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EQUITY POLICY

Approved:

Elliot Weinstein, M.D., Chair

PURPOSE

First 5 San Bernardino is committed to grounding an equity policy and practice into its work to ensure that all children and families, especially those of color and those furthest from opportunities and access, can reach their full potential. The Commission is positioned to utilize the framework of the Equity Policy to address identified systems-level inequities, and strive towards equitable goals and aspirational targets for all children, community and providers.

POLICY

The Commission shall ensure that work is advanced utilizing the goals framed within the Principles on Equity and the targets under the Equity Pillars outlined below to meet the needs of children, families and communities that face systemic barriers. The Commission will maintain the commitment by embedding the scope of the principles and pillars into all systems, structures, strategies, and practices and anchoring them to strategic planning, collaborative systems building and partnerships, and daily organizational operations.

All actions under this policy shall be in accordance with all applicable state laws as well as the strategic plan and the annual budget as approved by the Commission, authorized pursuant to the Children and Families Act of 1998 and included within the annual audit of the Commission program.

This policy will be revisited for applicable revisions upon the annual review of the First 5 Strategic Plan.

PRINCIPLES ON EQUITY {GOALS}

First 5 San Bernardino recognizes that children develop within the context of their families and communities, and as such, it is essential that First 5 San Bernardino programs secure and obtain meaningful participation and input of the families and other caregivers of children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities throughout all program development and implementation phases. Inclusive Governance and Participation is a priority principle on equity and must include trusted representation, must center the needs of children and families, and must acknowledge the assets and experiences of families being served.

Further recognizing that children develop within families, communities and environments where the level of resources available to them directly affects future outcomes, it is imperative to First 5 San Bernardino that parents and caregivers have Access to Services, resources, and environments that provide the capacity to thrive. It is important that families are knowledgeable of and utilize resources to ensure total wellness; that families are able to utilize developmentally appropriate care, and quality early childhood care and that families have the social supports that they need. In addition, the access to services must be created and supported with humility, with no assumptions or judgment, with the intent of meeting families where they are, respecting diversity, and understanding lived experience and individual need.

First 5 San Bernardino acknowledges that accountability and results are crucial to ongoing advocacy and sustainability of services and supports for children and families. Under the California Children and Families Act of 1998, County Commissions shall use an outcomes-based accountability to determine future expenditures. Using Results-Based Accountability, the Commission commits to transparency related to reporting on policy, systems change, and service delivery. Accountability includes informing and “telling the story” by utilizing community engagement input, sharing data with multiple voices to allow decision-making power, establishing critical relationships, identifying systems components that optimize leverage points, disseminate information on best practices and promising practices, and support innovation for the benefit of all children, their families, their caregivers and service providers.

First 5 San Bernardino Commission is committed to adhering to all *Legislative and Regulatory Mandates* governing program participation, receipt of funds, and service provisions for the children and families of San Bernardino County as a result of the Prop 10 statute being approved by voters in November 1998, which thereby created a program in the state for the purposes of promoting, supporting, and improving the early development of children from the prenatal stage to five years of age.

EQUITY PILLARS

First 5 San Bernardino operations shall strive to incorporate the following:

INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

- Use culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach strategies, as well as approaches effective in reaching parents of all children, including those with disabilities and other special needs.
 - Endeavor to assure that all children and their families, particularly those who have been traditionally underrepresented and underserved, are actively engaged and involved so that they can have an equal voice in defining their needs and finding solutions.
 - Seek to expand participation through the use of community organizations, consisting of both formal and informal networks, and other communication vehicles that have been effective in reaching out to and serving diverse groups.
 - Promote and support the development of emerging parent and community leaders representing diverse child and family groups, and to the greatest extent possible, assure opportunity to participate equitably in the planning, delivery and evaluation of initiatives, which includes the grant criteria process, advisory groups and other committees.
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ACCESS TO SERVICES

- Informed by local data and needs assessments, assure that children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities have access to high quality and culturally competent early care and education/development opportunities as a critical means for achieving equity.
- Set measurable goals and objectives for increasing access and achieving equity.
- Use culturally and linguistically relevant methods of communication and community outreach, which include engaging respected community persons to promote messages.
- Assure that programs and services provide access to information, resources and support regarding their child's development, including strengths and needs for all families.
- Conduct assessments that include assets, challenges, and gaps in communities and systems, as well as analyze disaggregated community demographic data (ethnicity, disabilities, language, age, socio-economic status, literacy levels, underinsured/uninsured rates, etc.). Use these assessments and data to establish priority desired results and to design programs and services that will remove disparities and attain desired results.
- Provide information and support through culturally and linguistically responsive service providers.
- Promote collaboration across disciplines, service delivery systems and communities. This includes providing leadership and support of a coordinated service delivery approach to young children and their families who are often served by a variety of agencies, programs, and service providers.
- Develop print, audio-visual, and electronic materials that are culturally and linguistically relevant for all communities served, written at appropriate literacy levels, and, as applicable, directed to specialized populations.
- Communicate as broadly as possible the availability of adapted and specialized services and supports as needed to assure full participation for all children and their families.
- Promote scheduling of services and supports in accordance with family needs and situations (work schedules, time of the year, language, transportation, etc.).
- Individualize services and supports for all families, which are critical to actively supporting a child's learning experiences in natural environments to the maximum extent appropriate.
- Demonstrate a commitment to promote a workforce that has skills, knowledge of, and reflective of the children and families being served.
- Promote policies to assure training and technical assistance necessary to improve knowledge, attitudes and skills of all involved with the Commission and aim to build their capacity to work within culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and serve as well as to work more effectively in serving the range of abilities, behavioral and learning styles that are representative of San Bernardino County's children.

**RESULTS-BASED
ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Informed by local data and needs assessments, maintain well-defined and meaningful outcomes that benefit children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities.
- Commit to attaining stated program outcomes realizing that results are crucial to ongoing sustainability and advocacy.
- Allocate sufficient resources to support accountability and evaluation activities.
- Use program planners, evaluators and other experts who are knowledgeable about children's differing abilities, and who are culturally competent in regards to the population(s) served in developing effective assessment and evaluation tools and methods.
- Conduct assessments that include assets, challenges, and gaps in communities and systems, as well as analyze community demographics (ethnicity, disabilities, language, age, socio-economic status, etc.).
- Regularly assess the inclusive governance process and provide updates on the extent of family involvement and engagement throughout all phases of program development (planning, implementation and evaluation).
- Use culturally and linguistically appropriate questions, instruments and other research methods to collect relevant data from the populations and communities served.
- Collect and report disaggregated data (e.g., ethnicity, disabilities, language, age, socioeconomic status, etc.) describing children and families served and the achievement of access, equity and desired child/family results.

**LEGISLATIVE
AND
REGULATORY
MANDATES**

- Embrace the spirit of the law.
- Ensure agencies and partners adhere to all legislative, regulatory and accreditation mandates pertinent to the provision of services to children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities.
- Demonstrate leadership by assuring all staff receive training, are knowledgeable about pertinent legislative and legal mandates and have the skills and resources necessary to implement required modifications or enhancements to services or facilities.
- Inform parents of their rights and responsibilities as well as those of their children.
- Offer services to all children and their families regardless of immigration status (California Children and Families Commission Resolution – June 24, 1999); and
- Be held accountable for compliance with key laws and other related mandates.