



## FIRST 5 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY



## ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT



July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

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## Acknowledgements

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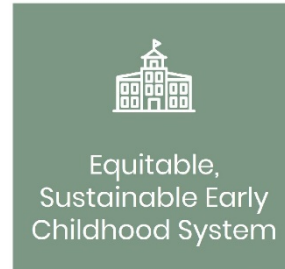
Nicole M. Young

# EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS

First 5 supports all young children and their families in Santa Cruz County, while prioritizing efforts that are responsive to the needs of the county's diverse community, and which have been shaped by community voice, and focus on eliminating disparities based on race, ethnicity, language, income, and other characteristics. In that context, First 5 seeks to strengthen the early childhood system of care by:

- **Leveraging** Prop 10 resources to create, strengthen, or fill gaps in service delivery systems;
- **Supporting** community initiatives, training, data sharing, community events, and capacity-building projects;
- **Implementing** and **evaluating** evidence-based and research-informed programs and practices;
- **Facilitating** collaboration among public, nonprofit, and private partners in order to connect siloed systems and services;
- **Serving** as the backbone for collective impact collaboratives, such as Quality Counts Santa Cruz County and Thrive by 5;
- **Advocating** for policies and budgets that prioritize early childhood;
- **Convening** partners to implement local solutions that address and integrate systems and policy changes initiated at the local, state, and federal levels.

Over the last 20 years, these service integration and systems building functions have become a cornerstone of First 5's strategy to promote and create an equitable and sustainable early childhood system of care in Santa Cruz County. Central to that strategy is the role that First 5 plays leading the coordination and evaluation of the county-wide Thrive by 5 Early Childhood Fund in partnership with the Human Services Department and the Health Services Agency, with guidance from an Advisory Committee established by the First 5 Santa Cruz County Commission.



- Increased coordination and integration among organizations and sectors serving young children and families
- Increase in local, state, and federal policies and legislation that prioritize prevention, early intervention, and equity for young children and their families
- Increase in local, state, and federal funding to sustain and institutionalize investments in the early childhood system of care

## Thrive by 5

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In January 2017, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors established the **Thrive by Three (TbT) Early Childhood Fund** as a dedicated funding source and a comprehensive local initiative to improve the following outcomes and indicators for the County’s youngest children (prenatal – 3) and their families:

### **Babies are born healthy**

- Prenatal care in the first trimester
- Full term births and healthy birthweight

### **Families have the resources they need to support children’s optimal development**

- Access to high-quality care and early learning opportunities
- Access to economic and self-sufficiency supports

### **Young children live in safe, nurturing families**

- Improved parental confidence, parenting practices, and parent-child relationships
- Parent and caregiver emotional well-being

### **Children are happy, healthy, and thriving by age 3**

- Prevention of child maltreatment and entries into foster care



In May 2022, the Board of Supervisors approved a proposal to expand the scope and purpose of the TbT Fund to **Thrive by 5 (Tb5)**. This created greater consistency and opportunities for alignment with other early childhood initiatives and funding streams. Since that time First 5 and its Thrive by 5 partners have:

- Adopted a Thrive by 5 theory of change (see Appendix C) that articulates a shared vision of thriving children and families in a resilient, just community and acknowledges that achieving this requires addressing the root causes of the “Pair of ACEs,” or Adverse Childhood Experiences that occur in Adverse Community Environments, a concept originally developed by the Center for Community Resilience at The George Washington University (<https://ccr.publichealth.gwu.edu/>).
- Expanded the Thrive by 5 Advisory Committee’s membership to include people or agencies representing CORE Conditions for Health and Well-Being not previously represented on the committee (e.g., Healthy Environments, and Community Connectedness). In addition, four seats on the Advisory Committee were added specifically for Parent Leaders with young children.

- Expanded the Thrive by 5 Community-Level outcomes and indicators and aligned them with the CORE Conditions for Health and Well-being to provide a more cohesive strategic framework for the Thrive by 5 initiative.
- Convened four meetings of the Thrive by 5 Advisory Committee over the course of the fiscal year focusing on key topics, including updates on the Nurse Family Partnership program as well as implementation of the HealthySteps program within Santa Cruz Community Health and Salud Para La Gente. The Committee also provided oversight and guidance to a multi-year effort to develop a Comprehensive Fiscal Analysis of early childhood systems in Santa Cruz County focused on home visiting and early care and education.
- Convened three meetings of the Home Visiting Learning Collaborative (HVLC) focused on a range of topics including Trauma Informed Practice, Motivational Interviewing, and HealthySteps.
- Convened an ad hoc Coordinated Entry Workgroup focused on supporting and enhancing the process of referring CalWORKs participants to the four home visiting programs in Santa Cruz County.
- Enrolled over 340 families of children from prenatal to age 5 in one of four home visiting programs in the County (Nurse Family Partnership, Field Nursing, Families Together, or Early Head Start Home Visiting).
- Continued to support integration, growth, and improvement of the HealthySteps program within the Thrive by 5 system of care. HealthySteps is an interdisciplinary, evidence-based pediatric primary care program that served over 3,600 children in FY 2022-23 at Salud Para La Gente and Santa Cruz Community Health clinics.
- Delivered Early Learning Scholarships (ELS) to 112 infant and toddler care providers serving families who are eligible for state child care subsidies. The ELS are designed to help providers close the gap between the high cost of quality care and subsidies provided by the State of California.

