly one-quarter of the county’s population, and the child population is racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse.

Local data show both strengths and continued areas of need. Most young children have health insurance, and early prenatal care has improved. At the same time, preterm births are increasing, family economic pressure remains high, child care is still difficult to access and afford, and third-grade learning outcomes show the importance of stronger early foundations.

Safety and family well-being indicators also point to the need for earlier, more coordinated support. Riverside County’s 2026 State of the Child Report found that general neglect accounts for more than 80% of substantiated child abuse cases, and children birth through age four made up nearly two-thirds of non-fatal drownings across all age groups between 2018 and 2022. These data reinforce the importance of family strengthening, concrete supports, child safety strategies, and trusted places where families can connect before needs become crises.

Taken together, the data tell a clear story. Riverside County’s youngest children are growing up in a large, diverse, and geographically complex county where many families are working hard while navigating rising costs, child care shortages, health disparities, transportation barriers, and fragmented systems. First 5 Riverside County’s role is to help strengthen the network around those families through trusted access points, early learning supports, health and developmental pathways, Family Resource Centers, home visiting, RivCoONE Connect, warm handoffs, shared data, and braided funding.



Riverside County Snapshot: What the Data Tells

What the Data Show

- A large and growing county Riverside County is home to more than 2.5 million residents, and children under age 18 make up nearly one-quarter of the population.
- A geographically complex county Families live across more than 7,300 square miles, with very different access to care, transportation, child care, and community resources depending on where they live.
- Maternal and infant health needs remain significant In 2024, nearly 1 in 10 babies in Riverside County was born preterm, with higher rates among several racial and ethnic groups.
- Families are carrying economic pressure. More than 310,000 K–12 students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals in 2024–2025, and more than 317,000 students were included in the unduplicated count of students eligible for free/reduced-price meals, English learners, homeless students, or foster youth.
- Child care remains difficult to access and afford Licensed child care capacity has begun to recover but remains below pre-pandemic levels. In 2023, Riverside County had 1,654 licensed child care facilities, and care for a child under age two cost more than \$21,000 annually in a center.
- Early learning foundations show up later In 2024–2025, 40.4% of Riverside County third-grade students met or exceeded English language arts standards, and 39.6% met or exceeded mathematics standards.
- Support needs are connected, not separate Families may need help with child care, food, housing, transportation, health care, benefits, developmental concerns, parenting stress, or safety at the same time.

Why it Matters for Young Children and Families

- Early childhood is not a small issue in Riverside County. The scale of the child population requires countywide strategies that reach families across cities, rural communities, desert regions, unincorporated areas, and tribal lands.
- A “one-size-fits-all” approach will not work. Families need trusted local access points, mobile and community-based strategies, and referral pathways that account for distance, transportation, and regional service gaps.
- The prenatal period and first years of life remain essential windows for support. Early prenatal care, pediatric care, home visiting, HealthySteps, maternal health screening, and warm referrals all help families connect earlier.
- Economic pressure affects family stress, child development, school readiness, health, housing stability, and access to care. Families need concrete supports, benefits navigation, child care access, and trusted places to ask for help without stigma.
- Child care is both an early learning issue and a family stability issue. Riverside County needs strategies that support infant and toddler care, provider sustainability, facilities, workforce development, quality, and family navigation.
- Third-grade outcomes begin long before third grade. Early literacy, quality early learning, developmental supports, health, family engagement, and stable caregiving environments all contribute to school readiness and long-term learning.
- First 5 Riverside County’s role is to strengthen the network around families: Family Resource Centers, home visiting, HealthySteps, early learning partners, RivCoONE Connect, warm handoffs, shared data, and braided funding.

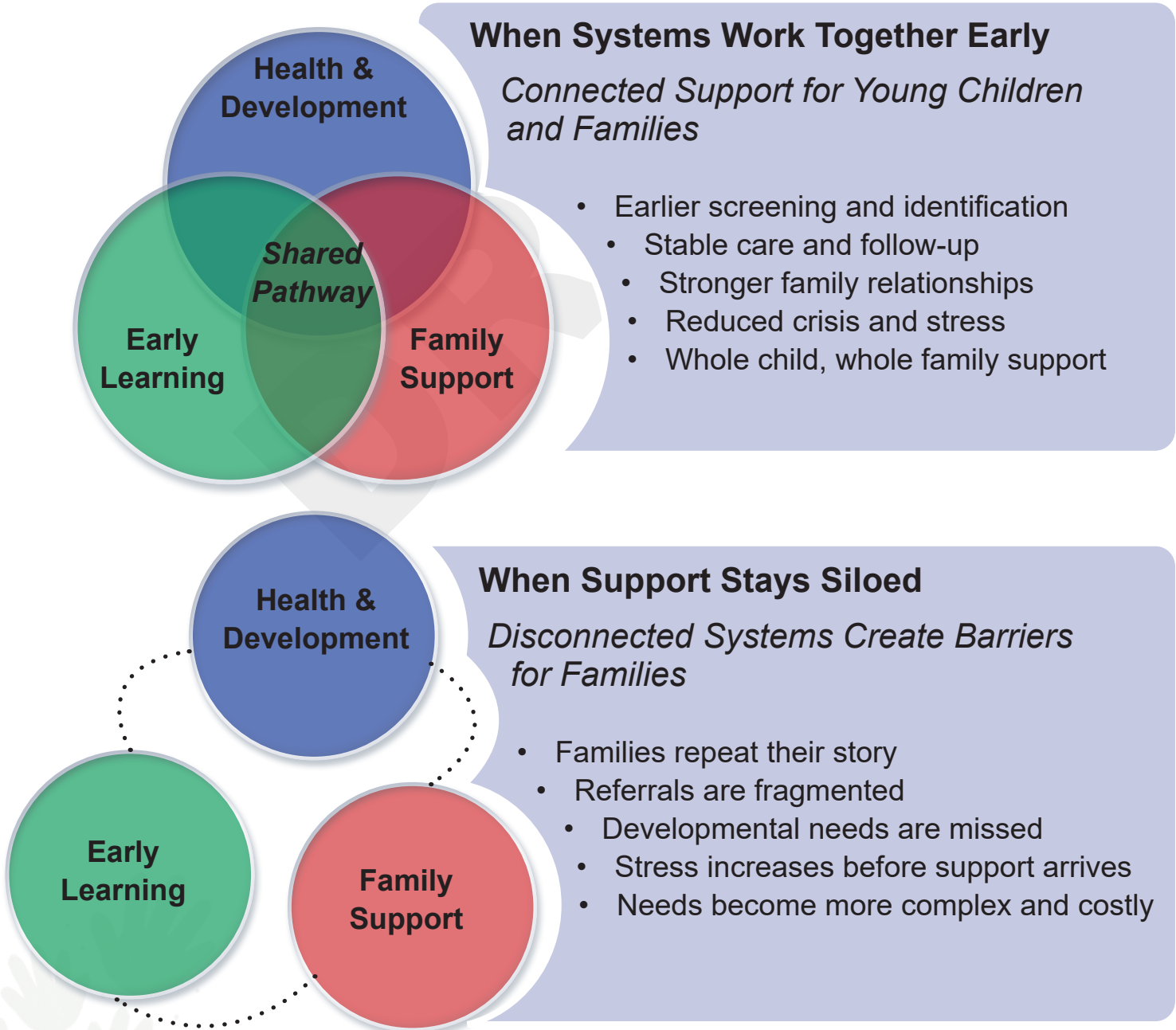
The Importance of Early Childhood

The earliest years shape everything that follows. From pregnancy through age five, children are building the foundation for learning, health, emotional regulation, relationships, and lifelong well-being. Everyday experiences — relationships, routines, care, safety, language, nutrition, health care, and family support — all influence how children grow and thrive.

Early childhood is not only a children’s issue. It is a family issue, a community issue, and a countywide issue. When families have support early, children are stronger, parents are less isolated, schools are

better prepared, and health and social service systems are less strained.

First 5 Riverside County exists to help build that strong beginning. This plan is organized around four connected goal areas: Quality Early Learning, Comprehensive Health and Development, Resilient Families, and Countywide Impact.



Early Learning Matters

Early learning is one of the strongest foundations Riverside County can build for children, families, and the county’s future. Long before kindergarten, children are building language, social skills, confidence, problem-solving, and the relationships that help them feel safe, connected, and ready to learn.

Families continue to face real barriers to early learning and care, especially for infants and toddlers. Care is often expensive, difficult to find, or not available when and where families need it. Providers are also managing workforce shortages, rising costs, facility needs, inclusion needs, and changing enroll-

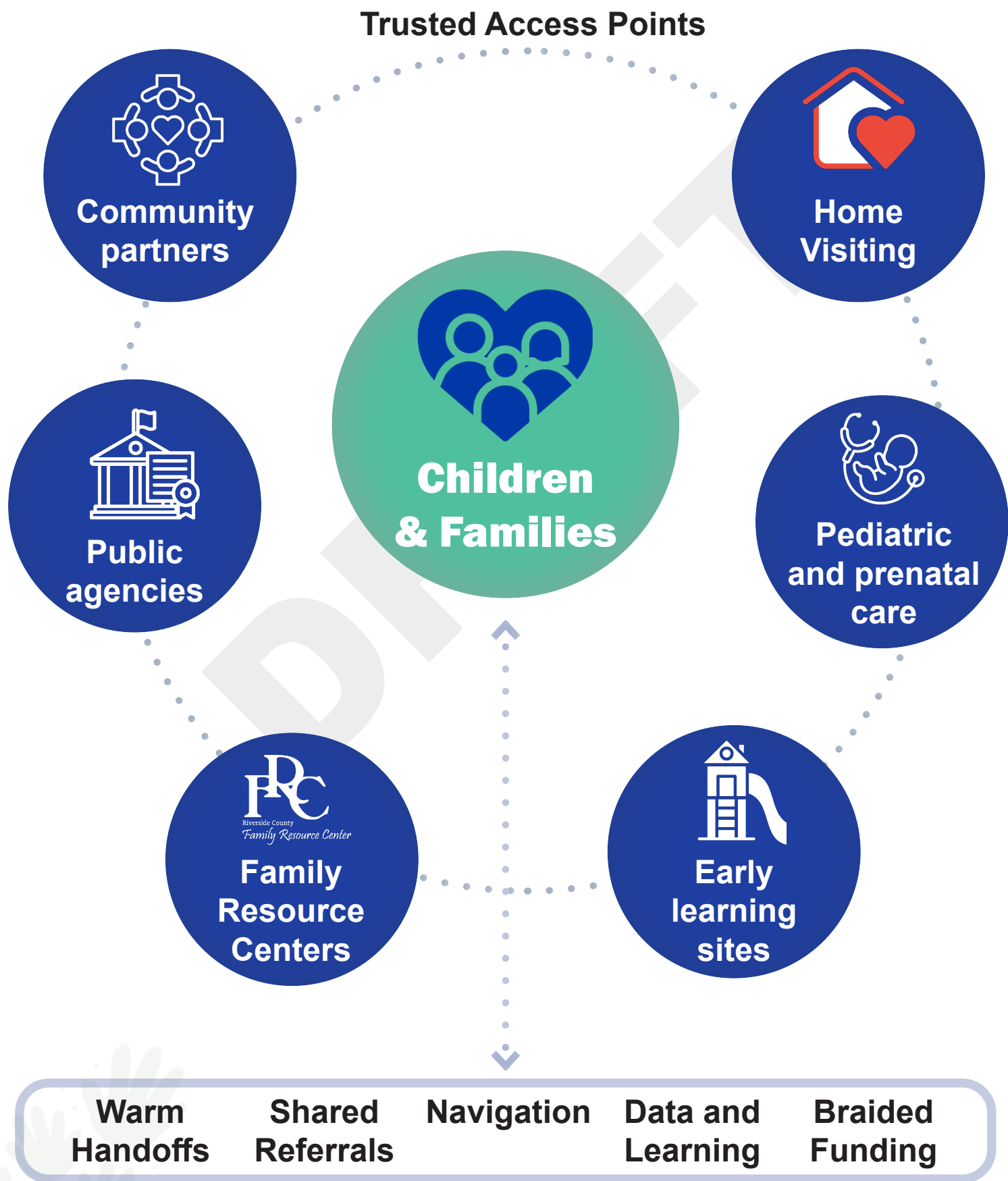
ment patterns as Universal Transitional Kindergarten expands.

First 5 Riverside County’s role is to strengthen the early learning system around families and providers. That includes supporting quality improvement, early literacy, family engagement, child care navigation, facilities, workforce supports, inclusion capacity, and data-informed planning. The goal is clear: more families should be able to find early learning options that meet their needs, and more providers should have the support to offer safe, high-quality, developmentally rich care.

