



Imperial County Children and Families First Commission
MINUTES
Meeting of April 6, 2023

I. Call to Order

This Regular Meeting of First 5 Imperial was called to order by Commissioner Green at 3:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the County Administration Building, Conference Room C/D, located at 940 W. Main Street, El Centro, CA.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Present:

Yurii A. Camacho
Becky Green
Michael Kelley
Paula Llanas
Fred Miramontes

Commissioners Absent:

Barbara Deol
Karla A. Sigmond
Danila Vargas
Joong Kim

Staff:

Julio C. Rodriguez
Fernando Valenzuela
Christian Hernandez

III. Public Comment

Pat Urena from the City of El Centro Community Services Department advised Commissioners that they are once again offering the Stepping Stones Program. They are utilizing a new curriculum and are offering swimming lessons to young children and offering CPR classes to parents. Ms. Urena further advised that their program is an inclusive program and they are working with children with autism and Down Syndrome. The program also has use of the El Centro Community Center playground, 3 rooms, the MLK Pavilion (soccer program and basketball program) and the aquatic center. Staff and parents spoke briefly in support of the City of El Centro's youth programs. All programs are offered county-wide.

Commissioner Miramontes advised that the Sheriff's Department will be participating in an Awareness Autism event that will be taking place in Imperial on April 8th and invited Ms. Urena to participate.

IV. Adoption of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Miramontes and seconded by Commissioner Camacho adopting the Minutes of the meeting held on February 2, 2023. No public comment or further discussion was made and the motion carried (1-abstention M.Kelley).

V. Consent Calendar Items

Upon review of the consent calendar items for the meeting which consisted of the January and February 2023 financial reports, a motion to approve was made by Commissioner Kelley and seconded by Commissioner Miramontes. No public comment or further discussion was made and the motion carried with all in favor.

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

1. Request to Select Community Development Mini-Grant Statements of Interest to Apply for FY 2023-2024: Mr. Rodriguez advised that 13 Statements of Interest to Apply were received in response to the Community Development Mini-Grant application. Commissioners immediately proceeded to disclose conflicts of interest and the following disclosures were made:

Paula Llanas – Kelly Ranasinghe, Deputy County Counsel – Juvenile Court Team Project
Fred Miramontes – Imperial County Sheriff’s Office Crime Prevention Unit

Mr. Rodriguez advised that \$150,000 was allocated specifically by the Commission for mini-grants and he discussed the selection process. A summary of the following discussion continued:

Ballington Academy for the Arts and Sciences: This agency is requesting \$15,000 to enhance the TK and Kindergarten program by purchasing materials and equipment related to STEAM/PE. The program will be using age-appropriate materials and intends to purchase outdoor seating with the mini-grant monies. Volunteers of America administrates this program, and they have reported serving 19 children who are enrolled in their TK (Transitional Kindergarten) and the Kindergarten programs. Commissioners commented that they are not sure what number of children under 5 would be served, and questioned what portion of children enrolled in kindergarten class are 5 and under. They feel the Commission is clear on their focus of serving children 0-5 population. Also commented during the meeting was on the fact that this agency receives public funding to set up these programs; those funds should cover the equipment that is needed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Camacho to not invite the Ballington Academy for the Arts and Sciences Project to Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant application and it was seconded by Commissioner Kelley. No public comment or further discussion continued and the motion carried with all in favor.

California Hands & Voices CARES CPRC Program: This agency is requesting \$25,000. The program’s focus is underserved parents of children with disabilities, including parents of children who are English learners, and parents with disabilities. The program intends to use the funds to host monthly field trips to different sites and community centers within the county and will provide meals at each event. The field trips will promote the cognitive, social, emotional, language and literacy development of the child. Staff is bilingual and materials are accessible in English and Spanish. Commissioners commented that this agency is from San Diego and does not have a presence in Imperial County. Priority is given to programs located in Imperial County because based on past experiences outside agencies will require parents to travel to San Diego to obtain their resources and this may not be accessible to families.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kelley to not invite the California Hands & Voices CARES CPRC Program to Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant application and it was seconded by Commissioner Camacho. Commissioners noted that they have funded agencies whose main offices are in San Diego but who also have a local office within Imperial County, this includes Burn Institute and the San Diego Regional Center. No public comment or further discussion continued and the motion carried with all in favor.

