



Imperial County Children and Families First Commission
MINUTES
Meeting of September 2, 2021

I. Call to Order

This Regular Meeting of First 5 Imperial was called to order by Karla Sigmond, Chairperson, at 3:35 p.m. The meeting was held via a video conferencing webinar hosted through Zoom.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Present:

- Ray Castillo
Becky Green
Joong Kim
Fred Miramontes
Veronica Rodriguez
Karla Sigmond
Danila Vargas

Commissioners Absent:

- Yurii Camacho
Barbara Deol

Staff:

- Julio C. Rodriguez
Bea Duran
Dr. Gustavo Galindo
Oddeth Perez

III. Public Comment

No public comments were noted.

IV. Adoption of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Green and seconded by Commissioner Miramontes adopting the Minutes of the Meeting held on June 3, 2021; having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

V. Consent Calendar Items

Upon review of the consent calendar items for the meeting, a motion to approve was made by Commissioner Miramontes and seconded by Commissioner Green; having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

VI. Administrative Report (Julio C. Rodriguez, Executive Director)

1. Request to Select and Approve Parent Support Initiative Community Development Mini-Grants for FY 2021-2022: Commissioners acknowledged having received four Parent Support Community Development Mini-Grant applications from local agencies:

- Burn Institute – Imperial Valley Scald Prevention Program
Imperial County Child Abuse Prevention Council – Staff Development
Imperial Valley Social Justice Committee – “See Me”
Sure Helpline Center – Parenting Classes

At this time, Commissioners proceeded to determine potential conflicts of interest. Having noted no conflicts with regard to the applications received, Commissioners continued with the review and selection of mini-grant projects.

Burn Institute – Imperial Valley Scald Prevention Program: Mr. Rodriguez provided a summary of the application and noted that the Burn Institute is seeking \$5,000 for this project. The agency intends to target 250 parents and providers through partnerships with local preschools, libraries and other family programs that offer services to children ages 0-5. They will be providing information, English or Spanish, related to fire, scald, and burn prevention. The Burn Institute is proposing to work in collaboration with other organizations that provide services to low socio-economic status families and those under-insured/uninsured. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the agency has 30 years experience working with the community. He added, though, that the proposal did not include a recruitment plan on how they would target parents or providers of the 0-5 age group.

Commissioner Green commented on the type of “providers” the agency plans to target. She asked whether this included guardians, foster parents, expectant parents, etc. She also found that the application did not address specific information on how they would engage the parents.

Imperial County Child Abuse Prevention Council – Staff Development Project: Mr. Rodriguez provided a summary of the proposal and noted that the Imperial County CAP Council is requesting \$15,776.25 for this project. The agency is seeking staff development training and consultation on the Incredible Years curriculum, which is the curriculum the project implements for the parenting classes provided to parents with infants, toddlers and young children, as well as workshops designed to train staff to work with children diagnosed with autism or a language impairment/delay. Mr. Rodriguez advises that it would be important if the agency included training on the best practices for the recruitment of parents, especially during this time. Mr. Rodriguez indicated that the proposal did not address the staff salaries and so this would need further clarification; and they would need to seek assurance on non-supplantation of funds.

Commissioner Sigmond questioned whether the agency included a plan on working with community partners, especially as it related to recruiting families that have children diagnosed with autism. She commented that this was a sensitive subject with many families that required a specialized approach but stated that she feels there is a great need for this type of service.

Commissioner Green added that there are many degrees of autism and stated that although the staff may receive training on how to address young children it is not the same as working directly with autistic children and families. She questioned whether this is the audience they should be working with being that it is a delicate situation.

Commissioner Rodriguez had a question regarding the timeline. Mr. Rodriguez pulled up the timeline on the application for review and noted that the group leader training would take place in early 2022 and stated that it would make sense to change the timeline, that it may possibly be moved up to take place sooner so that there won't be any missed opportunities to better serve the families. Mr. Rodriguez agreed that he would like to recommend that the project implement its timeline closer to October 2021 if this would adhere to the Incredible Years trainer's schedule.