Early Learning Access



Conditions around Children and Families:
An Ecosystem of Support



Whole Child, Whole Family

Young children grow and thrive within families and communities. A whole child, whole family approach recognizes that children’s development is shaped by safe, stable, and nurturing relationships; quality early learning and health care; family economic stability; and the ability to connect to support when it is needed.

For First 5 Riverside County, this approach is reflected in how we invest, partner, and strengthen

systems. Through Family Resource Centers, home visiting, HealthySteps, quality early learning, and coordinated referral and navigation pathways, First 5 Riverside County helps make support easier to reach, earlier to access, and more connected across systems.

**Strengthening Family Protective Factors
Amid Rising Pressures**

Children’s well-being is deeply connected to the strength, stability, and support available to their families. Many Riverside County families continue to face rising costs, housing and food insecurity, child care affordability challenges, transportation barriers, health care access issues, and uncertainty across public benefit and safety-net systems.

This context requires a strengths-based approach. The goal is not to define families by risk, but to strengthen the protective factors that help families thrive: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and children’s social and emotional development.

First 5 Riverside County will continue investing in trusted, voluntary, culturally responsive supports that meet real-life needs earlier and with less burden. This includes Family Resource Centers, home visiting, HealthySteps, early learning partnerships, public education, and community-based resources.



Family Protective Factors:
Supporting the Conditions Necessary for Safe, Stable, Nurturing
Relationships and Environments



Growing Need for Health Equity

Health equity begins with the conditions surrounding families. In Riverside County, health, housing, income, transportation, child care, behavioral health, and access to care are deeply connected. For young children and families, these conditions shape maternal and infant health, developmental outcomes, school readiness, family stability, and long-term well-being.

Medi-Cal is central to this strategy because it reaches a large share of Riverside County children and can support prevention, developmental screening,

behavioral health access, care coordination, and family support. CalAIM and future Medi-Cal reforms create opportunities to align pediatric care, managed care plans, developmental screening, home visiting, HealthySteps, Family Resource Centers, and community-based supports.

First 5 Riverside County’s role is to help make early childhood needs visible in policy and implementation, strengthen coordination across systems, and ensure families receive help earlier, with less burden and more continuity.

Health Equity Snapshot

Riverside County children and families are making progress, but countywide averages hide important disparities.

Equity Signal	What the Data Show
Child population is diverse and growing	Children under 18 represent 23.4% of Riverside County’s population. Hispanic/Latino children make up the largest share of children ages 0–17.
Health coverage is high, but not equal	96.1% of children had health insurance in 2024, but Native American/Alaska Native children had the lowest coverage rate at 81.5%. City-level coverage also ranged from 90.4% to 99.4%.
Early prenatal care is improving	85.4% of pregnant people received first-trimester prenatal care in 2021–2023, but gains were not evenly experienced across racial and ethnic groups.
Preterm birth is increasing	9.8% of Riverside County babies were born preterm in 2024. Rates were highest among American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Black/African American families.
Low birthweight remains an equity concern	7.8% of infants were born at low birthweight in 2024. Black/African American infants had the highest low birthweight rate at 12.9%.
Infant mortality disparities persist	Riverside County’s infant mortality rate was slightly higher than California’s in the most recent reporting period, with Black/African American infants experiencing the highest rates.
Youth mental health needs are visible	Chronic sadness and hopelessness increased among Riverside County students between 2017 and 2023, with 39% of 11th graders reporting chronic sadness or hopelessness in 2022–2023.
Family economic stress affects child health	Child food insecurity increased to 14.7% in 2023, and 28.5% of children received CalFresh in 2024–2025. Housing, child care, food, and transportation costs continue to shape family stability and child well-being.

What this Means for Riverside County

Health equity begins before birth and is shaped by the conditions surrounding families: access to care, culturally responsive supports, stable housing, nutrition, child care, transportation, and trusted places to receive help. These data reinforce the need for earlier support, stronger navigation, coordinated referrals, and place-based strategies that reach families before challenges become crises.

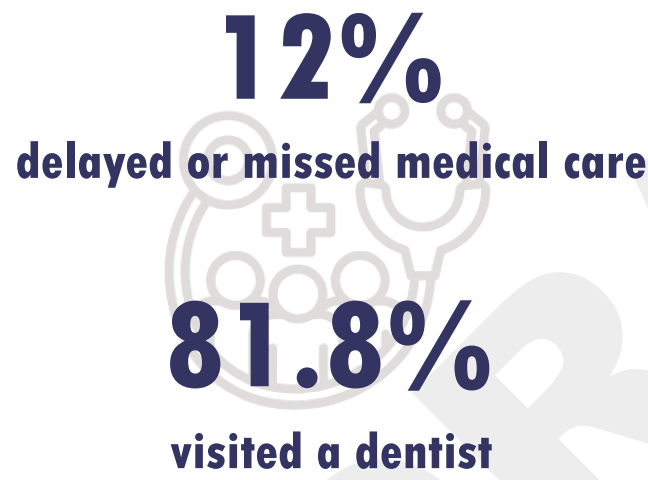
Watches With Partners

Riverside County Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) State of the Child indicators aligned with early childhood prevention, family support, and systems coordination

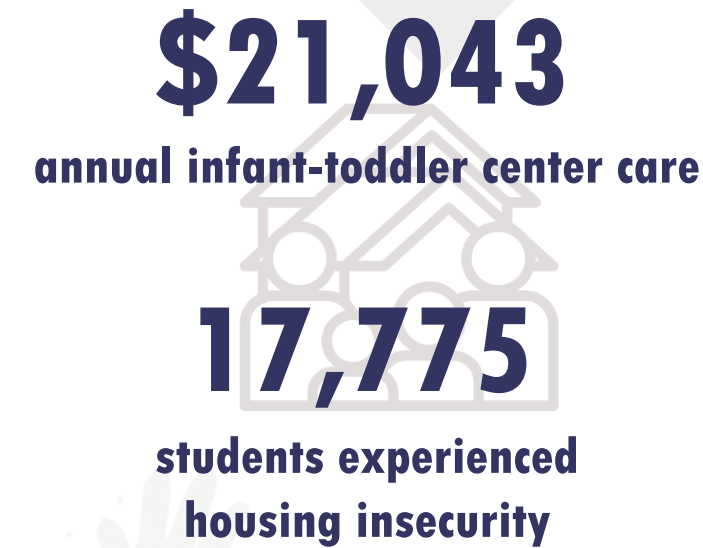
The 2026 OCAP State of the Child Report brings together shared countywide indicators across health, economic well-being, education, and safe homes and communities. First 5 Riverside County does not own these outcomes alone. They are shaped by many public systems, community partners, and family conditions.

First 5 Riverside County uses these indicators to focus prevention investments, strengthen early connections to care, support families before needs become crises, and align work with County partners through shared data, coordinated referrals, and family-centered access points.

Access to Care

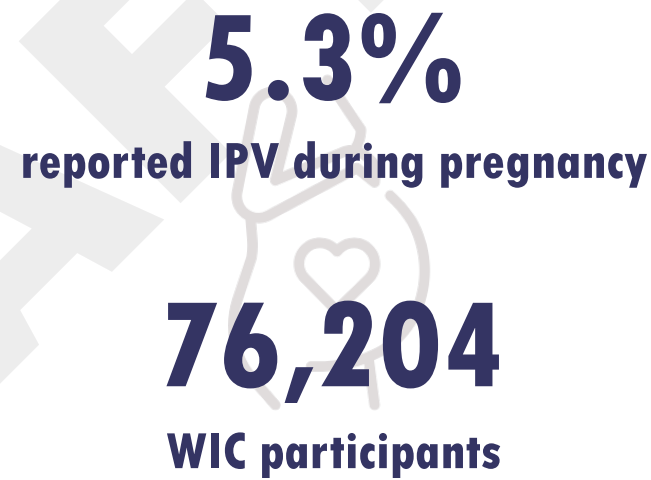


Family Stability

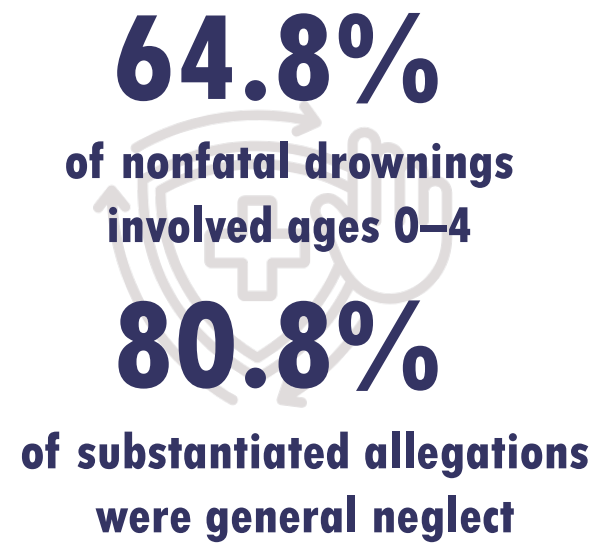


These indicators are countywide signals, not measures of one agency’s performance. First 5 Riverside County tracks them with partners to understand conditions affecting young children and families and to guide prevention, early support, and systems alignment.

Start Early



Prevention Before Crisis



3 STRATEGIC ESSENTIALS & INVESTMENT GUIDELINES



In 2016, the Commission developed three strategic essentials to ensure the success and sustainability of the Commission’s efforts to advance its vision, mission, and long-term objectives. These strategic essentials continue to guide the 2027–2030 refinement, with a sharper emphasis on using First 5 Riverside County’s flexible dollars, partnerships, data, and public-facing infrastructure to strengthen prevention, respond to changing family and community needs, and leverage resources beyond Proposition 10.

The Strategic Essentials continue to guide the 2027–2030 refinement:

- Support strategic positioning and partnerships: Maximize return on the Commission’s future investments through leveraging resources through leveraging and braiding resources.
- Support the development of organizations and providers: Provide technical assistance and support to programs to build capacity, strengthen sustainability, and increase independence from First 5 funding

- Integrate direct services: Provide funding for services that integrate other First 5 programs and link to existing programs and services, including navigation, warm handoffs, and coordinated follow-up for families.

Investment Guidelines

As part of this refinement, the Commission is also clarifying when First 5 Riverside County is best positioned to lead, partner, or support. This role clarity helps ensure that investments are aligned with First 5 Riverside County’s unique value: strengthening family-centered prevention infrastructure, serving as a fiscal intermediary, supporting embedded partnerships, and reducing the burden on families to navigate fragmented systems alone. To help define and support First 5 Riverside County’s shifting focus, the Commission developed five investment guidelines to express First 5 Riverside County’s point of view about how and where it can have the most impact and advance the strategic essentials.



Five Investment Guidelines to Implement the Strategic Essentials

Upstream (Prevention) ➡ Downstream (Intervention)

PROMOTION ➡ PRIMARY PREVENTION ➡ EARLY INTERVENTION ➡ TREATMENT OR SERVICE

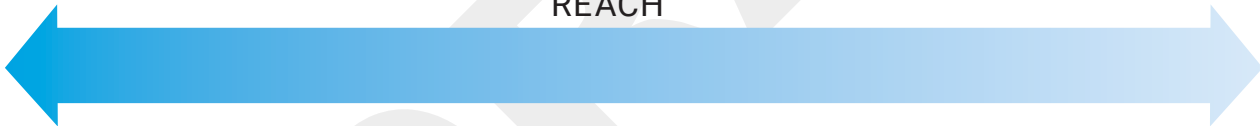


Upstream strategies focus on improving fundamental social and economic structures, environments, and conditions that support the ability of individuals and groups to reach their full health potential and to withstand challenges. Downstream strategies focus on providing equitable access to care and services to ensure that any presenting problems or challenges are addressed effectively.²³

First 5 Riverside County position: First 5 Riverside County investments will fall on the upstream/prevention side of the continuum, prioritizing support for promotion, primary prevention, and early intervention strategies.

Going Broad ➡ Going Deep

LOW INTENSITY/HIGH REACH ➡ MODERATE INTENSITY/MODERATE REACH ➡ HIGH INTENSITY/LOW REACH



Going broad means engaging in strategies that have less impact on a greater number of people, while going deep means engaging in strategies that have a greater impact but reach fewer people.

First 5 Riverside County position: First 5 Riverside County investments will fall on the left to middle section of this continuum, with most investments ranging from low intensity with high reach to moderate intensity and reach.

