COVID-19, Racism, and Economic Crisis Threaten Health and Well-Being of Families

Community organizations in Alameda County and across the Bay Area region are struggling to keep pace with the needs of children and families amid the simultaneous health and economic crises created by COVID-19. At the same time, society is in the midst of a reckoning around race and the harmful effects of institutional, structural racism that have resulted in societal barriers to wealth and resources for African American/Black families and other communities of color over many generations.

With families navigating historic levels of job loss, child care and school closures, health care challenges, and food and housing insecurity, the pandemic has only exacerbated persistent health and economic inequities.

Together, these societal, economic, and health conditions pose a particular threat to the health and wellbeing of children, especially children of color, with long-term implications for health, development, and well-being of children, families, and communities.

Commitment to Social Justice

Equity Framework
The Resilience Fund grants priority to African American/Black, South East Asian/Asian Pacific Islander, Latinx, Native American, immigrants, and undocumented families and those experiencing poverty. Due to structural race and class bigotries these populations are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and allocated resources must be used to mitigate the resulting inequities.

Goals of the Community Resilience Fund
First 5 Alameda County launched a Community Resilience Fund in April totaling more than $5.5 million to help children, families, and child care providers cope with the heightened challenges of the pandemic. The agency reviewed all current contracts, repurposed deliverables, engaged in targeted partnerships with philanthropy, and identified savings to be added to funding the First 5 Commission appropriated out of reserves to support the pandemic response. The goals of the fund are to:

1. Address the needs of young children, their families, and the early childhood system that supports them.
2. Prioritize investment in communities positioned most vulnerably as a result of racist and classist private and public policies and practices.
3. Leverage First 5 evaluation data and existing investments by supporting key kindergarten readiness recommendations, as well as augmentations to our existing Neighborhoods Ready for School grantees now also operating as supply and distribution hubs.

“The need for investment in our collective future has never been greater.”
Kristin Spanos, Chief Executive Officer
Support for Kindergarten Readiness

In 2019, our flagship research study, the Alameda County Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), found that only 44% of students are fully ready. Building off of this work and other place-based investments through our Neighborhoods Ready for School program and Early Learning Communities Network, the Community Resilience Fund is supporting children’s transition to kindergarten with grants to school districts, based on an equity index we developed.

The equity index is a weighted composite of the following factors:

- Percent of student body using free and reduced lunch
- Diversity of student body
- COVID-19 community transmission rates
- Kindergarten Readiness Assessment participation and 3rd grade academic achievement
- Number of kindergarten students and classrooms

*A higher score (indicated by a darker color on the map) represents a district with a greater level of need.
Priority Investments

Systems Partnerships
- Engagement with the Alameda County Board of Supervisors to support countywide systems change efforts. See our Early Childhood Data Profiles for each Supervisorial District for more information.
- Investment in school districts to support kindergarten transition in a time of crisis for families and our educational partners.

Concrete Needs
- Purchase and distribution of concrete needs and essential supports for providers and families, working with Alameda County Community Food Bank and SupplyBank.Org.
- Investment in family-serving shelters to improve access to essential supplies for unhoused families with young children, with support from Sunlight Giving.

Early Childhood Education
- Sustaining local infrastructure of backbone entities like the Resource and Referral Agencies to meet heightened demand during the current crisis.
- Investment in local family childcare providers in partnership with the Low Income Investment Fund and Silicon Valley Community Foundation, increasing access to financial technical assistance.

Community Investments
- Investment in community parent advocacy through increases to current contracts for our Neighborhoods Ready for School grants and Parent Voices Oakland.
- Pivot of NRFS sites into distribution hubs and use of KRA study to inform support for kindergarten transitions and funding in areas with greatest need.
- Targeted investments, in partnership with the California Wellness Foundation, for communities who are particularly vulnerable at this time.
- Participation in a base building advocacy fund through the East Bay Community Foundation.

Essential Food and Supplies for Families and Providers

All Sites Requesting or Distributing COVID Relief Supplies

Distribution Hubs
- Alameda County Office of Education Meal Service Sites*
- Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
- Neighborhoods Ready for School Sites

One-Time Donation Sites
- Community-Based Organizations
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Health Care Agencies
- Domestic Violence Shelters

Types of Supplies Requested
- Diapers
- Wipes
- Baby Formula
- Bar Soap
- Liquid Hand Soap
- Disinfectant Solution in Spray Bottles
- Laundry Detergent
- Bleach
- Feminine Hygiene Products
- Non-Medical Grade Face Mask
- Books
- Hand Sanitizer
- Dental Supplies
- N95 Masks
- Diaper Kits
- Dental Kits for Adults and Children
- Toothbrushes

*Alameda County Office of Education sites represent potential partnerships.

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