

Letter from (Commission Chair, Executive Director??)

Fifteen years ago, the people of California voted, through Proposition 10, to prioritize the first five years of a child's life and provide funding to invest in strategies to promote school readiness.

Since that time, the school readiness conversation has moved from ABC's and 123's to the importance of well child exams, seeing the dentist by the time the child is one year of age and reading to your child on a daily basis. Parents understand their child's development and community resources can support them as their first teacher. Libraries are now early childhood beacons in the community only second to high quality early care and education programs. The importance of early childhood has taken on a whole new meaning and is starting to take root in our community.

First 5 El Dorado's 2006-11 Strategic Plan set the course for this change by using research based strategies necessary for a local early childhood system. In this Plan, the Commission implemented six key Initiatives: Children's Health, Best Beginnings, Together We Grow, Ready to Read @ Your Library, High 5 for Quality and School Readiness. Together, these Initiatives form a continuum of services designed to support children and families prenatally through kindergarten. Building on this momentum, the next five-year, strategic plan seeks to integrate this early childhood continuum into the existing local family support system. Integration will be challenging given the current economic climate of the community and the Commission.

The Commissions budget mirrors a family budget in the current economy, income is going down so expenses must be cut. We need to live within our means. First 5 funding comes from a \$.50 tax on each pack of cigarettes, a declining revenue source. What started out as an annual allocation of \$1.7 million has now dwindled to just over \$1.2 million. The Commission's average annual budget for last four years was \$1.875 million. The time has come to slowly bring our program funding closer to the annual \$1.2 million allocation and live within our means.

We can get there by working together. Key to First 5 El Dorado's funding philosophy includes terms like universal, sustainability, leveraging and collaboration. All families will have access to First 5 El Dorado initiatives. It is our objective that the Initiatives become sustainable over time, integrating our work into existing delivery systems. We will seek out opportunities to leverage additional funding for the local early childhood system. First 5 El Dorado will continue to collaborate with community partners on early learning strategies to support families in our County. Together, we will achieve our mission.

Sincerely,

(Commission Chair, Executive Director??)

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Accomplishments:

In the last five years, First 5 El Dorado Commission has made significant progress toward implementing their vision to “promote nurturing, stable and loving family environments so that all children enter school physically and emotionally healthy, **ready** to learn.” Among the achievements:

- Developed a plan to measure school readiness for all incoming kindergarteners in the county and to provide early intervention services as needed.
- Implemented six Commission Initiatives that reflect the research based elements necessary for a comprehensive early childhood system: Children’s Health Initiative, Best Beginnings, Together We Grow, Ready 2 Read @ Your Library, High 5 for Quality and Community Strengthening.
- Established a continuum of services supporting a family prenatally through five years of age.
- Designed an evaluation plan to report progress on goals, objectives, indicators, and data collection tools for each Initiative.
- Promoted the Commission’s work through a Communication Plan: healthy, caring, growing, learning, connected and ready.
- Changed the early childhood culture in the County:
 - Children are seeing the dentist by their first birthday.
 - Families are using the 800 number for health related questions.
 - The library has become a place where families with young children gather.
 - Families are requesting developmental screens and home visits

Furthermore, individual Initiatives have been recognized nationally as innovative or promising practices:

- Collaborative strategies used in the Library have been published in “Partnerships and Collaborations in Public Library Communities: Resources and Solutions” by Karen Ellis, released in December 2011. <http://www.igi-global.com/book/partnerships-collaborations-public-library-communities/55272>
- In March 2011, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality recognized the Children’s Health Initiative as an innovative practice in “County-Wide Collaborative Uses Pathways Model to Enhance Access to Insurance, Primary Care, and Mental Health Services for Low-Income Children”. <http://www.innovations.ahrq.gov/content.aspx?id=2391&tab=1>
- Previously, the Children’s Health Initiative was recognized by National Initiative for Healthcare Quality as an “Innovative Prevention program for Improving Children’s Healthcare in California” in June 2009. http://www.peninsulafap.org/documents/NICHQ_Innov_Profile_Report_6-09.pdf

The Commission will continue to build upon their investments in the 2012-17 Strategic Plan with the goal of implementing their mission of developing “comprehensive early childhood systems through collaborative partnerships, early care and education, health, and community services.”

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Overview:

Introduction:

First 5 El Dorado receives approximately \$1.2 million annually through revenues generated by Prop 10. These funds are used to enhance or fund new programs, services and infrastructure supportive of young children and families. The aim is to invest effectively in a network of prevention and early intervention services for families with young children.