Imperial Valley Social Justice Committee – “See Me” Project: Mr. Rodriguez provided a summary of the proposal and noted that the request for \$6,702 is appropriate for the parents they intend to serve under this project. The Committee intends to offer a series of parent education sessions that will focus on parents raising bi-racial/multi-cultural children under 5

years. The classroom-type series will be held over the course of 5 weeks and will include various topics with suggestions on discussing race, communication techniques, increasing parent awareness, parent support and seeking resources. Mr. Rodriguez noted that a strength of this project is that the agency will work on sustaining the services beyond the funding of this mini-grant. Also, this type of specialized parent education can have a significant impact on young children. This is the first time this agency applies for funding with the Commission. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the proposal did not indicate whether the trainers had any experience working with this specific group, and the narrative did not identify a specific curriculum they proposed to use, one that is evidence-based. He also stated that he would like to see the agency provide the appropriate financial documents as referenced in the application guidelines.

Commissioner Green, at this time, asked whether the Commission was aware that one of the individuals involved in this project had been in a serious traffic accident. Mr. Rodriguez stated that Mrs. Staton had contacted him via telephone and expressed her intention to have the mini-grant application withdrawn from consideration, she felt that she would not be able to provide the services and did not want to commit to a program where she would not be able to participate in. He then advised Mrs. Staton that he would need a formal written request in order to withdraw the application from consideration. She indicated that because of her current state she could not provide a letter. Therefore Mr. Rodriguez indicated that he had asked her permission to share the details of their telephone conversation with the Commission.

It was the general consensus of the Commission to continue with the evaluation of the application received from the Imperial Valley Social Justice Committee.

Commissioner Sigmond asked how the agency planned to engage the families; she asked if the agency already had a database established for recruitment purposes. Wondered if the county had sufficient families that consisted of bi-racial children. Mr. Rodriguez advised that he had no knowledge on the statistics specific to our county.

Mr. Rodriguez further noted that it would be important for the curriculum to be appropriate for the age group, particularly since at that age group children have not begun to form a sense of self. Commissioner Green stated that there may not be an appropriate curriculum for this age group. She added that based on her knowledge and personal experience, children are not aware of differences until the age of 7 or later. She believes that exposing such information to very young children could have an adverse impact on their development if it is not an age-appropriate curriculum.

Sure Helpline Center – Parenting Classes Project: Mr. Rodriguez provided a summary of the proposal that was submitted by the Sure Helpline Center and noted that the agency is seeking \$24,972 for this project. The Sure Helpline Center intends to offer parent education classes that support parents by reducing their risk of falling into the cycle of abuse/neglect, which would be provided in groups of 12 sessions. The parent education sessions, which will be provided in English and Spanish, will encompass general topics, and include support, referral and counseling to parents and families who are at risk of domestic violence. The project intends to serve up to 40 parents. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the agency has a history of supporting individuals that are victims of abuse through its helpline services; however, the project does not provide further information on the type of experience or training they have in providing parent education

classes for families with children ages 0-5. The project did not address what curriculum it intends to utilize, and it did not include an assessment of the classes.

Commissioners, in general, noted that the project seemed too ambitious, and they did not wish to see mini-grants fail. Commissioner Green stated that its clear the Sure Helpline Center has been providing services in the community for a long time; however, the application doesn't provide sufficient information in its approach to the parenting education sessions.

A motion to approve the mini-grant submitted by the Burn Institute with the recommended amount was made by Commissioner Green also stating that the agency must show further evidence of a recruitment plan and should work with Mr. Rodriguez on establishing a collaboration with local partners, seconded by Commissioner Miramontes. Having noted no further discussion or public comments, the motion passed with all in favor.

