

First 5 Commission of San Diego

April 16, 2026

Executive Director Report

Updates Since Last Report

Health

- **Healthy Development Services (HDS) and KidSTART Center**
 - First 5 staff continue their work on the Integrated Prevention and Early Intervention Services procurement, that will integrate HDS, DSEP and KidSTART. This partnership will help secure critical integrated prevention and early intervention services for children ages 0 to 5 years with developmental and/or behavioral health needs.
- **Healthy Development Services (HDS) Countywide Coordinator: American Academy of Pediatrics – Chapter 3 (AAP-CA3)**
 - AAP-CA3 continues to build and maintain community partner relationships to foster and strengthen the HDS system of care in San Diego County and connect with other community partners, such as CDA and San Diego Center for Children, to foster referrals to HDS.
- **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 February 2026 Medi-Cal data provided by the County, overall Medi-Cal enrollment has declined by 5.67% compared to last year (and compared to the 4.37% decrease in January as noted in last month's OHI update). There is a 4.44% decrease in Medi-Cal enrollment among children ages 0-18 compared to last year (which is up from the 3.54% decrease in January as noted in the last month's OHI update). 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 midyear, and two additional subcontractors are close to fully expending their Treatment Fund allocations. Overall, subcontractors have spent about 92% of the Treatment Fund budget within 8 months of the current program year. (See **Item 9-2**).

Family

- **First 5 First Steps (F5FS) Countywide Coordinator: American Academy of Pediatrics – Chapter 3 (AAP-CA3)**
 - AAP-CA3 received its official site visit report with the results from the re-accreditation site visit that took place in February. The overall results were outstanding with 99% of HFA standards implemented to fidelity. As part of the site visit, the HFA team interviewed staff from First 5 First Steps sites and community partner agencies. There were some notable quotes from those interviews. First Steps site staff quotes included: “I see [the AAP team] as our core, they’re what holds us together.” A community partner noted about the whole First Steps system: “This county is resource rich and they could be competing, but they do a phenomenal job of coming together to collaborate.” AAP-CA3 has no follow-up for its own re-accreditation.
 - The team is now focusing on supporting Palomar Health, Public Health Nursing, and Home Start with their upcoming site visits in April and May.

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- **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 were executed and effective as of March 1, 2026.
 - The CalWORKs Home Visiting Program allocation was augmented per the All County Fiscal Letter issued on February 23, 2026 (See **Item 4-2**). The allocation increased by \$401,668 for a new total of \$4,059,012. All 5 home visiting contracts, including countywide coordination, are to be increased.

Learning

- **Learn Well Initiative (LWI)**
 - **Early Years Conference**

On April 10 and 11, the Learn Well team at the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) will host the 23rd Annual Early Years Conference. This event brings together early learning and care professionals with a shared goal: to thoughtfully reimagine and strengthen the ways in which we support young children and the educators and caregivers who serve them in an increasingly complex and evolving landscape.

Grounded in developmentally appropriate practice and whole-child principles, the conference will highlight evidence-based strategies that enhance learning, promote resilience, and foster a strong sense of belonging in early childhood settings. Workshops will address key areas of practice, including trauma-informed care, inclusive classroom environments, culturally and linguistically responsive approaches, play-based learning, and early childhood mental health.

While the conference is open to the public, it is primarily attended by early learning and care programs participating in the San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative (SDQPI), reflecting its strong focus on quality improvement and capacity building across the region's early childhood system.
 - **Proposed Funding Reduction**

The Learn Well contract is recommended for a reduction in the coming program years 2026–2030. This decrease represents a significant change in funding, lowering available resources from the current \$4m to \$3m. Such reductions will impact implementation of the *Learning* component of the First 5 Strategic Plan. Specifically, fewer providers will be served, stipend funding to providers who participate in Learn Well will be impacted, and fewer resources will be available to support participating early learning and care providers.

Community

- **Community Outreach and Engagement Events**

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

 - March 6, 2026 Talls & Smalls (**Sponsored**)
 - March 28-29, 2026 Easter Eggspress (**Sponsored**)
 - April 3, 2026 Talls & Smalls (**Sponsored**)
 - April 10, 2026 MCSS Super Kids (**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.

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Administration

- **Finance Committee**

- On March 23, 2026, the Finance Committee convened to review and approve the Revised Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operating Budget that reflects the decrease in Prop 10 revenue and the increase in CalWORKs home visiting Fiscal Year 2025-26. Additionally, the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Operating Budget and the 5-year Financial Spending Plan and the Balance Sheet as of February 28, 2026.

- **Administrative Updates**

- ED Arguilez has been engaging with the Department of purchasing and contracting on the new home visiting contracts.
 - Planning underway for the new Internal Service Fund charge that will be a new cost to the Commission. Estimated at .67% per contract that is managed by DPC.
- ED Arguilez continues to co-lead the home visiting steering committee in support of the new joint model with public health nurses.

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

- ED Arguilez continues to engage with CFWB on the ongoing FFPSA home visiting funding pilot. The CARES claiming system is still pending activation. When the CARES system is operational it will result in an up to 50% reimbursement of Prop 10 funds allocated to FFPSA Eligible services through the home visiting services.
- ED Arguilez attended the Choose Children 2026 event on March 20th, which brought together leaders in the region to educate candidates on the importance of prioritizing young children. This is a statewide, nonpartisan candidate engagement and education initiative that highlighted candidate Xavier Becerra, former U.S. Health & Human Services Secretary.
- 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 was invited to join the San Diego Unified School District Early Learning Wellness Taskforce focused on strengthening early childhood wellness in the district. This first taskforce convening will focus on the following:
 - Define foundational wellness competencies for young children
 - Examine how current systems and structures support — or constrain — student wellness in our youngest learners
 - Explore the role of observation-based tools
 - Identify priorities and partnerships for continued work beyond the initial session
- ED Arguilez received communication from the Strategic Behavioral Health Initiative led by the Policy and Innovation Center that outlines coalition recommendations on the Children, Youth & TAY Behavioral Health Continuum Framework – Optimal Care Pathways. This was in response to a board letter presented by BHS on March 24, 2026 to the Board of Supervisors. **Items 9-3 and 9-4** have been included for reference.
- ED Arguilez continues to represent First 5 San Diego in the following community stakeholder engagement efforts:
 - Child and Family Strengthening Advisory Board
 - SDUSD Early Learning Wellness Taskforce
 - SDSU College of Education Deans Advisory Board
 - Children's First Collective San Diego
 - 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 Programs

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.