

County of Santa Clara

Office of the County Executive

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DATE: January 30, 2023

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, County Executive

FROM: Sarah Duffy, Chief Children's Officer
Office of Children and Families Policy

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Sarah Duffy
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SUBJECT: Update on the Study Relating to Expansion of School-Based Behavioral Health Supports (i.e., Wellness Centers), Contract with Santa Clara County Office of Education, Early Care Education, and Support of Senate Bill 854

At the Board of Supervisors meeting on April 19, 2022 (Item No. 13.3a), Supervisors Ellenberg and Chavez requested an off-agenda report by the end of January 2023 relating to an update on the study relating to the expansion of school-based behavioral health supports and school-based mental health screenings, the contract with the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) relating to billing system support, County efforts in regard to the early care and education (ECE) workforce, and the support of Senate Bill 854. This report provides the requested information.

Expansion of School-Based Behavioral Health Supports (Wellness Centers)

A contract with consultant Aimee Reedy was executed and took effect on October 1, 2022, for the completion of an operational plan to support strategic County investments in the expansion of school-based behavioral health wellness centers to help children and youth recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Office of Children and Families Policy (OCFP), in partnership with the County Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD) and SCCOE, has been meeting regularly with the consultant to guide data collection and research efforts that include documenting local wellness center funding sources and programming as well as a review of wellness center models and funding sources in other California counties. On December 21, 2022 (Item No. 19), in the OCFP monthly report (Legislative

File 113831) to the Children, Seniors, and Families Committee (CSFC), staff included the preliminary detailed review of the wellness center study findings, including a timeline with dates and deliverables associated with the operational plan. School-based mental health screenings will be part of the wellness center study review and operational recommendations. The full operational plan will be completed by March 2023.

Billing and Technical Assistance Training

The contract with SCCOE to support school districts in billing Medi-Cal was executed and effective October 1, 2022. Contract activities that took place during Phase 1 (October to December 2022) included outreach and the establishment of a billing Professional Learning Community (PLC); the development of a toolkit, a fact sheet, and content videos for all aspects of billing programs with emphasis on areas of support identified by Local Education Agencies; and the development of a Medi-Cal billing resources and materials website. The first PLC session took place on December 12, 2022, and monthly sessions are scheduled to continue through May 2023.

Strategic Efforts to Build a Childcare and Early Learning Professional Pipeline

To address the early learning teacher shortage that was exacerbated by the toll of a global pandemic, the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 adopted budget included \$5,000,000 for FIRST 5 Santa Clara County (FIRST 5) to develop and implement a three-pronged strategy with partners (community colleges, California Family Child Care Education Networks, California State Preschool employers, family childcare home employers, SCCOE, school districts, and others) to bolster and strengthen the ECE workforce serving children birth through five years. Pilots include the Apprenticeship Initiative, Transitional Kindergarten (TK) Equity Initiative, and Shared Services Alliance. Following are progress summaries for each of these pilot initiatives.¹

The Apprenticeship Initiative provides an entry ramp into a career in ECE through an “earn and learn” program combining paid work experience with college coursework. In collaboration with community and system stakeholders, two apprentice cohorts, the California State Preschool Program (CSPP) and Family Child Care Home Providers (FCCH), were launched in September 2022 that included participation from apprentices, mentors, home provider owners, and other

¹ December 21, 2022 (Item No. 19), CSFC; FIRST 5 ECE Workforce Interim Progress Report.

partners. Mission and DeAnza are the community college partners for the CSPP (24 apprentices) and FCCH (27 apprentices) cohorts, respectively. Early learnings showed the need for a monthly Mentor Community of Practice to support mentorship. These mentor support sessions are facilitated by coaches from the SCCOE Inclusion Collaborative.

The TK Equity Initiative directly supports skilled and diverse ECE professionals to embark on a credential pathway that allows them to apply for higher-paying, union-protected early learning jobs with benefits in school districts. An Early Learning Consortium, composed of early learning stakeholders, launched in October 2022 to prepare for the new state preschool to third grade (P-3) credential that is pending approval from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, Office of Administrative Law. The Consortium will focus on identifying equitable TK pathways for strengthening a diverse ECE professional workforce. A FIRST 5 TK Teacher Interest Form resulted in 159 individuals expressing interest in learning more about the P-3 Credential Program. FIRST 5 is reviewing the applicant list and applying an equity framework to create pathways for women of color. Through the Consortium, partners will identify innovative ways to create educational pathways to address emerging barriers to a TK credential.

The Shared Services Alliance is adopting a liberatory design process to center the needs of FCCH providers and build business and pedagogy supports for small business owners who are primarily women of color. FIRST 5 completed an informational session for FCCH providers in English and Spanish as well as used marketing materials to recruit a Design Team. Out of 66 applicants, 40 FCCH providers were invited to participate using an equity-centered rating rubric (e.g., race/ethnicity, language, priority ZIP codes, working with children with diverse needs), and 32 accepted to be part of the Design Team. Applicants not selected will have opportunities to become involved in other ways, such as engaging in listening sessions and participating in a local Family Child Care Conference. The Imagine Institute was contracted to guide the Design Team in building an equity-focused Santa Clara County Family Child Care Network and Shared Services Alliance.

Research and policy institutes have emphasized the need to treat childcare as an essential economic infrastructure that is linked to family stability, school readiness, and economic recovery and growth.² These three ECE workforce initiatives serve

² “California’s Economic Recovery Starts with Child Care” (February 2021), California Budget & Policy Center (calbudgetcenter.org/resources); “The Child Care Crisis is Keeping Women Out of the Workforce” (March 2019), American Progress (americanprogress.org/article).

to strengthen the “workforce behind the workforce” and the economy by providing safe, consistent, quality childcare options for working families across Santa Clara County communities.

Senate Bill 854

The County supported Senate Bill 854, but the bill did not advance through the legislative process. Rather, its provisions and associated funding were incorporated into, and approved as part of, the 2023 Budget Act. The State is undertaking activities to develop an implementation plan, which is required to be submitted to the Department of Finance and the Legislature on or before February 1, 2024. The County Office of Intergovernmental Relations will monitor these efforts to identify issues and/or engagement opportunities for the County.

Conclusion

The County continues to invest in services and resources to meet the needs of children and young people that support recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. OCFP is working to understand where improvements are needed and where current resources can be better leveraged for impact.

Cc: Chief Board Aides
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