A motion to approve the mini-grant submitted by the Imperial County Child Abuse Prevention Council with assurances that there be no supplantation and that they propose an earlier timeline was made by Commissioner Kim and it was seconded by Commissioner Rodriguez; having noted no further discussion or public comments, the motion passed with all in favor.

A motion not to fund the mini-grant that was submitted by the Imperial Valley Social Justice Committee was made by Commissioner Green because the individual responsible for the grant may not be available, the project lacked the experience in working with children ages 0-5, no curriculum was provided and did not include the financial documents in their application, seconded by Commissioner Kim. Having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion passed with all in favor.

A motion not to fund the mini-grant that was submitted by the Sure Helpline Center was made by Commissioner Rodriguez and it was seconded by Commissioner Green; having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion passed with all in favor.

As per direction of the Commission, Mr. Rodriguez will send notices to all applicants and will draft contracts, integrating scope-of-work changes, with those agencies that were awarded.

Commissioner Rodriguez noted that one of the discussions that they were also having with the Local Health Authority was the need to provide support to local agencies with respect to grant writing or submitting applications for consideration of funding. Mr. Rodriguez noted that is something that the Commission had sponsored in the past and could look into this for future purposes. Commissioner Sigmond commented that the Commission believes in supporting agencies in their approach to providing services to young children and their families and added that local agencies could use assistance with courses or training in grant writing. She would like to support these efforts.

2. Administrative Costs Report FY 2020-2021: Mr. Rodriguez advised that the Administrative Costs Report on expenses for Fiscal Year 2020-2021 reflects the limitation and definitions that were established in the Cost Allocation policy noting that administrative costs would not exceed 15%. Commissioners reviewed the report included in the packet. Costs incurred in support of the general management and administration of First 5 Imperial for FY 2020-2021 were 7.48% for

administrative costs, 80.99% for program costs, and 11.53% for evaluation costs. Mr. Rodriguez further noted that the report is part of the compliances required by First 5 California.

A motion to approve the Administrative Costs Report FY 2020-2021 as presented was made by Commissioner Miramontes and it was seconded by Commissioner Kim. Commissioner Kim commented that the costs of living have increased, and he would like the Commission to review the limit because he would like to make sure that staff salaries are adequately included. Commissioner Sigmond noted that Commission staff has not received salary increases in 5 years. Having noted no further discussion, the motion passed with all in favor.

As per general consensus of the Commission, Commissioner Sigmond asked that the review of salary increases for staff be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

3. Request for Budget Revision for First 5 IMPACT Program FY 2021-2022: Mr. Rodriguez explained that the Request For Application for the IMPACT Program approved by First 5 California was for a 3-year term totaling \$960,034. The Commission was awarded \$320,011 for each year, and currently has entered into its second year of the RFA. Because expenses during fiscal year 2020-2021 totaled \$285,737, First 5 California, allowed us to roll-over the remaining balance of \$34,274.42. Therefore, the amount increases the current IMPACT budget for FY 2021-2022 from \$320,011 to \$354,285.76. Mr. Rodriguez provided a review of the proposed budget revision.

A motion was made by Commissioner Miramontes and it was seconded by Commissioner Rodriguez approving the budget revision for the First 5 IMPACT Program FY 2021-2022; having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

4. First 5 Imperial IMPACT – Quality Start Update: Dr. Galindo, Special Programs Manager, introduced Ms. Oddeth Perez, Early Learning Specialist, to the Commission at this time. Ms. Perez will be assisting the childcare providers with coaching sessions and trainings. Dr. Galindo reported that they are currently working with 45 family childcare homes and are in the process of recruiting an additional 13 more childcare homes; this total would meet the requirement. Plans for recruitment have been expanded to include the cities of Heber, Calipatria, Seeley and Holtville, as a priority has been set for the outlying and underserved areas of the County. He noted that family childcares are reaching out to the Commission requesting assistance and expressing their desire to participate in the Quality Start program. Dr. Galindo also reported that they have coordinated 12 product distribution events to date in order to support childcare sites during the COVID-19 pandemic. These “rodeo” distribution events consist of providing sanitizing products, PPE supplies, diapers, baby wipes, books, and bins to childcare providers. The program also distributed supplies to private centers. He noted that staff has also participated in additional distribution drives coordinated by the Imperial County Office of Education.