Growing Local Models ➡ Leveraging Evidence-Based Models

Agent of innovation, generating and promoting new and promising models ➡ Translator of innovation, bringing evidence-based approaches to real-world settings ➡ Agent sustaining real-world results, focusing on a small but important problem ➡ Agent of scaling real-world evidence-based approaches, bringing them to the larger population

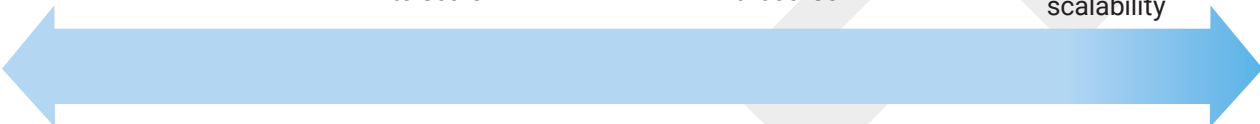


Growing local models means being an agent of innovation, generating and promoting new and promising models. In the middle of this continuum means being a translator of innovation, bringing evidence-based approaches to real-world settings, and being an agent sustaining real-world results, focusing on a small but important problem. Leveraging evidence-based models means being an agent of scaling real-world evidence-based approaches by bringing them to the larger population.

First 5 Riverside County position: Investments will generally fall in the middle of this continuum, and thus First 5 Riverside County will largely serve as a translator of innovation and agent of sustaining real-world results

Go It Alone ➡ Start with Partnership Opportunity

Go it alone ➡ Limited collaboration until approach ready to scale ➡ Moderate level of collaboration early or mid-course ➡ Early collaboration with agents of sustainability and/or scalability



Going it alone means engaging in limited collaboration until an approach is ready to replicate or scale, while starting with partnership opportunities means engaging in collaboration early in the process with agents of sustainability and/or scalability.

First 5 Riverside County position: Investments will primarily follow a model of collaborating early with other partners and/or agents of sustainability and/or scalability.

Direct Services ➡ Systems and Policy Change

DIRECT SERVICES ➡ ENHANCED SERVICE DELIVERY ➡ IMPROVED SYSTEM PERFORMANCE ➡ POLICY CHANGE



On one side of this continuum is a focus on funding direct services; the middle of this continuum includes enhancing service delivery; and the other side of this continuum focuses on working towards systems improvement and being a champion for policy change.

First 5 Riverside County position: Investments will primarily be directed towards systems and policy change.

These guidelines establish the Commission’s preferences for how future investments will be allocated and are to be considered both in evaluating individual proposals and assessing the overall portfolio of First 5 Riverside County investments.

4 OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



First 5 Riverside County's vision, mission, and values remain constant and continue to anchor and guide the Commission's work:

Vision

All children in Riverside County are healthy and thrive in supportive, nurturing, and loving environments and enter school ready to learn and embrace lifelong learning.

Mission

First 5 Riverside County invests in partnerships that promote, support and enhance the health and early development of children, prenatal through age 5, their families and communities

Values



Child & Family



Outcomes-Driven



Collaboration



Sustainability

Impact Model

First 5 Riverside County's Impact Model focuses on what the agency can directly influence and how those results contribute to better outcomes for children and families across the county.

The Impact Model is organized around three program goal areas:

1. Quality Early Learning
2. Comprehensive Health and Development
3. Resilient Families

Across these three areas, First 5 Riverside County focuses on four shared system-change results it can directly influence:

1. Increasing access
2. Improving quality
3. Strengthening coordination
4. Building family and community capacity to navigate, use, and shape services

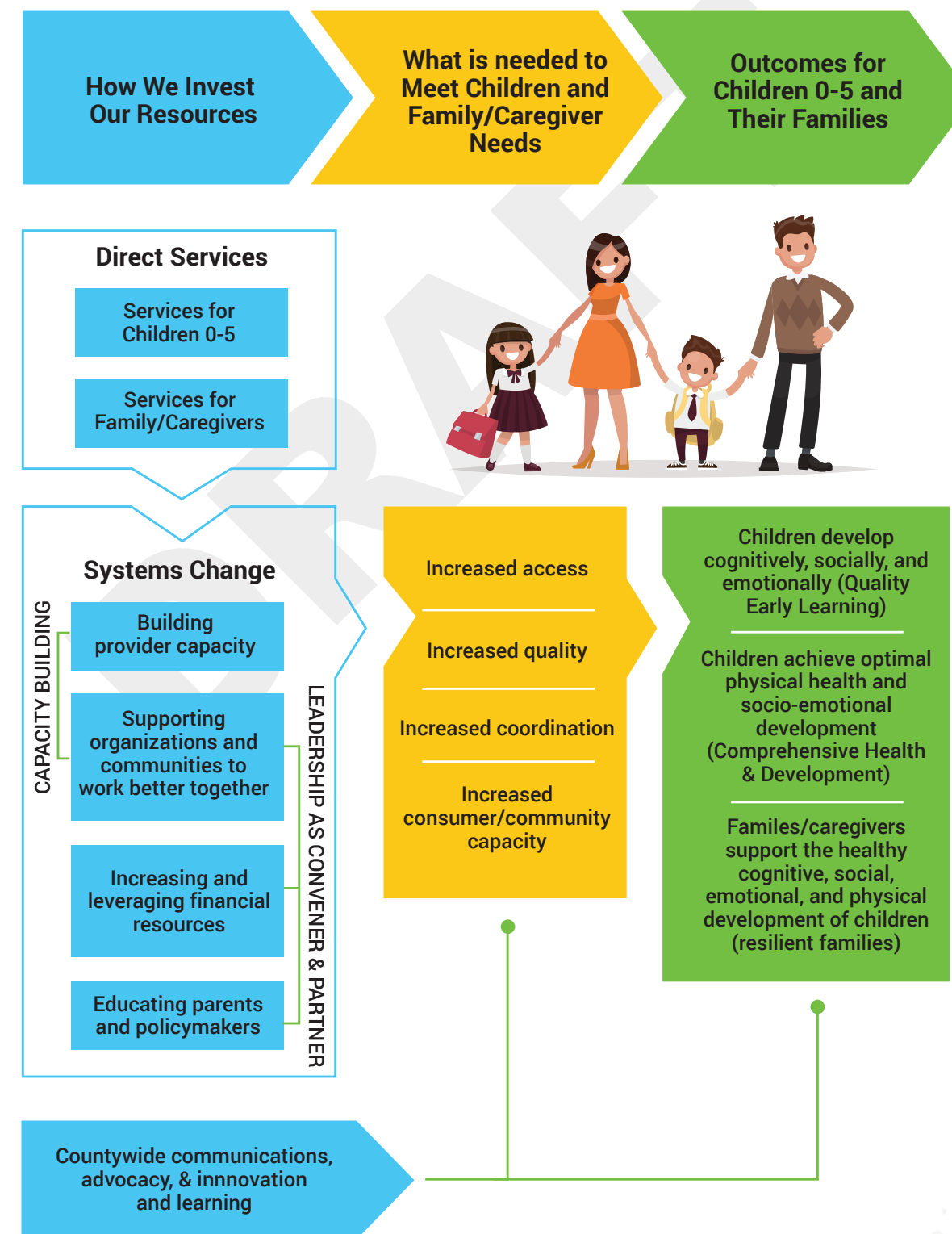
These system-change results are how First 5 Riverside County measures whether its investments are

strengthening the early childhood system. At the same time, First 5 Riverside County tracks broader countywide outcomes, such as children's health, development, school readiness, family stability, child safety, and early learning access. No single agency can achieve these population-level outcomes alone, but First 5 Riverside County's investments, partnerships, data systems, and advocacy are designed to

move these conditions in the right direction over time.

Together, this approach connects what First 5 Riverside County does, what it can influence, and the long-term countywide impact it is working toward with partners.

First 5 Riverside County Impact Model



5 Program Goals



Quality Early Learning Goal Statement:

Children, birth through age 5, have access to high-quality early learning, family engagement, and developmental supports that prepare them to thrive in school and in life.



Lead



where flexible Proposition 10 dollars, early childhood expertise, and county partnerships can strengthen access to quality early learning

Partner



where early learning systems share responsibility for expanding quality, affordable, and inclusive early learning opportunities.

Support



efforts to strengthen work led by early learning partners.

Goal 1 Strategy Narrative

Families in Riverside County continue to face fragmented and inequitable access to quality early learning, especially infant and toddler care. Many families struggle to find care that is affordable, available, close to home, and responsive to their child's needs. At the same time, early learning providers are facing workforce shortages, rising operating costs, limited facility space, changing enrollment patterns, and the ongoing effects of Universal Transitional Kindergarten expansion.

Local listening sessions reinforced that families and providers are asking for a stronger, more coordinated early learning system. Families shared that they need affordable and flexible child care, easier ways to find and access services, financial stability, trusted community connections, and support that reflects the realities of raising young children. Providers continue to offer caring, relationship-based services while managing low wages, staffing shortages, increased social-emotional needs among children, business challenges, and the need for additional resources to support children with developmental or behavioral needs.

In the years ahead, First 5 Riverside County will strengthen an integrated early learning system that helps families connect to quality learning experiences earlier and more easily. This work includes strengthening partnerships, improving referral and navigation pathways through trusted partners and RivCoONE Connect, sustaining quality across the mixed-delivery system, promoting early literacy and family engagement, and investing in workforce and facility capacity with a focus on expanding infant and toddler care.

Through the long-standing collaboration with Riverside County Office of Education, Quality Start Riverside County and the Riverside Hybrid Alternative Payment Program (RHAP) continue to serve as key examples of this integrated system approach. These programs are not stand-alone efforts; they are part of a broader early learning strategy that leverages partnerships, funding, quality improvement supports, family navigation, and data to expand access and strengthen the quality of early learning services throughout Riverside County.

Goal 1 Activities

- Strengthen early literacy and family learning support through evidence-based resources and trusted community partners.
- Leverage funding and partnerships to expand access to quality early learning for families not fully served by existing public programs.
- Use RivCoONE Connect and aligned referral pathways to help families navigate early learning options and related supports.
- Sustain and strengthen quality across Riverside County's mixed-delivery early learning system, including special populations and family engagement supports.
- Invest in workforce and facility capacity that supports quality care, with attention to infant and toddler access.
- Use data and community input to identify gaps, target investments, and track early learning access and quality over time.
- Support early learning inclusion by strengthening provider training, developmental referral pathways, and transition supports for children with developmental, behavioral, social-emotional, or health-related needs.



Goal 1 Results

Quality Early Learning

The following results describe what First 5 Riverside County seeks to influence through investments in early learning access, quality, workforce and facility capacity, family engagement, early literacy, and coordinated navigation.

Result Area: Access

What We Want to See

More families with children prenatal through age five can find and use quality early learning, early literacy, and family learning supports.

> What We Will Track

Number and percentage of families with children prenatal through age five connected to early learning services through coordinated entry points, Family Resource Centers, RivCoONE Connect, Riverside County Office of Education, Quality Start Riverside County, RHAP, or partner pathways. Number of children and families participating in early literacy, family engagement, or school readiness supports. Enrollment or participation rates for infants, toddlers, children with developmental or behavioral needs, and other priority populations, where data is available.

Result Area: Quality

What We Want to See

Early learning providers have resource tools, training, facilities, and workforce supports to sustain quality care.

> What We Will Track

Number and percentage of providers participating in quality improvement supports, professional development, or workforce capacity-building. Number of early learning sites receiving facility, safety, quality, or infant/toddler capacity supports. Provider-reported increases in knowledge, confidence, or capacity to support child development, inclusion, family engagement, and quality learning environments. Family-reported satisfaction, trust, and cultural responsiveness of early learning supports.

Result Area: Coordination

What We Want to See

Early learning providers, Family Resource Centers, RCOE, home visiting, health partners, and community partners use clearer referral pathways and warm handoffs.

> What We Will Track

Number of cross-system referral connections involving early learning, Family Resource Centers, home visiting, health partners, school districts, or community services. Percentage of early learning referrals with documented follow-up or successful connection, where closed-loop referral data is available. Number of partners using aligned referral workflows, RivCoONE Connect, or coordinated family navigation pathways.

Result Area: Family and Community Capacity

What We Want to See

Families better understand early learning options, child development, school readiness, and how to choose quality care.

> What We Will Track

Number and percentage of families reporting increased knowledge of child development, early literacy, school readiness, or quality early learning options. Number of families engaged in family literacy, family learning, parent education, or child development activities. Number of family voice, provider input, or community feedback opportunities used to inform early learning planning and investment decisions.

QUALITY EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:
STRENGTHENING CHILD CARE FACILITIES AND INFANT-TODDLER
CAPACITY

First 5 Riverside County has made strategic investments to strengthen Riverside County’s early learning system by expanding access to quality child care and improving the facilities that make early learning possible. These investments have focused on one of the county’s most persistent challenges: ensuring that families, especially those with infants and toddlers, can find safe, developmentally appropriate, and accessible care.