In the coming year First 5 will continue to coordinate and evaluate the Thrive by 5 initiative with a focus on completion of a Comprehensive Fiscal Analysis of early childhood systems in Santa Cruz County that is focused on home visiting and early care and education.

## Communications and Community Engagement

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In FY 2022-23, First 5 Santa Cruz County continued to develop and implement its communications plan that focused on increasing awareness of early childhood development, offering resources for families and early care and education providers, and promoting the agency's programs and partnerships both locally and state-wide. To address equity and access, First 5 continued to engage Spanish language translation and interpretation services for its website, newsletter, additional outreach materials and community engagement.

During National Immunization Awareness month in August of 2022, First 5 partnered with Santa Cruz County Public Health to print and mail 6,200 informational flyers on the importance of childhood immunizations. These flyers went directly to families with young children across the County who had been seen by the Baby Gateway program over the past five years.

In the late spring of 2023, First 5, in partnership with CORE Investments Santa Cruz County, Cradle to Career Santa Cruz County, the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, and the Child Development Resource Center, coordinated and hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual "Learn About Transitional Kindergarten: A Bilingual Town Hall Led By and For Families." This bilingual, family education event was facilitated by local parent leaders and attended by over 50 local families, school district representatives, and community members.

Building on the launch of its new website in 2021, First 5 continued to expand the depth of information about its programs and partnerships on the site, and built out additional community resources for families, as well as educational resources for early care and education providers.

During the fiscal year First 5 also continued publishing its monthly bilingual e-newsletter and expanded the list of community resources included within it. By the end of the fiscal year, the e-newsletter had a distribution reach of over 1,000 individuals. First 5 also increased its social media presence on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram to further engage with families and community members. Facebook followers grew to over 680, Instagram followers grew to over 115, and X followers grew to over 120 during the year.

In addition to the Thrive by 5 and communications and community engagement activities just described, First 5 continues to play an active role on the following systems-building efforts led by First 5’s partners.

## Collective of Results and Evidence-based (CORE) Investments



Beginning in 2015 and initially focused on the transition of the City and County of Santa Cruz’s Community Programs funding model, CORE Investments is both a funding model and a broader movement to create the conditions for equitable health and well-being across the life span – prenatal through end of life. While not limited to the well-being of young children and families, CORE has emerged as a substantial and critical initiative designed to help create the type of equitable, integrated services and systems originally envisioned by the authors of Prop 10. First 5 serves on the CORE Steering Committee, helping guide the project through a multi-phase, collaborative planning process, which has resulted in defining eight interdependent “CORE Conditions for Health and Well-being.”

**CORE Conditions for Health and Well-being**



## DataShare Santa Cruz County



In September of 2017 the Health Improvement Partnership of Santa Cruz County (HIP) initiated a collaborative effort to develop a county-wide data sharing system designed to share data on a variety of factors that affect the well-being of residents in the county. In 2021, management of the system was turned over to four administrative partners: the County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency, the United Way of Santa Cruz County, the Community Health Trust of Pajaro Valley, and CORE Investments.

DataShare’s mission is to provide an accessible, comprehensive, and reliable resource for local, regional, and national data available to everyone. DataShare Santa Cruz County envisions an equitable, thriving, and resilient community where everyone shares responsibility for creating the social, economic, and environmental conditions necessary for health and well-being at every stage of life. The website, [www.datasharescc.org](http://www.datasharescc.org), is an interactive data platform with local, state, and national data that allows users to explore and understand information about our local community. The site holds robust data and indicators in the areas of health, economy, education, environment, government and politics, public safety, transportation, and social environment.

## Central Coast Early Childhood Advocacy Network



Building on a series of successful legislative visits and policy wins for early childhood in 2017, First 5 Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties joined forces in FY 2017-18 to help form the tri-county Central Coast Early Childhood Advocacy Network (CCECAN). Representing over 94,000 children ages 0-8, CCECAN is a collaboration of organizations and individuals in the tri-county area committed to strengthening and advocating for policies and systems change at the state and local level that will support thriving children and families.

## Cradle to Career



Building on the success of the Live Oak Cradle to Career place-based initiative, the effort has now expanded county-wide and is simply known as “Cradle to Career” (C2C). Grown from a nascent idea in 2013 championed by former Supervisor John Leopold, to a vibrant results-based collaboration between parents and local education, health, and social service leaders in four school districts across the county, C2C’s mission is to work collectively to empower families, deliver resources, and advocate for equitable and inclusive support systems to eliminate disparities and ensure all Santa Cruz County children thrive in their education, health, and character.

## Oral Health Access



Oral Health Access Santa Cruz was created in 2016 as a steering committee made up of community leaders and organizations, dental and medical clinics, and educators to address the oral health needs in Santa Cruz County. Led by Dientes Community Dental, the County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency, and numerous community partners, the committee’s mission is to improve the oral health of Santa Cruz County residents by uniting stakeholders and advocating sound, measurable strategies that increase access to care and education.