

First 5 Commission of San Diego

February 24, 2026

Executive Director Report

Updates Since Last Report

Health

- **Healthy Development Services (HDS) and KidSTART Center**
 - On November 18th, 2025, the Board of Supervisors authorized the competitive solicitation for Integrated Prevention and Early Intervention Services for children 0 to 5 years old.
 - The Integrated Prevention and Early Intervention Services procurement is a collective effort between CFWB and First 5 Commission. This effort will leverage available resources that include funding from the California Department of Social Services and Proposition 10 revenue to support the ongoing continuum of care that supports our most vulnerable children ages 0 to 5 years of age and their families and caregivers.
 - KidSTART continues to serve children and families with complex needs.
- **Healthy Development Services (HDS) Countywide Coordinator: American Academy of Pediatrics – Chapter 3 (AAP-CA3)**
 - AAP-CA3 provided pertinent information on HDS in a Lessons Learned document that informs future program planning for early intervention services.
- **Oral Health Initiative (OHI)**

The current coverage and access to care landscape continues to affect clients served by community health centers, particularly in terms of eligibility shifts and access to timely services. As reflected in the attached January 2026 Medi-Cal data provided by the County, overall Medi-Cal enrollment has declined by 4.37% compared to last year, including a 3.54% decrease among children (0–18). These reductions in coverage may have contributed to more individuals seeking support through OHI for dental services that may no longer be fully accessible through their insurance plans.

As a result, utilization of the OHI Treatment Fund—intended as a payor of last resort—has increased. Additionally, with the 50% reduction in OHI funds for FY 25–26, half of the OHI subcontractors have already run out of their Treatment Fund allocations by mid-year. This raises concerns about children who may now go without care and the widening gap this creates in oral health access. This trend underscores the ongoing importance of OHI services, as subcontractors continue to provide essential outreach, education, and care coordination to help individuals prioritize and address their oral health needs despite coverage changes and system-level barriers. See **Item 5-2**

Family

- **First 5 First Steps (F5FS) Countywide Coordinator: American Academy of Pediatrics – Chapter 3 (AAP-CA3)**

The First 5 First Steps system is currently going through the process of reaccreditation by the (Healthy Families America) HFA national office. This happens every 4-5 years, this is the third

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time for First 5 First Steps. Beginning in Fall of 2025, AAP-CA3 along with Home Start, Palomar Health, SAY San Diego, and SBCS each prepared detailed self-studies that included narratives, evaluation results, and process data to demonstrate adherence to the HFA Best Practice Standards. This year, Public Health Nursing also participated in this process for the first time as the newest San Diego HFA site. The self-studies were reviewed by AAP-CA3 which offered technical assistance to each site on how to best prepare each document. On February 2-4, 2026, national HFA staff conducted an in-person site visit at the AAP-CA3 office. The site visit included file review and interviews of AAP-CA3 staff, program managers of each First Steps site, and community partners who work with the program. HFA staff conducted an exit meeting on the last day of the visit summarizing findings and highlighting strengths. Results were very positive with almost no findings for follow-up except for one suggested addition to a policy on affiliating or disaffiliating sites. The exit meeting will be followed up by a formal Site Visit Report expected around the end of March. Based on reviews of each self-study, HFA selected a total of three sites in San Diego for in-person site visits in the Spring. These are Home Start, Palomar Health, and Public Health Nursing. AAP-CA3 will be working with each of these sites to help them prepare for these visits. The anticipated timeline for completion of the reaccreditation process is as follows. After Spring Site Visits, each site will receive a detailed Site Visit Report with any follow-up action items in the summer. Pending submission of any follow up items, a formal recommendation for reaccreditation will go to the HFA National Accreditation Panel in November or December. That panel will grant formal reaccreditation to First 5 First Steps by end of 2026.

- **First 5 First Steps (F5FS)**

The Home Visiting competitive solicitation process was completed, and awardees were selected resulting in no change of current providers. New contracts are expected to be executed by March 1, 2026.

San Diego County's CalWORKs Home Visiting Program allocation was reduced this year by \$476,143, from \$3,657,344 to \$3,181,201. Reductions were taken from the four direct service provider contracts. Target was reduced to 280 from 322.

Learning

- **Mi Escuelita**

Cal Matters hosted a panel discussion with SBCS and First 5 California Executive Director Jackie Thu-Huong Wong on February 5th to discuss "From Healing to Learning: How trauma-informed care shapes the future of education." SBCS President and CEO Kathryn Lembo and Mi Escuelita program director Lisa Klemp were also on the panel.

- **Learn Well Initiative (LWI)**

- First 5 California notified Commission staff that the Impact Legacy Grant will remain intact with the same funding level for FY 2026-27. First 5 San Diego and the San Diego Office of Education (SDCOE) submitted the application for the 2026-27 IMPACT Legacy Grant in January.
- During the second quarter, the California Workforce Registry began its shutdown. SDCOE created a new internal process to track all participants' trainings manually. This new manual process takes a lot of time from staff, beginning with the creation of the process, the formulas, and the training of staff that need to import and export data. The Learn Well team did not account for the process because the team was hoping additional funding would become available to extend the California Workforce Registry.