As Universal Transitional Kindergarten expands across California, Riverside County’s early learning system is entering a new phase. Expanded preschool and TK access creates important opportunities for four-year-olds, but it also increases the urgency to protect and grow infant and toddler capacity. Younger children require smaller group sizes, more specialized care, and facilities designed to meet their developmental needs. Without intentional investment, communities could see continued gaps in care for the youngest children and for families whose work schedules, geography, or income make access even more difficult.

Recognizing that quality begins with safe and appropriate learning environments, First 5 Riverside County has prioritized child care facility improvement and expansion as a core strategy. This work supports providers, strengthens the mixed-delivery system, and helps create the conditions needed for high-quality care to grow in communities across the county.

Looking ahead, First 5 Riverside County will continue working with local governments, school districts, community partners, and early learning providers to expand child care capacity, address facility barriers, and identify practical solutions that meet the needs of families and providers. As part of this work, First 5 Riverside County is partnering with First Children’s Finance to complete a comprehensive Child Care Needs Assessment focused on the child care facilities landscape across Riverside County.

The assessment will help identify where facility gaps are most significant, especially in high-need and underserved communities, and will inform recommendations for long-term investment, partnership, and planning. Together, these efforts will strengthen Riverside County’s early learning infrastructure and advance a more accessible, equitable, and sustainable child care system for young children and their families.

Comprehensive Health and Development Goal Statement:

Children, prenatal through age 5, and their families access the full spectrum of health and behavioral health services needed to support their healthy physical and social-emotional development and overall health.



Lead when flexible Proposition 10 funds, expertise, and county infrastructure strengthens maternal and child health systems.

Partner where child-serving systems share responsibility for healthy development.

Support efforts that improve how systems work for young children and families.

Goal 2 Strategy Narrative

Families should be able to find care, receive guidance, and connect to support before concerns become harder to address. Too often, fragmented screening, referral, and follow-up pathways delay support for child development, health, oral health, behavioral health, safety, maternal health, and caregiver well-being. First 5 Riverside County strengthens the systems that help families receive the right support at the right time. This includes earlier identification of needs, clearer referral pathways, stron-

ger care coordination, warm handoffs, and follow-up across pediatric care, early learning, home visiting, Family Resource Centers, managed care, public health, and community partners.

Supporting caregivers is central to supporting children. Maternal mental and physical health, parenting confidence, and family stability all shape the well-being of infants and young children. By meeting families in trusted settings — including well-child visits, home visiting, child care, Family Resource Centers, and community spaces — partners can provide

support in places families already know and use.

HealthySteps, home visiting, developmental screening, oral health supports, drowning prevention, and related child health strategies are part of this broader approach. The focus is not only on delivering services, but on making the system easier for families to use.

In the years ahead, First 5 Riverside County will continue using RivCoONE Connect, aligned referral workflows, managed care partnerships, data, and sustainable financing strategies to strengthen access to comprehensive health and developmental supports for children prenatal through age five and their families.

HealthySteps in Riverside County

HealthySteps embeds child development, behavioral health, parenting support, screening, referral, and care coordination into pediatric primary care. In Riverside County, First 5 Riverside County has supported HealthySteps so families can receive developmental and relational health support earlier, in trusted health care settings where they already bring their young children for care.

Since First 5 Riverside County’s initial pilot launched in 2017, HealthySteps has grown into an important part of Riverside County’s early childhood health and development strategy. The model helps pediatric care teams identify child development, social-emotional, behavioral health, maternal health, and family support needs during well-child visits and connect families to appropriate services and resources.

During the 2027–2030 plan period, the focus will be on sustainability, alignment, and scale. This includes strengthening referral and follow-up pathways, supporting integration with electronic health record workflows where possible, aligning with managed care and Medi-Cal financing opportunities, and connecting HealthySteps more intentionally with home visiting, Family Resource Centers, early learning partners, and RivCoONE Connect.

Home Visiting and Family-Centered Supports

Home visiting supports both child development and family resilience. In Goal 2, the emphasis is on home visiting as part of coordinated screening, referral, maternal health, child development, and care coordination pathways.

Home visiting provides voluntary, relationship-based support during pregnancy and early childhood. Home visitors help parents and caregivers understand child development, build confidence, strengthen protective factors, and connect to health, developmental, early learning, and concrete supports.

First 5 Riverside County has worked with partners to expand evidence-based and evidence-informed home visiting models, including models supported through CalWORKs Home Visiting and other braided funding strategies. The next phase will focus on strengthening referral workflows, warm handoffs, shared data, follow-up practices, and sustainable financing so families can access support earlier and more consistently.

Strengthening the System of Care

A responsive early childhood health system should help families access screening, guidance, referrals, and follow-up without having to navigate disconnected programs alone. First 5 Riverside County will continue working with clinical, public health, early learning, home visiting, managed care, Family Resource Center, and community partners to strengthen referral pathways, improve care coordination, reduce barriers, and promote healthy development.

The goal is not only to expand services, but to make the system easier for families to use. Families should be able to enter through trusted settings, receive clear guidance, and be connected to the next right support with dignity, consistency, and follow-through.

Goal 2 Activities

- Support early identification of developmental, behavioral, oral health, maternal health, and child safety needs through screening and prevention approaches delivered in trusted early childhood settings.
 - Strengthen referral, follow-up, and care coordination pathways across pediatric care, early learning settings, Family Resource Centers, and home visiting programs.
 - Sustain and strengthen integrated child health models, including HealthySteps and aligned home visiting partnerships, that connect families to developmental and family support services earlier.
- Use RivCoONE Connect and aligned workflows to support warm handoffs, referral tracking, and more coordinated access to health, early intervention, school district, and family support partners.
 - Advance drowning prevention and other early childhood safety strategies through targeted family supports, provider partnerships, and public education.
 - Pursue sustainable financing and partnership opportunities that extend access to coordinated child health and developmental supports beyond Proposition 10 alone.



Goal 2 Results

Comprehensive Health and Development

The following results describe what First 5 Riverside County seeks to influence through investments in screening, referral, care coordination, HealthySteps, home visiting alignment, oral health, drowning prevention, child safety, and sustainable financing for child health and developmental supports.

Result Area: Access

What We Want to See

More children prenatal through age five and their families receive developmental, behavioral, oral health, maternal health, safety, and family support services earlier.

> What We Will Track

Number of children and caregivers receiving developmental, behavioral health, oral health, maternal health, child safety, or family needs screenings through funded or aligned partners. Number of families receiving Whole Person Health Scores, where implemented. Number of children and families receiving water safety education, swim lessons, drowning prevention supports, or other child safety supports. Percentage of infants born to individuals whose prenatal care began during the first trimester, tracked as a countywide impact indicator.

Result Area: Quality

What We Want to See

Funded and aligned partners use validated screening tools, defined referral protocols, family-centered practices, and follow-up workflows.

> What We Will Track

Percentage of funded or aligned providers using validated screening tools, such as ASQ, ASQ:SE, M-CHAT, oral health assessment tools, or maternal health screening tools, as applicable. Number of providers trained or supported in screening, referral, care coordination, child development, oral health, water safety, early relational health, or trauma-informed family support. Family-reported timeliness, trust, cultural responsiveness, and appropriateness of care or referral support.

Result Area: Coordination

What We Want to See

Referrals are initiated, tracked, and completed through RivCoONE Connect or aligned closed-loop workflows.

> What We Will Track

Percentage of screenings that result in referrals when concerns or needs are identified. Percentage of referrals with documented follow-up or closed-loop completion, where data is available. Number of warm handoffs between pediatric care, early learning settings, Family Resource Centers, home visiting programs, school districts, early intervention partners, managed care plans, and community-based supports.

Result Area: Family and Community Capacity

What We Want to See

Families and providers are better able to identify developmental, health, safety, and family support needs and navigate available services.

> What We Will Track

Number and percentage of families reporting increased ability to understand child development, identify concerns, access services, or navigate systems. Number of sites or partner organizations with demonstrated capacity to accept referrals, provide follow-up, or participate in shared referral workflows. Number of public education or family engagement activities focused on developmental screening, oral health, safe sleep, drowning prevention, hot car safety, early relational health, or family support.

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

SPOTLIGHT: DROWNING PREVENTION



Drowning is preventable, but for young children it can happen quickly and silently. That is why First 5 Riverside County treats water safety as a core child health and safety strategy, not just a seasonal activity.

First 5 Riverside County's drowning prevention work has grown from targeted swim lesson scholarships into a broader countywide prevention strategy. Through partnerships with swim providers, community organizations, public agencies, and local leaders, First 5 Riverside County has expanded access to no-cost swim lessons and water safety education for young children and families.

This work helps families understand water risks, build safety skills, and connect to resources before a tragedy occurs. It also reflects a larger goal of the Comprehensive Health and Development strategy: families should receive timely information, support, and connection in ways that help children grow up safe, healthy, and ready to thrive.

The strategy is increasingly data-informed. First 5 Riverside County and partners are using local emergency response and public health data to better understand where drowning and near-drowning incidents are occurring, which ages are most affected, and where prevention resources may be needed most. This helps move the work from broad awareness to more focused, timely, and equitable prevention.

Strengthening the system by:

Resilient Families Goal Statement:

Families and communities are engaged, supported, and strengthened through culturally responsive resources and opportunities that help them nurture, care for, and support their children's well-being and success.



Lead



where flexible Proposition 10 dollars, FRC infrastructure, or First 5 expertise can strengthen service navigation and prevention supports.

Partner



where systems supporting well-being share responsibility for family stability.

Support



efforts to integrate services and strengthen the work led by others.

Goal 3 Strategy Narrative

Families are children's first and most important source of safety, connection, learning, and resilience. When families have support early, children are more likely to grow up healthy, loved, and ready to thrive. When parents and caregivers are carrying stress from housing, food, transportation, child care, health care, program navigation, isolation, or economic pressure, they need trusted places to turn before challenges become harder to manage.

First 5 Riverside County's approach to resilient families is grounded in the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and children's social and emotional competence. This framework keeps the work centered on family strengths, relationships, connection, and practical help.

Family Resource Centers are core access points for this work. They provide familiar, community-based

settings where families can ask for help, build relationships, and connect to resources that reflect the realities of daily life. Through the FRC network, home visiting connections, community partnerships, and public education, First 5 Riverside County helps families access concrete supports, parenting resources, child development information, wellness supports, and referrals in settings that are welcoming and easier to navigate.

As Riverside County advances Integrated Service Delivery, First 5 Riverside County will deepen the role of FRCs as family support hubs within the broader RivCoONE system. This includes strengthening connections to RivCoONE Connect, the Whole Person Health Score, Community Health Worker capacity, shared consent, warm handoffs, and coordinated referrals. Together, these tools help staff understand the whole picture, reduce repeated intake and storytelling, and connect families to the next right support with greater follow-through.

The goal is not to only offer more services. The goal is to make family support more visible, trusted, coordinated, and responsive. Families should be able to enter through a familiar community setting, receive clear guidance, and connect to support in ways that

strengthen protective factors, reduce isolation, and help children thrive.

Goal 3 Activities

- Increase FRC visibility, access, and community trust through clear messaging, outreach, family orientation, mobile pop-ups, co-location, and trusted community spaces.
- Implement RivCoONE Connect across FRCs to support no-wrong-door navigation, triage, warm handoffs, referral tracking, and follow-up.
- Expand parent-child engagement, play and learn, early literacy, school readiness, developmental, wellness, and protective factor activities through FRCs and trusted community partners.
- Provide concrete, health, wellness, safety, financial empowerment, and benefit navigation supports that reduce family stress and strengthen protective factors.
- Use shared problem-solving structures to improve consistency, remove barriers, and support families with complex needs.
- Build family voice, parent leadership, provider engagement, training, and cross-sector collaboration into FRC planning and service design.



Goal 3 Results

Resilient Families

The following results describe what First 5 Riverside County seeks to influence through Family Resource Centers, home visiting, concrete supports, parent leadership, protective factors, RivCoONE Connect, and community-based prevention pathways.

Result Area: Access

What We Want to See

Families access Family Resource Centers, concrete supports, navigation, home visiting connections, and community-based outreach through trusted access points.

What We Will Track

Number of individuals and families served through county-operated Family Resource Centers, the broader FRC network, mobile/community access points, co-located services, and trusted partner sites. Number of families receiving concrete supports, such as food, diapers, housing navigation, transportation support, benefits assistance, safety resources, or other basic needs support. Number of families connected to home visiting, parenting support, health and wellness supports, or other family-strengthening services.

Result Area: Quality

What We Want to See

Family Resource Centers and family support partners use consistent intake, triage, family engagement, protective factors, and follow-up practices.