Commissioner Kim noted that he was glad to hear that the smaller cities have been included and will be participating in the program. He was grateful to staff for their hard work.

5. Professional Advancement for Childhood Educators Stipend (PACES) Program: Mr. Rodriguez presented information and an update on the PACES stipend program for fiscal year 2020-2021. He noted that two components of the stipend were created, one that benefitted individuals seeking educational attainment and the other that centered on capacity building. Individuals seeking educational attainment had to complete 9 semester units, care for children ages 0 to 5,

and work in a childcare site or be licensed. These individuals were eligible to receive a \$1,000 stipend for meeting the requirements. He noted that the Commission had recently increased the incentive amount from \$500 to \$1,000; 20 individuals received the award. Individuals seeking capacity building were eligible to participate in professional trainings, averaging between 1 to 10 for the year at a cost reimbursement of up to \$300. Of these, 33 individuals participated in this program and were eligible to receive awards.

6. First 5 Imperial Audit Report FY 2020-2021: Mr. Rodriguez announced that the Commission was in the process of completing its Audit of Financial Statements for FY 2020-2021, and Fechter and Company, CPAs will be completing this report for the Commission. The Letter of Engagement signed with Fechter and Company was included in the packet along with the State Audit Guidelines. Once completed, the audit will be sent to the State Controller's office and First 5 California as per the audit guidelines. Mr. Rodriguez advised that the audit report may be completed sooner than expected, and he anticipates no issues with meeting the deadline, where the deadline to submit the audit is November 1, 2021.
7. FY 2020-2021 4th Quarter Reports and Annual Report Update: Mr. Rodriguez provided a brief summary of the 4th Quarter Reports and the annual report. He advised that 4th quarter reports from grantees were due on July 15, 2021. 9 of 10 RFP major grants were submitted and 5 mini-grant reports were submitted. Preliminary reports indicate that direct services were provided to 4,249 non-duplicate contacts by the grantees. No community strengthening activities were realized during the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 192 early care and education providers participated in various trainings. 1,824 children ages 0-5 from the cities of Brawley, El Centro, Calexico, and outlying cities received services. Of the parents participating in services, 1,356 were from Brawley, El Centro and Calexico. RFP major grantees expensed approximately 79% of their budgets for the year, although this amount is still pending and adjustments and information from one project that had requested an extension; and mini-grants reported having expensed a total of 83%. Mr. Rodriguez further advised that the information collected from the grantees will help prepare the annual report that is submitted to First 5 California.
8. State of Children Report Update: Mr. Rodriguez reminded Commissioners that at a meeting held on June 3rd, the Commission authorized him to enter into a contract with First 5 Riverside in partnership with First 5 San Bernardino and the University of California Center for Social Innovations for the purpose of producing a "State of the Children" report. He included a copy of the agreement in the packet for their review. Because the three Commissions share some commonalities, these three counties are the inland counties in the Southern Region, and the report will include a mix of community partner profiles, promising practices, and case studies, he felt the partnership was something the Commission could benefit from. Mr. Rodriguez explained that the information collected from the report will serve to include indicators or information that may be incorporated into the new Strategic Plan, other agencies may benefit from the information that is collected, and inform further collaboration on projects. The report is scheduled to be completed in the fall.

VII. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Castillo commented that First 5 Imperial has been doing an excellent job despite a difficult year, he thanked Mr. Rodriguez as well as staff.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion adjourning the meeting was made by Commissioner Castillo and it was seconded by Commissioner Kim; the meeting was adjourned at 5:09 pm.