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Community

- **Community Outreach and Engagement Events**

First 5 San Diego is proud to have sponsored or participated in the following **14** community outreach event(s):

- October 31, 2025 - Halloween Family Day (**Sponsored**)
- November 22, 2025 – MCSS Tree Lighting Celebration (**Sponsored**)
- November 30, 2025 - East Village Tree Lighting (**Sponsored**)
- December 5, 2025 - Talls & Smalls (**Sponsored**)
- December 6, 2025 - December Nights (**Sponsored**)
- December 7, 2025 - December Nights (**Sponsored**)
- December 9, 2025 - Baby Story Time
- December 13, 2025 - San Diego Nice Guys 33rd Annual
- December 13, 2025 - A Kimball Holiday
- December 20, 2025 - Polar Express Day (**Sponsored**)
- December 22, 2025 - Fallbrook Family Health Center's
- January 9, 2026 - Talls & Smalls (**Sponsored**)
- February 6, 2026 - Talls & Smalls (**Sponsored**)
- On Going – Toddler Time (**Sponsored**)

- **Kit for New Parents (KIT)**

- The Kit for New Parents program resumed shipping on October 14, 2025. At this time First 5 California is projecting a 4-6 week period to catch up on all orders placed during the shipping pause. Partners and families will receive an email when their order ships.

Administration

- **Finance Committee**

- On October 7, 2025, the Finance Committee convened to review and approve the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. Additionally, the committee approved the Balance Sheet as of August 31, 2025 and the 2026 Finance Committee meeting schedule.

- **Administrative Updates**

- Communication with the HDS / KidStart providers has been issued regarding 1-year contract extensions due to delayed procurement efforts of the Integrated Prevention Early Intervention services. This is for early intervention services countywide.
- Pending procurements include integrated prevention and early intervention and oral health initiatives are anticipated for this fall 2026.
- As new contracts are awarded, they will be issued by the Department of Purchasing and Contracting. The FY 26/27 operating budget will have a new line item to capture the costs associated with utilizing DPC to issue new contracts, amendments and payment remittance. The costs associated with new Internal Service Fund is at .68% per transaction amount
- Notice of Intent to award for the Home Visiting program has been posted as of January 27, 2026. See **Item 5-3**.
- Working with CFWB on the new electronic health record systems – EPIC as it relates to the Home Visiting program.

- **First 5 Advocacy & Networking / Professional Development**

- ED Arguilez continued efforts with CFWB on the FFPSA funding pathway for FY25-26 to leverage administrative and training costs for F5SD staff assigned, as well as all contractors.

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- Choose Children 2026 Campaign is active to ensure that candidates for California Governor are aware of our priorities for young children and families; and support investments and approaches that advance the well-being, care, and learning of young children, their families, and the essential workers who care for them. You can learn more at choosechildren.org
- April 16th is the annual statewide First 5 Association Advocacy Day. The 2026 policy priorities are provided for your review. See **Item 5-4**.
- ED Arguilez continues her participation as a thought partner with the San Diego Children First Collective (CFC) and supporting the mission to *make quality, affordable child care available to every working family that wants and needs it, as well as to ensure that providers and child care workers are compensated, supported, and respected as the professional educators that they are.*
- ED Arguilez continues to co- lead the HV Business Process Reengineering Steering Committee in support of the new home visiting model that connects our Public Health nurses with the Community based paraprofessionals.
- ED Arguilez continues to represent First 5 San Diego in the following community stakeholder engagement efforts:
 - Child and Family Strengthening Advisory Board
 - SDSU College of Education Deans Advisory Board
 - Children's First Collective San Diego
 - Department of Defense Military Childcare Statewide Workgroup
 - Catalyst San Diego Early Education Funders Group
 - Child Care and Development Planning Council (designee is Lenette Javier)

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Background on First 5 San Diego Commission's Current Projects

FIRST 5 FIRST STEPS (F5FS)

F5FS provides countywide home visitation services to specific high-risk target populations including pregnant and parenting teens, military, refugee/immigrant, and low-income families using the Healthy Families America (HFA) model and Baby TALK curriculum.

HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (HDS)

HDS is an array of services for early identification and treatment of children with mild to moderate developmental delays. Services include assessment and treatment for behavioral and developmental concerns (including speech and language, occupational and physical therapies), parent education and care coordination to all families receiving HDS services.

KIDSTART CENTER

KidSTART center is an integrated program within First 5 San Diego and the Health and Human Services Agency's Behavioral Health Services to support children with complex developmental, socio-emotional/behavioral health, medical, and family needs. The KidSTART Center performs screening, triage, assessment, referrals and treatment for children with multiple, complex delays, and needs. The KidSTART Clinic, funded by Behavioral Health Services, provides comprehensive behavioral and social-emotional clinical treatment (First 5 San Diego funding supports the Center only).

KIT FOR NEW PARENTS

The Kit for New Parents is a free, comprehensive resource from First 5 California for new and expectant parents emphasizing the importance of a child's early years. Kits are distributed countywide and are available in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

MI ESCUELITA THERAPEUTIC PRESCHOOL

Mi Escuelita provides a therapeutic preschool experience for young children 2-5 years old who have experienced trauma. The goal of this program is to help children enter kindergarten as active learners by working with the family emotionally, socially, and developmentally.

ORAL HEALTH INITIATIVE (OHI)

OHI provides oral health services, care coordination and preventative education to children ages birth through five with the goal of improving oral health and promoting positive oral health practices.

LEARN WELL INITIATIVE

The Learn Well Initiative supports sustainable development of quality early learning and care programs and aims to support providers in the form of technical assistance, instructional support, coaching and ongoing professional development.