What We Will Track

Percentage of FRCs or family support sites implementing consistent intake, triage, referral, family engagement, and follow-up protocols. Number of staff and partners trained in protective factors, trauma-informed care, community health worker practices, benefit navigation, mandated reporting, cultural responsiveness, or family-centered service delivery. Family-reported satisfaction, trust, cultural responsiveness, and usefulness of FRC or family support services.

Result Area: Coordination

What We Want to See

Families experience better connected support through RivCoONE Connect, warm handoffs, shared problem-solving, and multi-agency coordination.

What We Will Track

Number and percentage of referrals initiated through RivCoONE Connect or aligned closed-loop referral workflows. Percentage of referrals with documented follow-up, successful connection, or same-day connection, where data is available. Number of multi-agency case coordination or shared problem-solving engagements supporting families with complex needs. Number of partner organizations actively participating in FRC network coordination, referral workflows, or community-based prevention activities.

Result Area: Family and Community Capacity

What We Want to See

Families build protective factors, reduce isolation, participate in decision-making, and help shape family support systems.

What We Will Track

Number and percentage of families reporting increased ability to navigate systems, access supports, reduce stress, or strengthen protective factors. Number of parent leadership, family voice, co-design, listening session, advisory, or feedback opportunities. Number of families participating in peer connection, parent education, child development, early literacy, wellness, or community-building activities. Evidence that family and provider feedback is used to improve FRC operations, outreach, navigation, or service design.

RESILIENT FAMILIES PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS

Family Resource Centers are one of Riverside County’s most important community access points for children and families. Families often come to an FRC when they are facing more than one challenge at once: food, housing, transportation, health care, child care, benefits, safety, paperwork, or family stress. They do not experience these needs as separate programs. They experience them as one life.

Over the last strategic plan period, First 5 Riverside County and the Department of Public Social Services have continued strengthening County-operated FRCs as trusted places where families can be welcomed, heard, and connected to support. What began as a place-based access model has grown into a broader family strengthening strategy that brings early childhood support, benefit navigation, community partnerships, parent engagement, and warm handoffs closer to where families live and seek help.

This growth reflects a deeper shift in the role of FRCs. They are not simply service locations. They are family support hubs that help families connect to concrete supports, parenting resources, child development information, wellness supports, and community relationships before challenges become harder to manage.

First 5 Riverside County is also exploring technology-enabled tools to help families and staff navigate complex benefit systems. These tools may help organize documents, identify next steps, support benefit maximization, and reduce administrative burden. They are not intended to replace staff judgment or trusted relationships. They are intended to give staff better tools so they can spend more time listening, problem-solving, and supporting families.

A recent FRC success story shows this model in action. A parent arrived late in the day without food or a safe place to stay. Staff listened, identified immediate needs, checked eligibility, made an urgent referral, and coordinated with partner programs so the parent could receive same-day support and ongoing connection. This is prevention in practice: trusted staff, strong partnerships, practical tools, and a system designed to respond before a crisis deepens.

Through the FRC network strategy, First 5 Riverside County is helping build a stronger countywide family support system. FRCs are trusted community spaces where families can be seen, supported, and connected to the next right step. As Riverside County continues advancing Integrated Service Delivery, FRCs will remain central to making family support more visible, coordinated, human, and accessible.

6 Countywide Impact



Countywide Impact Goal Statement:

Strengthen countywide systems, communications, data, funding strategies, and cross-sector partnerships so children prenatal through age five and their families can receive support earlier, more consistently, and with less burden.



Lead



with countywide position, flexible Proposition 10 dollars, and early childhood expertise improve systems for children prenatal through age five.

Partner



where organizations and policymakers countywide share responsibility for building a more coordinated early childhood system.

Support



where efforts can strengthen systems-level work led by others.

Goal 4 Strategy Narrative

Families are strongest when support is easy to find, trusted, coordinated, and available before stress becomes harder to carry. For Riverside County, this means building an early childhood system where families do not have to navigate disconnected programs alone.

First 5 Riverside County helps strengthen the countywide tools, partnerships, and pathways that make earlier support possible. This includes Family Resource Centers, RivCoONE Connect, the Whole Person Health Score, shared consent, warm handoffs, public education, dashboards, braided funding, and cross-sector accountability.

The goal is not to create more complicated systems. The goal is to make existing systems work better for families. Families should be welcomed, understood, and connected to the next right support without having to repeat their story at every door.

This work also helps partners see where families are getting connected, where referrals are delayed, where services are missing, and where public resources can be better aligned. Data is used to improve access, planning, follow-up, and shared accountability. It is not used to label families or define them by risk.

Helping Systems Work Better Together for Families

First 5 Riverside County’s countywide impact strategy includes five connected parts:

Trusted access points

Family Resource Centers, home visiting, pediatric clinics, early learning sites, schools, public agencies, and community partners help families enter the system through places they already know and trust.

Shared tools

RivCoONE Connect, the Whole Person Health Score, universal intake, shared consent, and aligned referral workflows help partners better understand family

needs and connect families to support.

Warm handoffs

Navigation, Community Health Worker capacity, referral tracking, follow-up, and closed-loop referrals help reduce dropped referrals and repeated storytelling.

Learning and improvement

Dashboards, GIS maps, public health data, OCAP indicators, program data, partner learning, and community input help First 5 Riverside County and partners identify gaps and improve practice.

Sustainability

Braided funding, Medi-Cal and managed care alignment, CalWORKs Home Visiting, grants, County resources, and partner investments help sustain services and infrastructure beyond Proposition 10 alone.

For families, this work is not about technology or bureaucracy. It is about reducing burden, improving follow-through, and making support easier to reach and trust. For partners, it creates clearer workflows, better information, stronger accountability, and more practical ways to improve the system together.



Systematizing Prevention: Support matched to family strengths and needs

Intensive Support - For Families with More Complex Needs



- Higher touch services
- Coordinated case support
- Safety-net navigation

Examples

HealthySteps Tier 3, Help Me Grow linkages, intensive home visiting, coordinated family support

Targeted Support - For families who need more guidance or follow-up



- Care coordination
- Parent coaching
- Developmental follow-up
- Navigation
- Warm handoffs

Examples

HealthySteps Tier 2, Help Me Grow care coordination, moderate touch home visiting, FRC navigation, specialized referrals

Universal Connection - For All Families



- Early information
- Screening
- Developmental guidance
- Public education
- Trusted Access Points

Examples

HealthySteps Tier 1, Help Me Grow, light-touch home visiting, FRCs, early learning settings

What Helps Systems Work Together

Trusted access points | RivCoONE Connect | Shared intake/consent | Warm handoffs | Referral tracking | Data and learning | Braided funding

Goal 4 Activities

Communications and Public Education

- Develop public education campaigns that help families, providers, policymakers, and community members understand early childhood development, early relational health, developmental screening, preventable injury, and family support resources.
- Create shared messages, partner toolkits, templates, social media content, and community materials so trusted messengers can communicate consistent prevention information across Riverside County.
- Strengthen communications that help families know where to start, what supports are available, and how to connect to services earlier.
- Provide education for policymakers, partners, providers, and community members on why early childhood prevention matters, how protective factors strengthen families, and how countywide infrastructure supports better use of public resources.

Research, Data, and Learning

- Develop and use shared early childhood indicators to understand access, quality, coordination, protective factors, service gaps, and system performance across the four goal areas.
- Use data and implementation learning from RivCoONE Connect, the Whole Person Health Score, Family Resource Centers, HealthySteps, home visiting, early learning partners, managed care partners, and public data sources to improve how families are connected to timely and appropriate supports.
- Use referral and follow-up data to identify delays, duplicated intake, unresolved referrals, eligibility barriers, service gaps, and handoff failures.
- Build dashboards, maps, trend reports, equity analyses, and data products that support planning, investment decisions, partner learning, and Commission oversight.
- Strengthen internal measurement, contract reporting, evaluation, and learning systems so First 5 Riverside County can understand who investments are reaching, what is changing, and

where course corrections are needed.

- Test and refine technology-enabled tools, including benefit navigation and benefit maximization supports, where appropriate, with clear privacy, consent, transparency, and human review safeguards.
- Share findings with staff, Commissioners, Advisory Committee members, partners, and community stakeholders in formats that support decision-making, not just compliance reporting.

Communications and Public Education

- Advance policy and advocacy priorities aligned with First 5 California, the statewide First 5 Network, Southern California First 5 partners, county departments, and local coalitions.
- Support prevention-focused policy priorities related to early learning, family strengthening, child safety, developmental health, home visiting, pediatric integration, Family Resource Centers, managed care alignment, and essential services for young children and families.
- Use fiscal planning and policy alignment to protect service continuity, reduce fragmentation, and sustain prevention infrastructure as funding, eligibility, and public systems change.
- Pursue financing strategies that sustain HealthySteps, home visiting, Community Health Worker capacity, care coordination, Family Resource Centers, benefit navigation, referral infrastructure, and other whole child, whole family supports.
- Continue strengthening RivCoONE Connect, the Whole Person Health Score, Family Resource Centers, universal intake, shared consent, warm handoffs, and closed-loop referral workflows as core countywide prevention infrastructure.

Goal 4 Results

Countywide Impact

The following results describe what First 5 Riverside County seeks to influence through countywide prevention infrastructure, communications, shared data, advocacy, fiscal strategy, and cross-sector alignment.

Communications and Public Education

What We Want to See

Policymakers, partners, providers, and community members better understand why the earliest years matter and how early childhood prevention strengthens Riverside County.

What We Will Track

Number of public education campaigns, partner toolkits, community materials, digital communications, or briefings focused on early childhood development, preventable injury, developmental screening, early relational health, Family Resource Center access, or family support. Reach and engagement through website, social media, newsletters, events, partner distribution, and community campaigns.

Research, Data, and Learning

What We Want to See

First 5 Riverside County and partners use shared indicators, dashboards, maps, referral data, program data, and community input to identify needs, gaps, and prevention opportunities.

What We Will Track

Availability and use of shared early childhood indicators across goal areas. Number of dashboards, maps, trend reports, equity analyses, or data products developed or used with partners. Number of Commission, staff, or partner decisions informed by data, community input, referral trends, or evaluation findings.

Referral and Prevention Infrastructure

What We Want to See

RivCoONE Connect, the Whole Person Health Score, Family Resource Centers, and aligned partner systems strengthen referral pathways, warm handoffs, follow-up, and shared learning.

What We Will Track

Number of partners, programs, or access points using RivCoONE Connect, the Whole Person Health Score, universal intake, shared consent, or aligned referral workflows. Number and percentage of referrals tracked through closed-loop or aligned follow-up processes, where data is available. Number of workflows improved through continuous improvement, partner feedback, or implementation learning.

Policy, Advocacy, and Financing Alignment

What We Want to See

First 5 Riverside County strengthens its role as a fiscal intermediary and prevention partner by aligning policy priorities and braiding funding to sustain services and infrastructure.

What We Will Track

Number of braided or leveraged funding initiatives involving Proposition 10, CalWORKs Home Visiting, Medi-Cal, managed care, grants, county resources, philanthropic resources, or partner funding. Amount of funding leveraged, braided, protected, or aligned to support prevention infrastructure and services for children prenatal through age five and their families. Number of policy, advocacy, or regional alignment efforts advanced with First 5 California, the statewide First 5 Network, Southern California First 5 partners, county departments, or community coalitions.

Countywide Prevention Infrastructure

What We Want to See

Partners have clearer roles, shared priorities, and stronger pathways for working together across early learning, health, public health, managed care, social services, child welfare prevention, and community-based systems.

What We Will Track

Number of cross-sector convenings, implementation teams, regional partnerships, or shared planning efforts focused on early childhood prevention. Number of system improvements implemented across access points, referral workflows, public education, data systems, or financing strategies. Partner-reported improvement in coordination, role clarity, shared accountability, or ability to connect families earlier.

Countywide Data Sources

First 5 Riverside County will use shared public data sources to understand countywide conditions, identify gaps, and guide future strategy refinements. These sources may include SHAPE Riverside County, the California Healthy Places Index, the OCAP State of the Child Report, KidsData, the California County Scorecard of Children’s Well-Being, public health data, education data, child care data, and First 5 Riverside County program and referral data.

These dashboards and reports will not be used to label families or predict individual need. They will be used to understand patterns, strengthen planning, improve referral pathways, support equitable investment decisions, and help partners see where families may need earlier, more coordinated support.



7 Procurement and Accountability



First 5 Riverside County is committed to investing public dollars in strategies, partnerships, and programs that improve outcomes for young children and families. Accountability begins with the Commission’s public direction and continues through administrative practice: budget planning, procurement, contracting, fiscal oversight, performance monitoring, and public reporting.

First 5 Riverside County will procure goods and services in a manner consistent with applicable County policies, Commission approvals, Proposition 10 requirements, and public procurement standards. Scopes of work, contracts, reporting requirements, and monitoring processes will be aligned with the goals, strategies, roles, and measures in this plan. This helps ensure that investments are fair, transparent, compliant, and tied to the results the Commission intends to advance.

