



**Imperial County Children and Families First Commission**

**MINUTES**

**Meeting of October 1, 2020**

**I. Call to Order**

This Regular Meeting of First 5 Imperial was called to order by Karla Sigmond, Chairperson, at 3:42 p.m. The meeting was held via a video conferencing webinar hosted through Zoom.

**II. Roll Call**

**Commissioners Present:**

- Yurii Camacho
- Barbara Deol
- Becky Green
- Joong Kim
- Fred Miramontes
- Karla Sigmond
- Danila Vargas (joined in momentarily)

**Commissioners Absent:**

- Ray Castillo
- Veronica E. Rodriguez

**Staff:**

- Julio C. Rodriguez
- Bea Duran

**III. Public Comment**

No public comments were made.

**IV. Adoption of Minutes**

A motion was made by Commissioner Deol and seconded by Commissioner Miramontes to adopt the Minutes of the Meeting held on September 3, 2020; having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

**V. Administrative Report (Julio C. Rodriguez, Executive Director)**

1. Request to Reallocate Funds to Increase COVID-19 Relief Support: Mr. Rodriguez explained that the Commission allocated funds in the amount of \$75,000 toward the Early Childcare Education Physical Activity Initiative. The initiative was established last year in response to addressing one of the priorities of the Strategic Plan which is to promote physical activity for young children. He noted that the ECE Physical Activity application has not yet been released. Due to current issues with the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Rodriguez is asking the Commission to reallocate the ECE Physical Activity funds to help support COVID-19 relief efforts in childcare settings including other organizations that serve children 0 to 5. Mr. Rodriguez further explained that there are 49 centers that are currently operating and over 240 family childcare homes open; all sites are having to deal with changes in protocols related to health and safety for children, families and providers due to COVID-19. This includes the use of a database to report COVID-19 cases, procedures for checking children in and out of the facility, the sanitizing of equipment and toys, the change in the number of children that can be served, and distance learning. Mr. Rodriguez is also proposing that the funds be used to serve other programs and agencies that serve children 0 to 5 such as the Betty Jo McNeece Center and Commission grantees. Support efforts will be coordinated with the Imperial County Office of Education.

Chairperson Sigmond expressed her support for the reallocation; she noted that the Commission has been providing assistance related to Covid-19 support and a system is already in place. Commissioner Green stated that she fears that many other sites will be closing, support is definitely needed.

A motion to approve the reallocation of funds to Increase COVID-19 Relief Support in the amount of \$75,000 was made by Commissioner Miramontes and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol; having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

2. Request from CASA of Imperial County for Budget Revision FY 2019-2020: Mr. Rodriguez advised that CASA of Imperial County is requesting that the Commission consider a budget revision for the previous fiscal year. Under the contractual agreement, the deadline to submit a revision for grantees is 30 days prior to the end of the contract. The Director for CASA had indicated he submitted a budget revision request prior to the deadline; however, he realized after a thorough review that wasn't the case. Thus, the budget request wasn't submitted in a timely manner. CASA is requesting to reallocate funds from the mileage category to the salary/fringe category. The special circumstances affecting the reduction in mileage and not being able to hold fundraisers were due to the Governor's Stay at Home orders due to the pandemic.

Chairperson Sigmond advised Commissioners that approving the request, after fiscal year-end, would offset closure of books for the fiscal year. She also advised that this action would set a precedence for similar requests from other agencies. Further discussion continued about how this could potentially become an issue due to the County closing its books for the fiscal year, both for the grantee and the Commission.

Commissioner Kim commented that because CASA was affected by Covid-19, the agency should be given the flexibility to move the funds needed for their program. Commissioners agreed with providing support to CASA especially since they weren't able to hold their fundraisers due to the pandemic. Mr. Rodriguez recommended options for a budget adjustment for this year if the Commission approves.

A motion to approve a budget adjustment out of this year's budget to cover costs from the previous year due to the special circumstances was made by Commissioner Kim and it was seconded by Commissioner Green; having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

3. First 5 Imperial's Request for Proposal Process for the 2021-2023 Funding Cycle: Mr. Rodriguez said that the Commission is scheduled to release a new Request for Proposal funding cycle for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 fiscal years and he is asking for direction from Commissioners on how they wish to proceed due to the unpredictability of upcoming years.

Commissioner Green inquired about the Commission's fiscal stability. Mr. Rodriguez replied that based on Imperial County's birth rates, First 5 Imperial funding is stable, though in general Proposition 10 revenue is declining. The Commission should be receiving the allocation that was projected which is approximately 2 to 2.1 million dollars in tobacco tax monies.

Chairperson Sigmond recalled that when the Commission's funding was threatened due to the State experiencing a financial crisis some years past, the Commission didn't release a new proposal, instead they gave the agencies an opportunity to do an extra year of their programs.