Since 2001 approximately \$10 million dollars has been awarded to programs throughout the county. First 5 El Dorado supports building partnerships among agencies, organizations and the private sector, leveraging local resources to increase the value of its investments. First 5 El Dorado identifies strategies based on research and best practice models to support services that make a difference in the lives of young children, and directs resources to build a comprehensive early childhood service system.

Background:

First 5 El Dorado has used the Harvard Family Research Project six key elements for a local early childhood comprehensive system. Through the 2006-11 Strategic Plan, Initiatives have been funded to address these six elements.

Research Based Elements	Initiative
Developmental screenings	Together We Grow
High-quality early childhood education programs	High 5 for Quality
Access to medical and dental insurance, services and medical homes	Children’s Health
Family literacy and parenting education programs	Ready to Read @ Your Library
Community resources and services	Best Beginnings
Tailor services to better meet the needs of the families who can most benefit from them	Community Strengthening Groups

In this first, five-year strategic plan, First 5 El Dorado laid the framework for the Initiatives, each designed to work together, providing a continuum of early childhood services to families with children 0-5 years of age in El Dorado County. It is the goal of the 2012-17 Strategic Plan to build upon this continuum and integrate Commission services with other community agencies.

Achieving the Vision

The Commission has formally approved Decision Making Guidelines. These guidelines include the vision, mission, common understandings, funding parameters and evaluation objectives to ensure consistency prior to taking action. These guidelines are reflected in the Commission Initiatives, fiscal policies and evaluation practices.

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Section 2: Commission Goals and Initiatives

It is the goal of the Commission to serve as a voice and advocate for young children by developing Initiatives that meet the best interests of children zero through five years and their communities. Commission Initiatives have been developed over the last five years in a process that strives to be collaborative, transparent and inclusionary. It is important that Commission actions are responsible, as they are accountable stewards of public funding with investments that are research based, long range and visionary. Each decision is focused on enhancing and supporting existing systems to achieve the Commission vision and mission.

“The people of El Dorado County will promote nurturing, stable and loving family environments so that all children enter school physically and emotionally healthy, ready to learn.” - *Vision*

The overall goal for Commission investments is for all children to enter school ready to learn. Through the School Readiness Initiative, teachers countywide assess incoming students utilizing the Kindergarten Student Entry Profile (KSEP). KSEP results are used in developing professional development opportunities for early care and education and kindergarten teachers offered through semi-annual articulation meetings. By understanding areas of strengths and opportunities of our children, we can better guide the development of our Initiatives.

“First 5 El Dorado Commission is committed to improving the lives of children 0 through 5 and their families by promoting, enhancing, and developing comprehensive early childhood systems through collaborative partnerships, early care and education, health, and community services.” - *Mission*

The six Commission Initiatives are integral pieces to the local comprehensive early childhood system. These Initiatives assist families to ensure their children are healthy, have access to community resources, are developing appropriately, are engaged in language and literacy activities and attend high quality early care and education programs.

The Children’s Health Initiative: Community Health Workers connect families with children to medical and dental services, including the El Dorado Children’s Dental Van. The Initiative maintains partnerships with a broad network of health service providers and connects families with young children to resources that allow them to have a regular doctor or dentist and encourages well child visits.

Best Beginnings: Nurses provide newborn home visits for families delivering at Barton and Marshall Hospitals. Families with newborn children are offered a follow up home visit through Best Beginnings each year. At the visit, families receive a Kit for New Parents and a Child Health Record with information about community resources to support them and their newborn child.

Together We Grow: Early Childhood Specialists offer periodic developmental screenings and everyday parenting support and education beginning at 2 months of age through Kindergarten

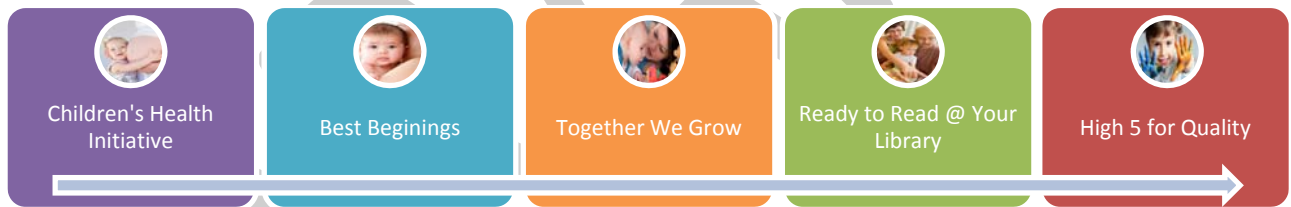
entry. Children are screened utilizing a combination of 3 screenings tools: Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), ASQ-Social Emotional, and a health questionnaire. Parents are offered support in addressing their child's developmental needs.