For this refined plan, First 5 Riverside County will distinguish between results it can directly influence and broader countywide indicators that require shared action with partners. Direct results include access, quality, coordination, referral follow-up, provider capacity, communication reach, family and community capacity, and leveraged funding. Broader indicators, including child health, family stability, school readiness, preventable injury, and system-level access, will be monitored with partners to understand shared progress over time.

Data and evaluation will support both learning and accountability to strengthen connections. First 5 Riverside County will use program data, referral information, community input, partner learning, public health data, shared dashboards, fiscal tracking,

and contract reporting to identify gaps, improve follow-up, strengthen coordination, and inform future procurement and budget decisions. This includes continued use of tools such as RivCoONE Connect, the Whole Person Health Score, Family Resource Center data, home visiting and HealthySteps reporting, public health dashboards, prevention communications metrics, and tracking of braided and leveraged funding.

First 5 Riverside County will report progress to the Commission annually and use data throughout the year to support continuous improvement, budget planning, contract oversight, and partnership alignment. This includes reviewing whether investments are advancing the goals of the plan, whether contracts and partnerships are producing intended results, and whether families are experiencing support that is easier to access, more coordinated, and more responsive to their needs.

As Proposition 10 tobacco revenues continue to decline, First 5 Riverside County will continue to diversify, braid, and leverage funding to sustain support for children and their families. The goal is to use First 5 Riverside County’s funding strategically: to protect what works, unlock outside dollars, support innovation, and strengthen the countywide infrastructure that helps children and families thrive.

A APPENDIX A: PLAN REFINEMENT PROCESS

What This Refinement Carries Forward and What It Sharpen

Carries Forward

- Vision, mission, values
- Four goal areas
- Protective Factors Framework
- Early learning, health, family support investments
- Annual review and public accountability

Sharpens for 2027-2030

- First 5 Riverside County's role in strengthening prevention, early intervention, and family support systems
- RivCoONE, the Whole Person Health Score, warm handoffs, and closed-loop referrals
- Fiscal intermediary and braided funding role
- Data-informed planning, dashboards, and shared accountability
- Lead/partner/support role clarity

Commission Review Actions

The following Commission actions show the formal planning history leading to the 2027–2030 Strategic Plan Refinement. The refinement builds on the Commission's adopted planning framework and reflects annual review, public hearing, revision, and extension actions over time.

Actions are listed in reverse chronological order.

- January 21, 2026 – Action Item 26-05, Commission approved the existing plan with no changes.
- March 12, 2025 – Action Item 25-16, Commission approved the existing plan with no changes.
- March 13, 2024 – Action Item 24-10, Annual Review and Public Hearing of the Riverside County Children and Families Commission Strategic

Plan 2023–2026, Commission approved the existing plan with no changes.

- January 25, 2023 – Action Item 23-10, Annual Review and Public Hearing of the Revised Riverside County Children and Families Commission Strategic Plan, Commission approved extension of the plan for three years, from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026.
- May 11, 2022 – Action Item 22-15, Annual Review and Public Hearing of the Revised Riverside County Children and Families Commission Strategic Plan 2018–2023, Commission approved the existing plan with no changes.
- December 9, 2020 – Action Item 20-41, Commission approved extension of the Riverside County Children and Families Commission Stra-

tegic Plan through June 30, 2023, Revision IV.

- December 11, 2019 – Action Item 19-33, Annual Review and Public Hearing of the Riverside County Children and Families Commission Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2018–2021, Commission approved inclusion of additional goal area activities.
- May 9, 2019 – Action Item 19-13, Annual Review and Public Hearing of the Riverside County Children and Families Commission Strategic Plan 2018–2021, Commission approved the existing plan with no changes.
- December 13, 2017 – Action Item 17-19, Commission approved the revised Strategic Plan for July 1, 2018 implementation plan with no changes.
- May 10, 2017 – Action Item 17-06, Commission approved the existing plan with no changes.
- October 28, 2015 – Action Item 15-25, Commission approved and adopted the 2016–2021 five-year Strategic Plan.
- June 10, 2015 – Action Item 15-16, Commission approved the Strategic Plan Process Timeline for 2016–2021.

The Strategic Plan Refinement Process

The California Children and Families Act, Health and Safety Code Section 130140, requires county commissions to adopt a county strategic plan, review the plan at least annually, revise the plan as necessary or appropriate, and conduct a public hearing before adopting revisions.

This 2027–2030 Strategic Plan Refinement builds on First 5 Riverside County's adopted 2023–2026 Strategic Plan. It is a refinement, not a reset. The Commission preserved the core vision, mission, values, goal areas, and system-change results while sharpening the plan to reflect First 5 Riverside County's current role as a prevention partner, fiscal intermediary, and connector across systems.

The refinement process included Commissioner direction, family and provider voice, community listening, partner engagement, fiscal analysis, staff implementation experience, and lessons learned from the current strategic plan.

Review of Current Plan and Accomplishments

First 5 Riverside County reviewed progress under the 2023–2026 Strategic Plan across Quality Early Learning, Comprehensive Health and Development, Resilient Families, and Countywide Impact. This review helped identify what is working, what should continue, and where the plan needed to be updated for the next phase of work.

Fiscal and Investment Planning

The Commission and Advisory Committee participated in fiscal and investment planning discussions to assess the long-term Proposition 10 revenue environment and clarify how flexible dollars should be used. These discussions reinforced the importance of leveraging outside funding, protecting core family support and systems infrastructure, using reserves carefully, and applying clearer investment guardrails.

Commissioner, Staff, and Partner Input

First 5 Riverside County engaged Health Management Associates (HMA) to support the refinement process. HMA conducted interviews with Commissioners and/or their designees and facilitated strategic discussions with the Commission, Executive Team, and Management Team.

These discussions helped clarify First 5 Riverside County's role across goal areas and identify how the plan should reflect the agency's work as a prevention partner, fiscal intermediary, and connector across early learning, health, family support, child welfare prevention, public health, and regional advocacy systems.

Family, Provider, and Community Input

Community voice was central to the refinement process. First 5 Riverside County gathered input from parents, caregivers, early learning providers, and community partners to better understand what families are experiencing and what supports they need most.

Families described the need for trusted child care, clearer navigation, local supports, transportation solutions, flexible eligibility, safe community spaces, and support that reflects the real cost and stress of raising young children. Providers highlighted the need for workforce stability, support for children with behavioral and developmental needs, business and enrollment support, and clearer communication to families about child care options.

Additional community listening and learning sessions elevated parent and caregiver perspectives from Riverside County communities, including Meca and Jurupa Valley. These conversations surfaced shared concerns around access to services, economic pressure, family stability, culturally responsive health care, child care, developmental supports, transportation, and trusted local resources.

Role Clarification and Investment Framework

As part of the refinement process, First 5 Riverside County clarified when it is best positioned to lead, partner, or support an investment or strategy. This role clarity helps ensure future investments reflect First 5 Riverside County’s unique value and do not treat all funding opportunities the same.

First 5 Riverside County also developed an Investment Greenlight Framework to support future funding decisions. The framework helps staff and Commissioners assess strategic alignment, prevention value, leverage potential, partnership strength, and whether a proposed investment strengthens systems beyond a single program.

Draft Framework and Direction Check

First 5 Riverside County presented a draft framework for Commissioner feedback before finalizing the full strategic plan. This direction check focused on whether the refinement preserved what still works, sharpened First 5 Riverside County’s current role, clarified the four goal areas, and provided enough direction to prepare updated goal narratives, activity themes, results, and measures.

Final Strategic Plan Refinement

The final refinement reflects Commissioner direction, staff input, HMA facilitation, family and provider voice, community listening, partner engagement, fiscal context, and lessons learned from implementation. The result is a more current, focused, and usable plan that strengthens First 5 Riverside County’s role in supporting children prenatal through age five and their families.

Strategic Plan Approval

The 2027–2030 Strategic Plan Refinement is scheduled to be presented to the Commission for consideration during a regularly scheduled meeting on July 8, 2026. Following Commission direction and public hearing requirements, First 5 Riverside County staff and HMA will make any final refinements needed based on Commissioner feedback and action.

B APPENDIX B: Glossary

Programs, Terms, & Acronyms to Know

Alternative Payment (AP) Program: State-funded child care subsidy programs that help eligible families pay for child care. Families may select care from licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, or license-exempt providers.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): Federal COVID-19 recovery legislation enacted in 2021 that provided funding to state and local governments to respond to the public health and economic impacts of the pandemic. First 5 Riverside County’s plan may reference ARPA in relation to prior emergency response, child care stabilization, facilities, or pandemic recovery investments.

Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Third Edition (ASQ-3): A developmental screening tool used to help identify whether young children may need additional support or evaluation in areas such as communication, motor skills, problem-solving, and personal-social development.

Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ:SE-2): A screening tool used to help identify young children who may need additional support related to social-emotional development, behavior, and relationships.

Braided Funding: A financing strategy that coordinates multiple funding sources to support a shared program, service, or system goal while maintaining the requirements and accountability rules of each funding source. For First 5 Riverside County, braided funding may include Proposition 10, CalWORKs Home Visiting, Medi-Cal, managed care, grants,

county resources, philanthropic funding, and partner investments.

California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM): California’s multi-year initiative to transform Medi-Cal into a more coordinated, person-centered, and equitable system of care. CalAIM emphasizes prevention, care coordination, whole-person care, and stronger connections across health, behavioral health, social services, and community-based supports.

California Alternative Payment Program (CAPP): A state child care subsidy program that provides vouchers for eligible families to obtain child care. In Riverside County, CAPP is administered by the Riverside County Office of Education, which helps families arrange child care and pays providers directly for approved services.

California Children and Families Act / Proposition 10: The 1998 voter-approved law that created First 5 California and county First 5 commissions. Proposition 10 established a tobacco tax dedicated to supporting the health, development, and school readiness of children prenatal through age five.

California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS): The state agency responsible for administering Medi-Cal and other health care programs. DHCS oversees programs and policies related to medical, dental, behavioral health, substance use treatment, long-term care, and related health services.

CalWORKs Home Visiting Program: A home visiting

program for eligible CalWORKs families that supports positive parenting, healthy child development, family stability, and connections to resources. First 5 Riverside County uses CalWORKs Home Visiting as part of a broader strategy to braid funding and sustain evidence-based home visiting services.

Care Coordination: An intentional process for organizing services, supports, information, referrals, and follow-up around a child or family's needs and goals. Care coordination may involve health care, social services, early learning, behavioral health, home visiting, Family Resource Centers, and community partners.

CARES Act: Federal COVID-19 emergency legislation enacted in 2020 that provided economic relief to individuals, businesses, health systems, and governments. First 5 Riverside County's plan may reference CARES Act funding in relation to prior pandemic response or recovery activities.

Child Care and Early Learning Access: The availability, affordability, and usability of early care and education options for families with young children. Access includes whether care is available where families live and work, whether it meets families' schedules and needs, and whether children can participate in safe, nurturing, high-quality learning environments.

Closed-Loop Referral: A referral process in which the referring partner can confirm whether the family was connected to the intended service or support. A closed-loop referral helps reduce dropped referrals, repeated storytelling, and the burden on families to navigate systems alone.

Community-Based Organization (CBO): A nonprofit, public benefit, faith-based, or local organization that provides services, supports, advocacy, or community engagement in response to local needs.

Community Health Worker (CHW): A trusted front-line worker who helps individuals and families navigate health, social service, and community systems. Community Health Workers may provide outreach, education, resource connection, benefit navigation, care coordination, and culturally responsive support.

Concrete Supports: Practical resources that help families meet immediate needs and reduce stress. Examples may include food, diapers, transportation assistance, housing navigation, benefits assistance, safety supplies, utility support, and connections to health or family services.

County-Level Impact Measures: Broader population indicators that First 5 Riverside County tracks with partners to understand conditions for children and families across Riverside County. These measures may include prenatal care, developmental screening, connection to services after screening, child care access, family economic stability, child maltreatment, chronic absenteeism, and preventable injury. First 5 Riverside County contributes to these outcomes but does not control them alone.

Countywide Impact: Cross-system work intended to improve conditions for children and families beyond a single program or contract. Countywide impact includes communications, advocacy, data, funding alignment, policy work, prevention infrastructure, and partnerships that strengthen the broader early childhood system.

Culturally Responsive Services: Services and supports that respect, reflect, and respond to the cultural, linguistic, geographic, racial, ethnic, and lived experiences of families. Culturally responsive services are designed to build trust, reduce barriers, and improve access and outcomes.

