First 5 Alameda County is committed to advocating for and achieving equity by focusing on racial and economic justice to ensure that all children in Alameda County are born healthy and community and family conditions exist that support well-being and growth.

Through our policy agenda we seek to evolve an equitable local early childhood system, and support community led efforts to do so. This “whole community, whole family, whole child” policy approach embraces growing recognition that children and families are best supported holistically, and that the work of First 5, through the administration of Prop. 10 funding, is to contribute to creating the conditions through programming, investment, and relationships for families to thrive.

Our approach identifies that the structural economic issues of wealth, jobs, wages, and the needed service supports for families to engage in the labor market (e.g., child care, housing, financial resources, health, and transportation) are inextricably linked to child development. Further still, due to systemic racism, communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by exploitative labor and financial practices and public policies that were adopted with the intent of doing harm and have not supported access to quality family supportive services. Decades of outcome data, numerous local and national evaluations, family surveys, and focus groups have repeatedly revealed that access to safe, reliable infrastructure, financial stability, and programming reduces parental stress and provides the conditions that ensure children are ready for kindergarten.

**SPOTLIGHTS FOR ACTION**

Read about First 5 Alameda County’s position on the following issues and the actions we plan to take in 2022 to advance equity in Alameda County.

- **Economic Supports**
- **Systems That Work for Families**
- **Mental Health & Well-Being**
- **Early Care & Education**
- **Place-Based Focus**
- **Birth Equity & Reproductive Justice**
- **Parent & Community Leadership**
- **Data for Action**
Economic Supports

Policies and programs should increase economic supports and assets for families.

► Economic Supports:
Promote policies that advance economic justice, living wages jobs, apprenticeships, and the use of public resources to support access to secondary and technical education. Support programs such as Universal Basic Income, an improved public safety net, work supports, and asset building, including college savings, that promote the health and well-being of families with young children.

► Housing:
Partner with community organizations and county agencies and support programs to center unhoused pregnant people and families. Support policies that increase the supply and access of affordable housing options for families.

Systems That Work for Families

Now is the time to imagine, co-create, and build an early childhood system of care that centers the needs of families with an equity lens.

► Care Coordination & Family Navigation:
Scale and sustain cohesive systems for families, such as care management through Help Me Grow and pediatric practices, Project DULCE, and Family Resource Centers, that create equitable access to services that mitigate childhood adversity and are available in families’ language and in their community. This includes physical, behavioral, and dental health, and social determinants like housing and food.

► Statewide System Reform:
Engage in administrative advocacy to support an equity centered approach to the implementation of changes passed in the California 2021-22 state budget that include doula services as a Medi-Cal benefit, child care slots, rate increase, and funding for community-based mental health services for children and families.

► CalAIM/Medi-Cal Reform for Kids:
Advocate for successful implementation of CalAIM to ensure that communities have coordinated access to a range of services that support the social determinants of health like housing and food, and that promoters are deployed as valued and effective members of the workforce.

► COVID-19 Supports:
Mitigate harm caused by the COVID-19 crisis by advocating for economic supports, school readiness programs, and mental and behavioral health services for children and families.
Mental Health & Well-Being

The mental health needs of children, families, and communities are met with culturally and linguistically accessible services.

▶ Child & Family Wellness:
Support family wellness by increasing access to mental health and community supports through playgroups, library story times, community resources, Help Me Grow, and in early care and education settings.

▶ Medi-Cal:
Inform community and systems partnerships to increase access to appropriate community-centered mental health and prevention services.

Early Care & Education

Resources and infrastructure are critical for early care and education.

▶ Access & Quality:
Increase access to quality early care and education that builds on each child's unique individual and family strengths, cultural background, language(s), abilities, and experiences. Strengthen learning and care opportunities for infants and toddlers and expand the infrastructure of care.

▶ Early Childhood Apprenticeship:
Leverage early childhood workforce apprenticeship funding in the state's 2021-22 budget to expand Alameda County's model for CalWORKs participants and other parents and caregivers with an equity lens, co-funded in partnership with Tipping Point and Alameda County Social Services.

▶ Workforce:
Support policies and practices that strengthen the diverse early care and education workforce through livable wages, safe workplaces, access to professional development, and health and well-being.

▶ Measure C:
Partner to prepare the ECE system for broad investment through Alameda County Measure C Children’s Health and Child Care Initiative. As named administrator of the child care portion of the ordinance, First 5 will oversee 80% of the total revenue.
**Mixed-Delivery System:**
Explore and advance supports with and for family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) and family child care (FCC) providers.

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**Place-Based Focus**
Thriving neighborhoods are essential for families and children.

**Equitable Family-Centered Investments & Infrastructure:**
Leverage local, state, and federal funding opportunities by advocating for investments that support the needs of families with young children, early childhood educators, and community using a neighborhood approach.

**Neighborhoods Ready for School:**
Partner with Neighborhoods Ready for School grantees, community partners, and local government to support family navigation, affordable housing, access to safe parks and green spaces, improvement in conditions of built environment and public infrastructure, transportation access, and community-based health and mental health services.

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**Birth Equity & Reproductive Justice**
Birth Equity and reproductive justice are key health and economic issues for children 0-5.

**Local Implementation:**
Partner locally to support the implementation of new state and federal policies that aim to advance birth equity and reproductive justice, including access to postpartum care, full spectrum doula supports, continuous Medi-Cal eligibility for children 0-5, collection and analysis of data related to birth disparities and related research.

**Advocacy:**
Engage state and federal agencies and elected officials about the important role of birth equity to advance racial and economic justice.
Parent & Community Leadership

Policies are most effective when developed with family and community lived experience, leadership, and voice.

► Community Voice:
Support community leadership and use systems change to proactively center families with an equity lens. Advocate for programs and policies that respect the lived experiences of Black, Indigenous, people of color; families with low incomes; refugees; undocumented families; and unhoused families.

► Parent & Caregiver Leadership:
Include parent and community voice in program design and funding allocations, research, evaluation, and data. Provide resources for providers and community partners to support parent and caregiver leadership and engagement.

► Father Engagement:
Promote the adoption and integration of the Father-Friendly Principles and father-specific services across community programs and public systems.

Data for Action

Families and community are conveners, storytellers, and owners of the data in the work to advance data-driven decision-making.

► Alameda County Kindergarten Readiness Study:
Use findings from this community-informed research study to advocate for policies that strengthen the readiness of families, communities, and schools to prepare all children for kindergarten and later success.

► Research into Action:
Invest in and use research and evaluation findings, such as of Help a Mother Out’s diaper bank, Neighborhoods Ready for School grants, and Kindergarten Assessment, to advocate for resources for families, communities, and broader systems change in service to equity and economic security.