Ready to Read @ Your Library: Early Childhood Librarians promote language and literacy through monthly activities: preschool "Let's Read Together" storytimes, infant "Mother Goose on the Loose" storytimes, toddler "Musical" storytimes, Spanish storytimes, other special storytimes, workshops, and outreach visits to early care and education programs.

High 5 for Quality: High 5 for Quality improves the quality of early care and education sites through trainings and supports for early care and education professionals through training, technical assistance and mentoring based upon early childhood environmental rating scales.

Community Strengthening: In an effort to ensure that families and service providers informed about the services available in their community, Commission Initiative and early childhood partners meet on a regular basis to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate. These meetings are facilitated through three Regional Community Strengthening Groups: Divide Ready by 5, Western Slope Ready by 5, and the Lake Tahoe Collaborative.

Together, these Initiatives create a continuum of care prenatally through kindergarten entrance.



2012-17 Strategic Planning Process:

All families with Children 0-5 have access to First 5 El Dorado Commission Initiative services. Initiative services are not designed to directly address high level needs of families with children 0-5 such as domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, acute or chronic physical and/or emotional health issues, or economic challenges such as unemployment, food insecurity, or housing insecurity. When there is a need, Commission Initiative services strive to connect families with children 0-5 to existing higher level support and intervention services available in the County.

The goal of the planning process was to enhance the capacity of Initiatives to meet family needs by adopting research based best practices and integrating Commission Initiatives with the existing early childhood services in the County. The planning process has been comprehensive, collaborative and transparent.

Commissioners, our evaluator, contractors, service providers, community strengthening groups and other interested partners were convened to assess existing strategies, communicate the status of the planning process and seek input on the plan. In keeping with a results based accountability process, evaluation outcomes were shared for each Initiative, strengths and opportunities for each initiative were assessed and key elements were matched with research based, best practices.

Before making recommendations on home visiting models, the Commission looked to the expertise of existing providers in the county. Focus groups were held in South Lake Tahoe and on the Western Slope, incorporating representatives from the Georgetown Divide. From these meetings, a process model for integration was developed and recommendations were made for implementation. These recommendations include well-defined scopes of service for Commission Initiative providers, a collaborative referral process and ongoing training and communication among community partners.

Section 3: Long Term Financial Plan

In developing a long term financial plan the Commission is committed to preserving an early childhood system. The Strategic Plan is the basis for decision making and budgets developed with the intent of living within the annual funding allocation. Funding decisions will be strategic, systematic and assessed over a five year period of time. Reserves will be considered in the total funding. Staff and contractors will continue to research opportunities to leverage additional funding.

The current annual allocation from the CA Children and Families Commission Trust fund is approximately \$1.2 million annually. This amount has decreased 20% since 2008-09 when the allocation was \$1.5 million. The decreases are a direct result of increased costs from the Board of Equalization in managing the trust fund, fluctuations in cigarette sales and birth rates in the county. Revenue is decreasing.

As the Commission has moved toward funding research based, best practices, they have been able to fund above their annual allocation. In 2009-10, annual Commission expenditures were \$2.8 million. The 2011-12 budget is \$1.8 million, a decrease of 35%, but still \$600,000 above the \$1.2 million of annual revenue. The goal of this strategic plan is to gradually move toward operating within our annual allocation in the next five years.

Collaboration, integration, and leveraging are key terms in the next five years. Through collaboration, the Commission will look for efficiencies in Initiative services and opportunities to integrate their work with other partner agencies. All opportunities for leveraged funding will be considered.

Section 4: Evaluation Impact

First 5 El Dorado considers evaluation as critical and ongoing. The Commission has used various approaches to evaluate the effects of the investments on the children and families in the county, and the systems that serve those children and families. Evaluation is conducted on three levels:

1. Evaluation of funded projects/strategies:

First 5 El Dorado grantees receive training and technical assistance regarding the evaluation of their project. The intent is to assist the grantee in identifying and achieving expected results, and to monitor outcomes of the strategies being utilized. Parent surveys of clients served by funded projects that deliver direct services to children 0-5 years of age and/or their parents/guardians are utilized to check for outcomes that are aligned with the evaluation plans of the funded projects.

2. Early Childhood Service System Evaluation:

Community Strengthening data collection and funded project quarterly reports provide qualitative data regarding the impact of First 5 funding on the early childhood service system. This qualitative data allows the Commission to capture information regarding changes in service accessibility, leveraged funding, and positive changes in standard practices to address barriers or increase efficiency.