City of El Centro Community Services Department: This agency is requesting \$25,000 to continue to enhance their Stepping Stones Program which is composed of Camp Pebble which serves children 0 to 2 years of age and Camp Rock which serves children 3 to 5 years old. Activities will be held at the City of El Centro Community Center, City Gym, playgrounds, the Aquatics Center and the MLK Pavilion. The program will offer CPR to parents with children 0-5 including water safety education; specific education that teaches soccer, basketball, and athletics, and will address a nutrition component and music and movement classes.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kelley inviting the City of El Centro Community Services Department to apply for Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant application and it was seconded by Commissioner Camacho. No public comment or further discussion continued and the motion carried with all in favor.

Imperial County Child Abuse Prevention Council: This agency is requesting \$25,000 to offer the Little Steps Program. They intend to offer parenting classes using the Incredible Years curriculum and incorporating the Kits for New Parents. Their focus is to serve 125 parents with children ages 0-5. The CAP Council will provide classes in-person but will also offer classes via Zoom to parents who live in remote areas of the County. The purpose of the program is to focus on strengthening parent/child interactions. This project clearly falls under the family strengthening goal of the Commission's Strategic Plan.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kelley inviting the Imperial County Child Abuse Prevention Council to apply for Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant application and it was seconded by Commissioner Camacho. Commissioner Kelley stated that the CAP Council has been offering services for a long time and they have the expertise to serve the parents. No public comment or further discussion continued and the motion carried with all in favor.

It was noted at this time that Commissioner Miramontes stepped out of the meeting room due to the disclosure of a conflict of interest with the Imperial County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit.

Imperial County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit: The agency is requesting \$8,000 to purchase a software program they will use to fingerprint and take pictures of children 6 months to 5 years of age for the purpose of having an ID made for the children. The agency will encourage families to fill out personal information as part of the ID of the child. They will also be offering tips on child safety. Outreach and ID services will be offered at daycare facilities, community health fairs and other school events.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kelley inviting the Imperial County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit to apply for Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant application and it was seconded by Commissioner Camacho. No public comment or further discussion was made and the motion carried (1 abstention – F.Miramontes).

Commissioner Miramontes entered the room at this time.

Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program: This agency is requesting \$25,000 to provide home visitation services to an additional 15 families through Project Nenes. The Commission currently funds a major RFP contract with Project Nenes to provide a 30-week home instruction

program to 75 families. Additionally, IVROP provides home instruction to Families, Friends and Neighbors with funds provided through the IMPACT Program. The HIPPY program is an intensive home visitation program that is very successful and has had a great impact on children entering school. Project Nenes has received continued funding from the Commission for 15 years; although there are new programs applying that the Commission may want to consider.

A motion was made by Commissioner Miramontes inviting the Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program to apply for Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant application and it was seconded by Commissioner Llanas. Commissioner Green asked whether the project has looked for other funding sources to sustain their program. Mr. Rodriguez advised that the program has applied for other resources but has not been successful. No public comment or further discussion continued and the motion carried with all in favor.

At this time, Commissioner Llanas stepped out of the room due to a conflict of interest.

Kelly Ranasinghe, Deputy County Counsel – Juvenile Court Team Project: \$200 is the request being made through this statement. The purpose of the request is to utilize the money to provide snacks, water, books, toys, and candy for children who are attending juvenile court in the Superior Court of Imperial County while they are waiting for their case.

