



Building an Integrated Early Intervention and Prevention Services Model

Background

For over 20 years the First 5 Commission of San Diego (First 5) and Child and Family Well-Being Department (CFWB) have provided critical services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families countywide. These programs include the First 5 programs Healthy Development Services (HDS) and KidSTART Center, as well as the CFWB program Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (DSEP).

In 2006, First 5 made a significant investment in creating and implementing HDS which is a groundbreaking program created to address service gaps for children with developmental concerns and behavioral issues. It is a comprehensive system of developmental and behavioral services for children 0 to 5 whose challenges are not severe enough to qualify them for existing early intervention services. HDS created new treatment services for children with mild to moderate needs, providing help for children who otherwise would not receive care, and bridging crucial gaps in developmental care for traditionally underserved families. HDS services include care coordination and group and/or individual treatment for developmental and behavioral delays.

In 2009, First 5 approved funding for the implementation of the KidSTART center. The initial phase of KidSTART focused on only serving children 0 to 5 years in the child welfare system and in 2012 the population was expanded to serve all children 0 to 5 years. The KidSTART center provides comprehensive triage, assessments, referrals and treatment for children 0 to 5 years of age with complex developmental and social-emotional needs. Infants, toddlers and preschoolers, along with their families and caregivers, experiencing atypical development and behavior will be provided with access to treatment at the appropriate level of intensity.

Additionally in 2009, First 5 approved the funding for the implementation of DSEP. DSEP is a collaborative system of care that addresses the developmental and social-emotional needs of children under 6 years of age who have an active child welfare case.

The DSEP program conducts developmental and behavioral screenings, case management and direct intervention with children and their caregivers. DSEP services include evidence-informed prevention and early intervention services, monitoring and tracking services, consultations, and intensive care coordination for children who come through Polinsky Children's Center.

Each of these programs are contracted out to community providers that include Family Health Centers of San Diego, Palomar Health, Rady Children's Health, and SBCS.

In this comprehensive system of care these programs actively work together and refer to one another to ensure the child and their family receives the care they need and deserve. Children with mild to moderate needs are served by the First 5 HDS program and children with complex needs are served by KidSTART.

The success of these individual programs and their existing partnerships creates the unique opportunity to combine the efforts of CFWB and First 5 to leverage available resources and create an integrated continuum of care that supports our most vulnerable children and their families.

Supporting an Integrated Services Model

This item brings together CFWB and the Commission to leverage available resources that include funding from the California Department of Social Services and Proposition 10 revenue to create a continuum of care that supports our most vulnerable children ages birth to 5 years and their families. For over 20 years, CFWB and the Commission have funded these programs separately which aim to reach this population of focus; with limited resources available, bringing the programs together into one procurement provides an opportunity to improve efficiency and support an integrated program.

Critical to supporting the existing needs in the community are making these essential arrays of services available for children and families:

- Developmental screening, assessment, classes, consultation, and treatment (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy)
- Behavioral and social emotional screening, assessment, consultation, and treatment
- Referrals to higher levels of care
- Screening, referrals, and treatment for caregiver mental health
- Care coordination and case management

Building upon the success of these various programs, we have an opportunity to create a continuum of care that will maintain fidelity to the foundational components of each of these programs in supporting children 0 to 5 years and their families. Merging these efforts ensures alignment to maximize resources, continue implementation of high-quality services and an integrated and equity centered system that ensures a focus on children and families that are most vulnerable in our region.

Link to First 5 Strategic Plan

As part of the newly approved FY 2025 – 2030 strategic plan there is a continued focus on promoting each child's healthy physical, social, and emotional development. The primary strategies are as follows:

- **Early Identification and Treatment:** *Promote overall mental health and well-being of young children through partnerships that provide developmental early identification and treatment services.*
- **Maternal and Caregiver Mental Health:** *Promote early screening and services for maternal and caregiver mental health through partnership with health care and home visiting providers.*

This request for a competitive negotiated procurement of integrated prevention and early intervention services supports the goals and strategies of First 5 by supporting system coordination and integration across partner organizations to leverage the unique strengths of each partner providing a more equity focused approach and continuum of care. This effort also supports the goal to promote the overall mental health and well-being of young children through partnerships that provide developmental early identification and treatment services.