Data Dashboard: A visual tool used to display data, trends, indicators, maps, or performance information in a way that supports decision-making, continuous improvement, and shared accountability.

Department of Public Social Services (DPSS): A Riverside County department that provides public assistance, employment services, child welfare services, adult protective services, and access to health care coverage and other supports for eligible individuals and families.

Developmental Screening: A brief, structured process used to identify whether a child may need additional support, assessment, or referral related to development, behavior, communication, motor skills, social-emotional development, or learning.

Early Care and Education (ECE): Programs and settings that provide care, learning, and development support for young children before kindergarten. ECE may include child care centers, family child care homes, preschool, Head Start, Early Head Start, transitional kindergarten, and other early learning settings.

Early Childhood Oral Health Assessment (ECOHA): A screening tool used by trained non-dental providers to assess oral health risks and needs for children ages zero through five and connect families to oral health education, prevention, and dental care referrals.

Early Development Instrument (EDI): A population-level measure of early child development completed by kindergarten teachers. The EDI assesses children's development in areas such as physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills, and general knowledge.

Early Intervention: Services and supports provided as early as possible when a child or family has an identified need, concern, developmental delay, health issue, or risk factor. Early intervention helps address needs before they become more serious or harder to resolve.

Early Relational Health: The emotional connection, responsive caregiving, and safe, stable, nurturing relationships between young children and their parents or caregivers. Early relational health supports brain development, emotional regulation, resilience, and lifelong well-being.

Evidence-Based: A program, model, practice, or intervention that has been studied and shown through research or evaluation to produce positive outcomes. **Evidence-Informed:** A strategy or practice that is guided by research, data, professional expertise, lived experience, and/or promising implementation evidence, even if it has not yet met the formal standard of an evidence-based model.

Family and Community Capacity: The ability of families and communities to understand needs, access resources, navigate systems, participate in decision-making, build protective factors, and shape the

services and supports intended to serve them.

Family Resource Center (FRC): A trusted community access point where families can connect to information, navigation, concrete supports, parenting resources, health and wellness supports, referrals, and other family-strengthening services. FRCs are central to First 5 Riverside County's prevention infrastructure and no-wrong-door approach.

Family Voice: The perspectives, experiences, priorities, and recommendations of parents, caregivers, and families. Family voice helps ensure that programs, policies, and systems are responsive to real family needs and conditions.

Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC): A community-based health care provider that meets federal requirements and provides primary care and related services in underserved communities. FQHCs often serve families enrolled in Medi-Cal, uninsured individuals, and communities with limited access to care.

First 5 California (F5CA): The state commission created by Proposition 10 to support the health, development, and school readiness of children prenatal through age five and to coordinate statewide early childhood investments, public education, and policy priorities.

First 5 Network: The statewide network of First 5 California, county First 5 commissions, and related partners working to improve outcomes for children prenatal through age five and their families.

First 5 Riverside Hybrid Alternative Payment Program (RHAP): A local child care subsidy and reimbursement strategy that supplements and enhances the California Alternative Payment Program. RHAP expands access to early care and education for eligible families and may support quality-linked reimbursement or priority populations.

Fiscal Intermediary: An organization that receives, manages, aligns, and distributes funding on behalf of a broader strategy, partnership, or system goal. First 5 Riverside County's fiscal intermediary role includes helping braid funds, preserve service continuity, support partners, and reduce fragmentation

across early childhood systems.

Geographic Information System (GIS): A mapping and data visualization system used to analyze geographic patterns, service gaps, community conditions, access points, and investment opportunities. **Health Management Associates (HMA):** A consulting partner engaged by First 5 Riverside County to support strategic plan refinement, facilitation, analysis, and development of updated goal narratives, activities, results, and measures.

Healthy Families America (HFA): An evidence-based home visiting model that supports families with young children through parenting education, child development guidance, family support, and connections to resources.

Healthy Places Index (HPI): A data tool that measures community conditions associated with health and well-being, such as economic conditions, education, housing, transportation, health care access, neighborhood conditions, and social factors.

HealthySteps: An evidence-based early childhood development model that integrates a child development specialist into pediatric primary care. HealthySteps supports screening, parenting guidance, care coordination, referrals, and family support during and between well-child visits.

Help Me Grow (HMG): A system model that promotes cross-sector collaboration to help families access developmental screening, care coordination, referrals, and early childhood resources so children can grow and thrive.

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY): A home visiting model that supports parents as their child's first teacher and promotes early literacy, school readiness, and parent-child learning activities.

Home Visiting: A voluntary family support strategy in which trained professionals meet with parents and caregivers, often in the home or another trusted setting, to support healthy pregnancy, parenting, child development, family stability, protective factors, and connection to resources.

Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive (IMPACT): A First 5 California initiative that supports quality improvement in early learning settings, family engagement, and systems-building efforts to improve early care and education.

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health: The developing capacity of infants and young children to experience, regulate, and express emotions; form close relationships; and explore and learn. Infant and early childhood mental health is shaped by relationships, caregiving, family well-being, and community conditions.

Investment Greenlight Framework: A decision-making tool used to assess whether a proposed investment aligns with First 5 Riverside County's strategic plan, prevention role, leverage opportunities, partnership strategy, and ability to strengthen systems beyond a single program.

Managed Care: A health care delivery system designed to manage cost, utilization, access, and quality. In Medicaid and Medi-Cal, managed care plans contract with the state to provide covered health care services to enrolled members.

Medi-Cal: California's Medicaid program, which provides health coverage to eligible children, families, adults, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.

Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan: A health plan that contracts with the state to provide Medi-Cal covered services to enrolled members. Medi-Cal managed care plans are important partners in prevention, pediatric care, developmental screening, care coordination, and family support strategies.

Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT): A screening tool used to help identify young children who may need further evaluation for autism spectrum disorder or related developmental concerns.

Mixed-Delivery System: An early learning system that includes multiple types of providers and settings, such as family child care homes, child care centers, private preschools, Head Start, Early Head Start, California State Preschool, Transitional Kindergarten, school districts, and community-based providers.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): A national professional organization focused on high-quality early learning for young children through practice, policy, accreditation, and professional development.

No Wrong Door: A service approach in which families can enter through any trusted access point and be connected to the right support, even if the first place they contact is not the final service provider. The goal is to reduce confusion, repeated intake, and the burden on families to navigate systems alone.

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP): An evidence-based home visiting model that pairs specially trained nurses with first-time mothers during pregnancy and early childhood to support maternal health, child development, parenting, and family well-being.

Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP): A parenting education and family support model designed to strengthen parenting skills, parent-child relationships, empathy, attachment, and positive child development.

Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP): A state office focused on child abuse prevention, family strengthening, and related data, planning, and prevention strategies.

ParentChild Plus (PC+): An early learning and home visiting model that supports parent-child interaction, school readiness, early literacy, language development, and social-emotional growth.

Parent Leadership: The active participation of parents and caregivers in advising, designing, improving, and evaluating programs, services, policies, and systems that affect children and families.

Parents as Teachers (PAT): An evidence-based home visiting model that supports parents as their child's first and most important teachers by providing parenting education, child development information, screening, and resource connections.

Prenatal Oral Health Assessment (POHA): A screening and education tool used to assess oral health needs and risks during pregnancy and connect preg-

nant individuals to oral health guidance, prevention, and referrals.

Prevention Infrastructure: The people, places, tools, data, partnerships, funding strategies, and workflows that help families receive support earlier. Prevention infrastructure includes trusted access points, Family Resource Centers, RivCoONE Connect, the Whole Person Health Score, warm hand-offs, public education, shared indicators, data dashboards, care coordination, and braided funding.

Protective Factors: Strengths and conditions that help families support children's healthy development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse, neglect, isolation, or crisis. Protective factors include parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and children's social and emotional competence.

Proposition 56: A California ballot measure approved in 2016 that increased the tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products. Proposition 56 revenues and backfill funding have supported health and early childhood-related services, including First 5 investments.

Quality Improvement System (QIS): A coordinated system of supports designed to help early learning providers improve program quality through coaching, training, assessment, professional development, family engagement, and continuous improvement.

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS): A system used to assess, improve, and communicate the quality of early care and education programs based on defined quality standards. QRIS is one type of quality improvement approach within the broader early learning system.

Quality Start Riverside County (QSRC): Riverside County's early learning quality improvement system. QSRC supports early care and education providers through quality standards, coaching, training, professional development, family engagement, and tools to help families identify quality early learning options.

Raising A Reader: An early literacy and family en-

agement model that supports book sharing routines between caregivers and children to promote language development, relationships, brain development, and school readiness.

Reach Out and Read (ROR): An evidence-based pediatric early literacy model in which health care providers give families books and guidance about reading, talking, and sharing stories with young children during well-child visits.

Referral Pathway: The process used to connect a child or family from one program, provider, or access point to another service or support. Strong referral pathways include clear eligibility information, warm handoffs, follow-up, and accountability for whether the family was connected.

Resilient Families: Families with the relationships, supports, knowledge, resources, and community connections needed to care for young children, manage stress, build protective factors, and recover from challenges.

Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE): The county office of education that provides educational, financial, legislative, early learning, and leadership support to school districts, students, families, and education partners throughout Riverside County.

RivCoONE Connect: Riverside County's coordinated referral and navigation platform intended to support no-wrong-door access, warm handoffs, referral tracking, follow-up, and stronger connections across county departments, Family Resource Centers, health partners, early learning, and community-based organizations.

Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments (SSNREs): Relationships and environments that provide children with safety, consistency, emotional connection, responsive caregiving, and protection from harm. SSNREs support healthy brain development, resilience, and lifelong well-being.

SafeCare: An evidence-based parent support model for families at risk for or involved with child welfare. SafeCare focuses on parent-child interaction, home safety, and child health.

School Readiness: A child's readiness to enter school prepared to learn, build relationships, communicate, regulate emotions, and participate in classroom routines. School readiness is shaped by early learning, health, family support, social-emotional development, and community conditions. SHAPE Riverside: A Riverside County public health data platform or reporting resource used to understand health indicators, community conditions, and population health trends.

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH): The conditions in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, and age that influence health and well-being. Examples include housing, transportation, income, education, food access, community safety, racism, discrimination, environmental conditions, and access to health care.

Social-Emotional Development: A child's ability to form relationships, express and manage emotions, explore safely, develop confidence, and interact with others. Social-emotional development is central to early learning, school readiness, and lifelong well-being.

Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework: A research-informed framework developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy that identifies protective factors that support family well-being and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. First 5 Riverside County uses this framework as a foundation for family-strengthening strategies.

System-Change Results: The results First 5 Riverside County can directly influence through investments, partnerships, contracts, referrals, data systems, communications, and policy work. In this plan, the shared system-change results are increased access, improved quality, strengthened coordination, and increased family and community capacity.

Transitional Kindergarten (TK): The first year of a two-year kindergarten experience for eligible four-year-old children. TK is part of California's public school system and is being expanded statewide.

Universal Prekindergarten (UPK): California's broader effort to expand access to early learning before kindergarten through a mixed-delivery system

that includes TK, state preschool, Head Start, Early Head Start, child care, and community-based early learning providers.

Universal Transitional Kindergarten (UTK): The statewide expansion of TK to make it available to all four-year-old children. UTK affects the broader early learning system by changing enrollment patterns, provider business models, workforce needs, and the role of community-based providers.

Virtual Dental Home (VDH): A telehealth-based oral health model that provides preventive and basic dental services in community settings and connects children to dental professionals for review, guidance, and follow-up care.

Warm Handoff: A supported referral in which staff actively help a family connect to another service or provider. A warm handoff may include making the referral with the family, contacting the receiving provider, sharing information with consent, helping schedule an appointment, or following up to confirm connection.

Whole Child, Whole Family: An approach that recognizes children's development is shaped by the well-being of their families, relationships, caregivers, communities, health, early learning, economic stability, safety, and access to support.

Whole Person Health Score (WPHS): A tool used to understand a person or family's needs and strengths across multiple areas of well-being. In the strategic plan, the Whole Person Health Score supports earlier identification of needs, navigation, coordinated referrals, and whole-family support.

Zero to Three: A national nonprofit organization focused on the healthy development of infants and toddlers. Zero to Three operates the national HealthySteps model and provides training, certification, technical assistance, and resources related to early childhood development.

C APPENDIX C: Protective Factors

First 5 Riverside County uses the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework to guide family-centered prevention work. The framework, developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, identifies five protective factors that help increase family strengths, support healthy child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

Protective factors are not a checklist for judging families. They are strengths, relationships, skills, and supports that help families manage stress, stay connected, and create safe, stable, nurturing environments for young children. Every family has strengths. Every family also needs support at different times.