Mr. Rodriguez advised the Commission could help support this request but is suggesting an alternative resource. Mr. Rodriguez is recommending that the Commission not consider this application and re-direct Kelly Ranasinghe to apply for funds through the Community Outreach Support Application process; the maximum support provided through this application is \$1,500.00 and it is a much simpler application process and the agency will not have to go through the reporting requirements of a mini-grant as well, particularly considering the amount being requested.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kelley to not invite the Juvenile Court Team Project to apply for Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant process, seconded by Commissioner Camacho. Directions were given to Mr. Rodriguez to reach out to County Counsel Ranasinghe and provide an alternate application. No public comment or further discussion continued and the motion carried (1 abstention – P.Llanas).

Commissioner Llanas re-entered the room.

March of Dimes: The agency is requesting \$16,000. March of Dimes is looking at bringing back their Becoming a Mom/Comenzando Bien Program. The intent is to provide the Comenzando Bien curriculum training to 16 health care providers. This curriculum is a bilingual comprehensive prenatal curriculum that will be provided to expectant parents by the providers through a series of sessions.

Commissioners commented that this program had been funded in the past through a major grant over several years. During funding, several health care providers were trained in this curriculum; however, the program had a difficult time reaching out to parents. Also noted was the fact that March of Dimes does not have a physical presence in the county any more and has not had one for a number of years.

A motion was made by Commissioner Camacho to not invite the March of Dimes to apply for Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant process, seconded by Commissioner Miramontes. No public comment or further discussion continued and the motion carried with all in favor.

Pioneers Memorial Hospital: The agency is requesting \$25,000 to purchase a bed for critically ill newborns or at-risk infants born in the hospital. This is a mobile unit that is completely self-contained.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kelley to not invite Pioneers Memorial Hospital to apply for Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant process due to the fact that this request does not fall under the Strategic Plan, seconded by Commissioner Camacho. No public comment or further discussion continued and the motion carried with all in favor.

Real Hope Center: This agency is requesting \$10,000 to conduct a media campaign which would help promote their services. The services benefit expectant parents and parents with children 0 to 5. The agency provides diapers, baby clothes, baby accessories as well as referrals to other agencies.

Commissioners commented that the request is reasonable and falls under the Strategic Plan; however, noted that the agency did not follow the rules for submittal. All statements should be submitted in type-written form.

A motion was made by Commissioner Camacho to not invite Real Hope Center to apply for Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant process due to the fact that the agency did not follow the procedures of the application process, seconded by Commissioner Miramontes. Commissioners suggested connecting the agency with the Community Foundation. No public comment or further discussion was noted and the motion carried with all in favor.

Seeley Union School District: The District is requesting \$25,000 to engage children 0 to 5 in literacy and childhood activities using age-appropriate materials to cognitively prepare them for the school system.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kelley inviting the Seeley Union School District to apply under Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant application and it was seconded by Commissioner Camacho. No public comment or further discussion continued and the motion carried with all in favor.

Sure Helpline Center: The agency is requesting \$25,000 for this project. The agency is proposing a parenting program that will benefit children 0 to 5 by reducing the risk of child abuse and neglect and increasing children's healthy behaviors and social skills. Most of the families that may be part of the target population are referred by the Imperial County justice system. Serving a significantly vulnerable population.

Commissioner Kelley stated that Sure Helpline Center does a dynamic job in the community, and they need all the help they can get. A motion inviting the Sure Helpline Center to apply under Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant was made by Commissioner Kelley and

seconded by Commissioner Camacho. No public comment or further discussion was made and the motion carried with all in favor.

University of California-Desert Research and Extension Center: The agency is requesting \$20,000 to hold a Farm-to-Preschool Festival. The event focuses on bringing out preschool-aged children and their parents and introduces them to nutrition and adopting healthy eating habits. The program specifically targets childcare centers; and other early care and education sites are also invited to participate. The agency promotes physical activity and science activities that support the development of the child. One of the activities they plan involves sowing half an acre of vegetables prior to the festival; the child, along with their parents, will then participate in harvesting these vegetables.

A motion inviting the University of California-Desert Research and Extension Center to apply under Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant was made by Commissioner Camacho and seconded by Commissioner Miramontes. No public comment or further discussion was made and the motion carried with all in favor.