3. Monitoring of Population-based Indicators:

First 5 El Dorado also periodically reviews countywide population-based indicators related to the health and education of children and the well being of families in El Dorado County on a regular basis to study the long-term impacts of Commission-funded projects on the overall population of young children and their families.

First 5 El Dorado has built its evaluation capacity over time and now has baseline data against which to measure results. Incremental progress toward the Commission's goals is measured annually and trends are analyzed over a five year period. Evaluation is based on Results Based Accountability principles and is analyzed on an ongoing basis to link to the Commission's strategic plan and to tell the story of the Commission's investments impact.

Evaluation Plan Matrix

First 5 El Dorado Commission Vision					
Goal	Objective	Indicator	Current Baseline	Achievable (Next Year)	Optimal (5 years)
Children enter school physically and emotionally healthy, ready to learn	Increase the % of children enter kindergarten ready for school	% of entering kindergarten children scoring 33 or higher on the KSEP	TBD Fall 2011 through KSEP Pilot Project	TBD	85%
1. Healthy: Children's Health Initiative					
Goal	Objective	Indicator	Current Baseline	Achievable (Next Year)	Optimal (5 years)
Children 0-5 have annual well child exams	Increase the % of children ages 0-5 that have annual health exams	% of parents that report that their child has had a well child exam in the last 12 months on the F5ED Parent Survey	97% FY 09-10	97%	100%
Children 0-5 have annual dental exams	Increase the % of children ages 0-5 that have annual dental exams	% of parents that report their child has had a dental exam in the last 12 months on the F5ED Parent Survey	54% FY 09-10	63%	100%
2. Caring: Best Beginnings					
Goal	Objective	Indicator	Current Baseline	Achievable (Next Year)	Optimal (5 years)
Parents of newborn children are connected to services that support them and their newborn child	Increase the % of parents with a newborn child that have access to community support services	% of parents that report high levels of satisfaction (4-5 on the scale) after receiving BB services on the BB Follow Up Survey	TBD Winter 2011	TBD	85%

3. Growing: Together We Grow					
Goal	Objective	Indicator	Current Baseline	Achievable (Next Year)	Optimal (5 years)
Parents of children 0-5 complete developmental screenings on an annual basis	Increase the % of children ages 0-5 that have a developmental screening annually	% of parents that report their child has had a developmental screening (like the ASQ) in the last 12 months on the F5ED Parent Survey	FY 09-10 53%	58%	85%
4. Learning: Ready to Read @ Your Library and High 5 for Quality					
Goal	Objective	Indicator	Current Baseline	Achievable (Next Year)	Optimal (5 years)
Parents read to their children on a regular basis	Increase the % of parents that read to their children on a regular basis	% of parents that report reading to their child on a regular basis (6-7 days per week) on the F5ED Parent Survey	FY 09-10 75%	77%	85%
Children are cared for in high quality environments	Increase the % of licensed child care spaces that are high quality	Number of licensed spaces for children ages 0-5 years at 3 or higher with H5Q plus number of Title V spaces for children ages 0-5, divided by the total number of licensed spaces for children ages 0-5 years.	FY 09-10 30%	62%	85%

5. Connected: Community Strengthening, Communication Plan & Evaluation

Goal	Objective	Indicator	Current Baseline	Achievable (Next Year)	Optimal (5 years)
Parents of children 0-5 are aware of, utilize and are satisfied with First 5 funded services	Increase the % of parents that are aware of, utilize and are satisfied with First 5 funded services	% of parents that report they are very or extremely satisfied with First 5 funded services on the F5ED Parent Survey	FY 11-12 TBD		75%

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Section 5: Implementation Overview

The 2012-17 Strategic Plan will provide direction to strengthen Commission Initiatives by integrating curriculum, training, professional development and evaluation. The Commission will work with collaborative partners to provide outreach, education, referrals and ongoing communication in the early childhood system.

Progress on the Strategic Plan will be monitored through the Evaluation Report presented each January and reviewed at the Annual Business Meeting each March. Scopes of work for Commission Initiatives will be reviewed with contractors each April with an annual budgets considered for approval in May. Contracts for services are executed in June in preparation for the next fiscal year.

A communication plan will be implemented by the Commission to promote key early childhood messages:

- ✓ Take your child to all well-child visits and see a dentist by their first birthday.
- ✓ Schedule a home visit for your newborn.
- ✓ Make sure your child is developing on track.
- ✓ Read with your child each day.
- ✓ Choose quality child care programs.

Each message is associated with a Commission Initiative service and contact information.

Through participation at community strengthening groups, the Commission will continually exchange information with partners. Regular communication will improve the quality of services provided through Commission Initiatives and relationships with community partners.

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