The five Strengthening Families protective factors are:

1. Parental Resilience

Parenting young children can be joyful, stressful, exhausting, and meaningful all at the same time. Parental resilience means parents and caregivers have the support, tools, and relationships they need to manage stress, solve problems, heal from difficult experiences, and continue caring for their children during challenging times.

Research connected to the framework shows that when parents are better able to manage stress, they are more able to provide nurturing attention and support secure emotional attachment with their children. Resilience does not mean families should handle challenges alone. It means families have people, resources, and trusted places to turn to when life

feels hard.

2. Social Connections

Families are stronger when they are connected to people who care about them. Friends, relatives, neighbors, parent groups, faith communities, providers, and community organizations can offer emotional support, practical help, trusted information, and a sense of belonging.

The framework identifies supportive social connections as an important buffer against stress. Research summarized by CSSP links strong emotional, informational, practical, and spiritual support with positive parental mood, parental well-being, responsive parenting, and lower levels of anger, anxiety, and depression. Social connection matters because isolation can make parenting harder. Families need welcoming places where they can build relationships, ask for help, share experiences, and know they are not alone.

3. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Parents and caregivers want to understand what their children need and how to support their growth. Clear, practical information about child development helps families understand milestones, behavior, communication, sleep, social-emotional development, and what to do when they have concerns.

The framework emphasizes that parents and caregivers benefit from information about physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional development;

signs that a child may need extra support; and parenting practices that promote healthy development. This information is most helpful when it is easy to understand, culturally responsive, available in the family's language, and offered at the right time. Families should be able to ask questions without judgment and receive guidance that fits their child and family.

4. Concrete Support in Times of Need

Families need access to practical support when challenges arise. This may include food, diapers, housing support, transportation, health care, child care, mental health support, legal help, or help navigating public benefits and community resources.

CSSP's framework emphasizes that families need help identifying, finding, and receiving concrete supports that address basic needs and reduce stress during difficult times. It also emphasizes that support should be coordinated, respectful, caring, and strengths-based. For First 5 Riverside County, this connects directly to Family Resource Centers, home visiting, warm handoffs, coordinated referrals, and partnerships that help families get connected earlier and with less burden.

5. Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Young children are still learning how to express feelings, build relationships, follow routines, and manage big emotions. Social and emotional development helps children build confidence, communicate needs, play with others, and feel safe in relationships.

The framework connects young children's social-emotional competence to cognitive development, language skills, mental health, and school success. It also notes that children's social-emotional development depends on nurturing relationships, consistent caregiving, and safe environments where children can express emotions, practice problem-solving, and build trust with caring adults.

When children have big feelings, developmental delays, trauma exposure, or challenging behaviors, families and providers may need extra support. Early

support can reduce stress, strengthen relationships, and help children stay connected to caring adults and supportive learning environments.

Why Protective Factors Matter

Protective factors help shift the focus from what is wrong with families to what helps families stay strong. They also connect directly to First 5 Riverside County's prevention role. By investing in protective factors, First 5 Riverside County and its partners help families build the relationships, knowledge, resources, and community connections that young children need to grow up safe, healthy, loved, and ready to thrive.

Protective factors also reinforce the purpose of this strategic plan refinement: to strengthen the connective tissue across Riverside County so families can access support earlier, through trusted relationships and coordinated systems.

D

APPENDIX D: REFERENCES AND DATA SOURCES

This strategic plan draws on public data sources, state and federal policy materials, research and evidence-informed frameworks, Riverside County reports, partner materials, and First 5 Riverside County planning documents. Data points reflect the most current sources available during plan development and should be reviewed as part of the Commission's annual strategic plan review process.

A. Foundational Legal, Policy, and Strategic Sources

California Children and Families Commission / First 5 California. Proposition 10 Statutes: California Children and Families Act of 1998.

County of Riverside Board of Supervisors. Resolution No. 2020-179: Declaring Racism and Inequity as a Public Health Crisis. Adopted August 4, 2020.

First 5 California. Stronger Starts public education campaign and related toxic stress resources.

First 5 Riverside County. Strategic Plan 2023–2026.

First 5 Riverside County. Commission review actions and annual strategic plan review materials.

B. Early Childhood Development, Protective Factors, and Family Strengthening

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. Brain Architecture and Serve and Return resources. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Early Brain Development and Health.

American Academy of Pediatrics. Early Relational Health resources and policy guidance related to

safe, stable, nurturing relationships.

Center for the Study of Social Policy. Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework.

Center for the Study of Social Policy. Protective Factors Action Sheets.

First 5 California. Stronger Starts: Understanding and Overcoming Toxic Stress.

C. Riverside County Profile, Demographics, and Community Conditions

U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

California Department of Finance. Population and birth data.

SHAPE Riverside County. Community health, demographic, economic, and social determinants indicators.

Public Health Alliance of Southern California. California Healthy Places Index 3.0.

Riverside University Health System – Public Health. Riverside County Data Digest and Health Matters briefs.

KidsData.org. Riverside County child and family indicators.

California Department of Public Health. Maternal, infant, birth, preterm birth, prenatal care, infant mortality, and related public health data dashboards.

California Department of Health Care Services. Medi-Cal enrollment and child health coverage data.

California Department of Education. Free and reduced-price meal, unduplicated pupil count, enrollment, and student assessment data.

California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress. Smarter Balanced assessment results for English language arts and mathematics.

D. Early Learning, Child Care, School Readiness, and RCOE Alignment

California Department of Education. Universal Pre-kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten implementation resources.

California Department of Education. California Universal Prekindergarten planning and implementation guidance.

California Child Care Resource & Referral Network. California Child Care Portfolio, including county-level child care supply, demand, and cost data.

U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. National Database of Childcare Prices.

KidsData.org. Child care availability, child care costs, licensed child care facilities, and related early care and education indicators.

Riverside County Office of Education. Child Care and Pre-K Education resources.

Riverside County Office of Education. Resource & Referral program materials.

Riverside County Office of Education. Quality Start Riverside County and Riverside Hybrid Alternative Payment Program materials.

Riverside County Office of Education. Universal Pre-kindergarten resources for families and providers.

Quality Start Riverside County. Program description, quality improvement resources, and provider supports.

Learning Policy Institute. Promising Practices for Mixed Delivery Systems.

Public Policy Institute of California. California's Transitional Kindergarten Expansion and California's Changing Child Care Landscape.

E. Health, Developmental Supports, Medi-Cal, and Home Visiting

California Department of Health Care Services. California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal, including Enhanced Care Management, Community Supports, and related Medi-Cal transformation resources.

California Department of Health Care Services. Dyadic Services as a Medi-Cal Benefit.

California Health and Human Services Agency. Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative materials related to dyadic care.

ZERO TO THREE / HealthySteps. HealthySteps model, evidence summary, tiers, and core components.

California Department of Social Services. CalWORKs Home Visiting Program.

First 5 Center for Children's Policy. Home Visiting Landscape in California.

California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare. Home visiting program evidence and child well-being resources.

F. Family Resilience, Child Safety, and Prevention

California Department of Social Services. Office of Child Abuse Prevention resources, prevention framework, county prevention dashboard, and related materials.

Riverside County Office of Child Abuse Prevention. 2026 State of the Child Report.

KidsData.org. Child abuse and neglect reports, substantiations, foster care, and related child welfare indicators.

SHAPE Riverside County. Substantiated child abuse

rate and related indicators.

Riverside University Health System – Public Health. Health Matters brief on unintentional fatal and non-fatal drowning in Riverside County.

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Childhood drowning and pool/spa safety reports.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Drowning prevention and child injury prevention resources.

G. Countywide Systems, Data, and Prevention Infrastructure

Riverside County Integrated Service Delivery materials related to RivCoONE, Whole Person Health Score, shared consent, coordinated referrals, warm handoffs, and no-wrong-door service navigation.

Riverside County Office of Education and First 5 Riverside County planning materials related to early learning access, child care navigation, provider capacity, family engagement, literacy, inclusion, school readiness, and shared data.

First 5 Riverside County. Program, budget, contract, accomplishment, evaluation, and Commission materials related to Family Resource Centers, HealthySteps, home visiting, Quality Start Riverside County, RHAP, drowning prevention, early literacy, facilities, workforce supports, and braided funding.

First 5 Riverside County. Family, provider, staff, Commissioner, and partner input gathered during the 2027–2030 strategic plan refinement process.

Health Management Associates. Strategic plan refinement facilitation materials, summaries, and draft framework documents.

H. Local Accomplishments and Implementation Sources

First 5 Riverside County annual reports and Commission materials documenting investments, leveraged funding, program accomplishments, and system-building activities.

County of Riverside and California State Association of Counties materials related to the 2024 CSAC Challenge Award for Riverside County’s Early Child-care Education Wage Enhancement.

First 5 Riverside County and partner materials related to Family Resource Center operations, RivCoONE Connect implementation, Whole Person Health Score workflows, Community Health Worker capacity, benefit navigation, and coordinated referral pathways.

First 5 Riverside County and partner materials related to HealthySteps expansion with Riverside University Health System, Rady Children’s, and Inland Empire Health Plan.

First 5 Riverside County and partner materials related to child care facilities investments, ARPA-supported early care and education recovery funds, provider stabilization, and infant/toddler capacity expansion.

First 5 Riverside County and partner materials related to child care facilities investments, ARPA-supported early care and education recovery funds, provider stabilization, and infant/toddler capacity expansion.

APPENDIX E: Strategy at a Glance

Strong Starts. Strong Families. Connected Systems.

First 5 Riverside County helps young children and families get support earlier, closer to home, and with less burden. The Riverside County Children & Families Commission | Established through Proposition 10 | Investing local early childhood funds.

Why It Matters Families need support that is easier to find, easier to use, and connected across systems.

Early years matter The first five years shape lifelong health, learning, relationships, and well-being.	Large county, local realities Families live across urban, rural, desert, tribal, and unincorporated communities.	Many needs at once Child care, health care, food, housing, benefits, transportation, and parent support often overlap.	Earlier support works When systems connect sooner, children and families get help before needs become harder.
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Our Four Strategic Goals

1. Quality Early Learning Safe, high-quality early learning and care that supports school readiness and family stability.	2. Health & Development Earlier screening, health, oral health, behavioral health, and developmental support.	3. Resilient Families Trusted supports that reduce stress, build protective factors, and strengthen parent-child relationships.	4. Systems & Accountability Shared goals, data, funding, and partnerships that make systems work better together.
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Families should not have to understand every system to get help. First 5 Riverside County helps build the connections that make support easier to find and easier to use.

How Impact is Made Investment becomes impact when systems work better together.

Invest > Programs People Facilities Partnerships family stability.	Connect > Early learning Health Social services Family support	Strengthen > Access Quality Coordination Family Capacity	Learn & Improve > Data Family voice Provider experience together.	Children Thrive Healthy Supported Ready to learn together.
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What the Strategic Plan Does

It gives the Commission, staff, County partners, and community partners a shared roadmap for strengthening Riverside County’s early childhood system.

The plan focuses on practical changes families can feel: easier access, better quality, stronger coordination, and more capacity in families and communities.

Our role is to help the right partners, funding, data, and supports work together for young children and families.

Lead

where flexible funding, County infrastructure, or early childhood expertise can move work forward.

Many needs at once

where public systems and community partners share responsibility for children and families.

Earlier support works

where funding, data, coordination, communication, technical assistance, or advocacy helps others go further.

What We Advance Across the Four Goals

Quality Early Learning Child care access; infant and toddler capacity; literacy; family engagement; facilities; workforce and quality improvement.	Comprehensive Health & Development Developmental screening; Help Me Grow; HealthySteps; home visiting, oral health; pediatric partnerships; early intervention pathways.	Resilient Families Family Resource Centers; home visiting; parent education; concrete supports; warm handoffs; community connection.	Systems & Accountability RivCoONE; Whole Person Health Scores, closed-loop referrals; dashboards; braided funding; policy and advocacy; public education; public accountability; continuous learning.
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What Success Looks Like

Families know where to go Clearer entry points and trusted places for support.	Children are connected earlier Screening, referrals, follow-up, and early intervention happen sooner.	More access to quality care Early learning and child care capacity grows where families need it.	FRCs are welcoming hubs Family Resource Centers offer connection, support, and prevention activities.
Partners solve problems together Less duplication, better handoffs, and shared accountability.	Funding goes further Braided funds and partnerships help sustain what works.	Data drives improvement Dashboards and learning loops show gaps and guide action.	Children and families thrive Young children are healthy, supported, and ready to learn.

When Riverside County invests early, children thrive, families are stronger, and public systems work better.

Riverside County Children & Families Commission | First 5 Riverside County

CONNECTING FAMILIES and the **COMMUNITY** with resources to build a **STRONG FOUNDATION** for **SUCCESS** for children 0 through 5 years of age.





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