2. Request to Approve the Community Development Mini-Grant Guidelines Step 2: Mr. Rodriguez advised that the guidelines are the same as last year, except for dates, and he went on to provide a summary of the updated guidelines noting the changes and the timeline. He advised that \$150,000 was designated for the award of mini-grants. He also discussed the submittal process noted on page 30 of which Commissioners suggested that the applications be sent electronically to them.

A motion was made by Commissioner Camacho and seconded by Commissioner Kelley approving the Community Development Mini-Grant Guidelines, Step 2. No public comment or further discussion was made and the motion carried with all in favor.

3. Request to Approve First 5 California Annual Report FY 2021-2022: The Children and Families Act requires that County Commissions approve the First 5 California Annual Report. Mr. Rodriguez noted that a summary of services for Imperial County was included on Page 28. The report highlighted the work the Commission continues to do with the early care and education community. The data in the report is aggregated statewide.

A motion was made by Commissioner Miramontes and seconded by Commissioner Camacho approving the First 5 California Annual Report FY 2021-2022. No public comment or further discussion continued and the motion carried with all in favor.

4. Request Termination of El Centro Regional Medical Center Contract 2022-199038: Mr. Rodriguez advised that during the February meeting of the Commission, the El Centro Regional Medical Center had submitted a request to transfer its Lactation Program to Pioneers Memorial Healthcare District. The Commission agreed to move forward and negotiate the possibility of the transfer. Pioneers Memorial Hospital District was made aware that if agreed, they would have to also fulfill the scope-of-work responsibilities that were submitted by El Centro Regional Medical Center. Pioneers Memorial Healthcare District indicated they would like to continue the lactation program; however, they are still contemplating the scope-of-work portion of it. Mr. Rodriguez is asking to move forward with formally terminating the contract with El Centro Regional Medical Center.

A motion was made by Commissioner Miramontes and seconded by Commissioner Kelley to terminate the contract entered into with El Centro Regional Medical Center. No public comment or further discussion continued and the motion carried with all in favor.

5. 2nd Quarter Progress Report: A summary of the 2nd Quarter Progress Report was provided in the packet. The Compliance Coordinator and Executive Director have been meeting with grantees to discuss program goals and to provide support. He noted the discussions they have had with the Burn Institute and the recommendation made that they establish an outreach plan. They have also had discussions with the County Free Library; the Director noted that they are having difficulty with staff retention and reaching out to families to get them enrolled and participating in the program. Mr. Rodriguez advised that he may come back and recommend changes to programs. Programs have expensed 39% of their budgets. 3,271 children, families and extended family members received services during the 2nd quarter.
6. Other First 5 Imperial Updates: Mr. Rodriguez advised that the Commission's US Bank account was hacked; \$9,185.31 were transferred out of the account. He is working with the bank and they are investigating the transfers that were made. The bank is advising that the act was either fraud or an error. The bank has implemented a safeguard wherein any amount that is wired/transferred out will be reported by email to Mr. Rodriguez and will need prior approval. Also, he will provide Commission members with follow-up on the status of the dispute of charges on the account.

Mr. Rodriguez announced that Christian Hernandez, Fiscal Analyst for the Commission, will be retiring after 19 years of service. Commissioners thanked Mr. Hernandez for his service and wished him good luck in his new business venture.

Mr. Rodriguez noted that they have applied for the Home Visiting Coordination grant through First 5 California under a region which includes Orange County, San Bernardino County and Riverside County. They expect to receive a two-year award totaling \$391,000 under this grant.

VII. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Green commented that their Concert in the Lawn was a wonderful event. There were between 475-500 attendees. She also stated that they are applying for a grant to create new pathways for elementary teachers that are coming back to get their early childhood education credentials.

Adriana Nava, Services Director for the City of El Centro, stated that the City holds up to 13 events per year and encourages programs to participate and to reach out to the City for support. She looks forward to a collaboration with the different agencies.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion adjourning the meeting was made by Commissioner Miramontes and seconded by Commissioner Camacho. The next meeting is scheduled for June 1, 2023.