At this time, Mr. Rodriguez provided a few options for the Commission to consider:

- Extend the current grantees contracts for one more year, not release an RFP until more is known about the current situation with the pandemic;

- Move forward with releasing a new RFP, same process as in past years;
- Make changes/revisions to the RFP and/or identify special initiatives, and release it;
- Cancel the RFP process.

Commissioner Green suggested waiting one year and then moving forward instead of releasing a new RFP. She said the agencies may need this additional time to provide services they weren't able to do during the closures. She also advised that it should be optional for agencies, they may not be able to provide their services due to the current state we are in.

Commissioners further discussed the option of extending contracts (optional basis) for one more year as they have done in the past until things become more stable. This item will be placed on the Agenda for December's meeting as an action item. Commissioners felt that mini-grants should continue as is because the process is not as lengthy. Commissioner Green noted that the Commission may choose to support childcares with relief funds as a special consideration.

4. First 5 Imperial Audit of Financial Statements FY 2019-2020: The Commission is currently in the process of having its financial statements for FY 2019-2020 audited pursuant to guidelines relevant to generally accepted auditing standards and standards developed specifically for auditing First 5 Commissions. The Commission has retained the services of Fechter & Company CPAs for the audit.
5. California Family Book Distribution Partnership: Mr. Rodriguez explained that First 5 California, in partnership with the CA Department of Social Services, provided an opportunity for interested Counties to submit a request for books through the Book Distribution Partnership. The request was a two-phase process, and an application was submitted by our Commission requesting 5,800 children's books. Mr. Rodriguez stated that the distribution list consists of children participating in story time activities with the Brawley Public Library; children within the foster care system; children enrolled in a home visitation program; parents participating in a lactation initiative; and the families of children served by high need childcare sites. He also noted that a data collection tool will be developed for the purpose of collecting information on the book distribution partnership.

Commissioner Green mentioned that young children in childcare sites that participate in zoom virtual courses need support with books, pencils, paper, writing materials and other items; she noted that many of the families cannot afford the materials.

Chairperson Sigmond also noted including 4-year old's that are enrolled in transitional kindergarten classes. Data collection could be accessible through the schools.

Mr. Rodriguez advised that if on-line learning or early learning is justified as an issue due to Covid-19, the Commission may be able to use the COVID-19 relief funds to support that. Mr. Rodriguez will keep the Commission updated regarding the Book Distribution Partnership request for books.

6. First 5 Imperial IMPACT Program Update: Mr. Rodriguez stated that the Commission will be implementing First 5 Impact 2020 which is a continuation of the original Impact Program where the purpose of the program is to promote continuous quality improvement in specific areas related to the Quality Improvement Rating System (QRIS). We received a 3-year award at \$320,011.00 annually.

Mr. Rodriguez advised Commissioners that a letter went out addressed to the California Department of Education, to the Governor's office, to the Department of Social Services and to Resource and Referral addressing issues related to QRIS inequity and systemic racism. The letter was authored by a Resource and Referral Network of Providers, the Childcare Law Center and Parent Voices. The Department of

Social Services and First 5 California are taking a serious look at the issues. Mr. Rodriguez advised that it may change the way we do Impact; however, at this point, First 5 Imperial will continue to move forward with the program services with a focus on the areas where there is more children with high need and promote equity.

He added that a joint application has been established with the Imperial County Office of Education wherein they will be serving the state preschool programs. First 5 Imperial will facilitate family home sites, private preschools and alternative sites. 58 sites in total is the target. First 5 Imperial will prioritize the recruitment of family childcare homes within the outlying areas of Calipatria, Heber, Holtville and Seeley, which are underserved and high need. Another option will be to target recruitment of providers located in catchment areas within high-need elementary schools. First 5 Imperial will also prioritize working with migrant head start centers. The Impact Program will focus their efforts on Covid-19 relief, trainings, PACES and PACES Plus-Plus stipends. No sites will be rated during this year because enough sites were rated last year.

7. Grantee 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Summary Report and Annual Report for FY 2019-2020: Mr. Rodriguez advised that we are currently entering the phase where the Annual Report is being drafted. During the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, some of the grantees put forth a formidable effort to provide services and yet some grantees were not able to provide services at all. Mini-grant programs had similar issues. The majority of services were provided in the early education field; family functioning and then services related to child health. Percentage of children served in Brawley, El Centro and Calexico were close to 73%. Some of the grantees did not expense all their budgets such as the El Centro Regional Medical Center's Asthma Program (33%) due to issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The City of El Centro's mini-grant project could not provide services due to closures.

## **VI. Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Sigmond thanked Mr. Rodriguez and staff for going above and beyond their role as it pertains to securing grant funding from outside sources for the benefit of our community.

## **VII. Adjournment**

A motion adjourning the meeting was made by Commissioner Deol and it was seconded by Commissioner Green; the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm. The next meeting is scheduled on December 3, 2020.