

2021-2025 Strategic Plan



OUR VISION

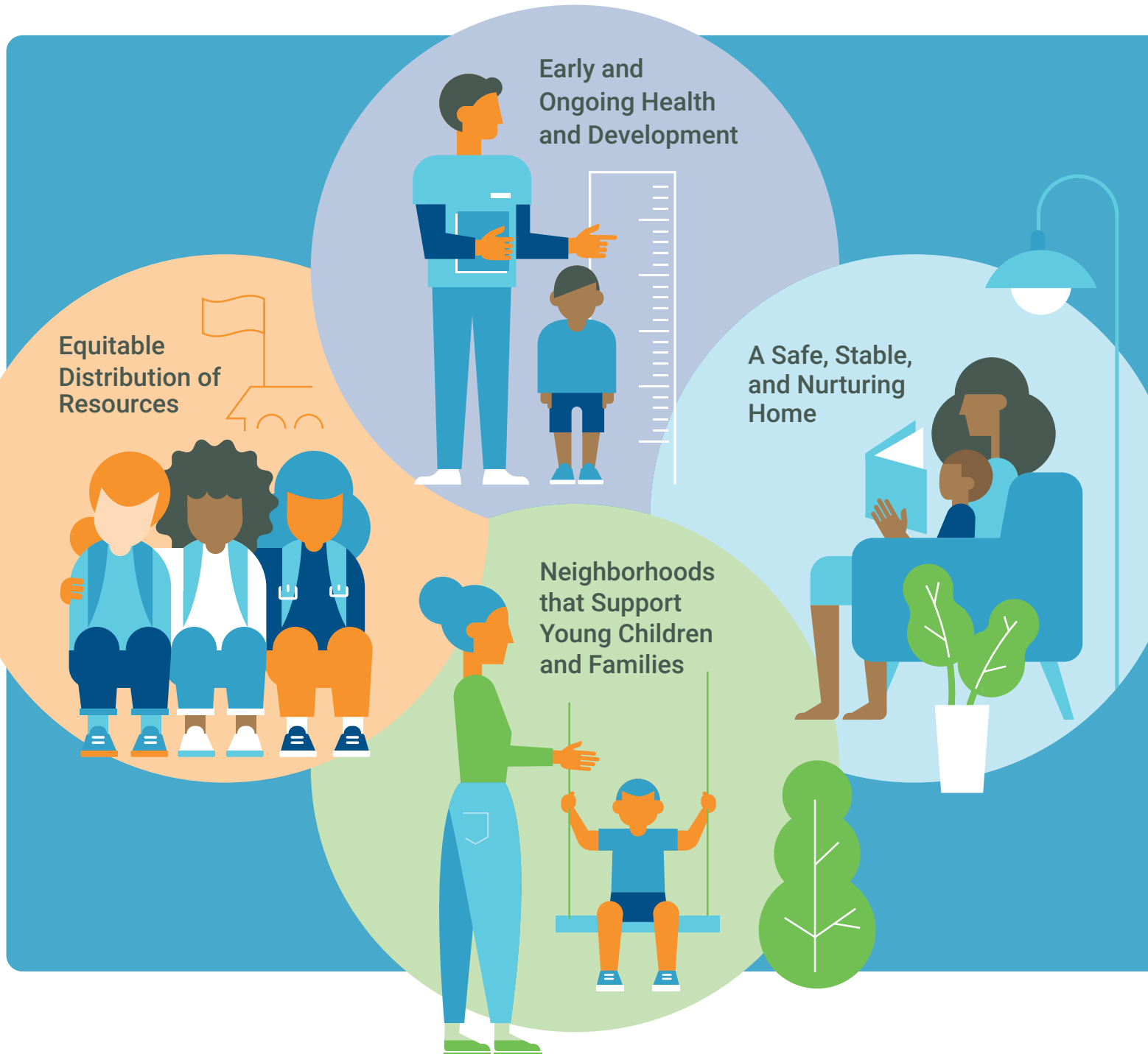
We envision an Orange County in which **“All children reach their full potential.”** The groundwork for this vision to be achieved is set during a child’s earliest years. First 5 Orange County partners with many organizations working towards creating and maintaining an early childhood system that families experience as a seamless network of care.

Each child is unique, and every child’s full potential will look different. We know from years of research that a child’s experiences during their early years establish a foundation that, if strong, sets children up to achieve more in school and life, be physically healthier and more emotionally resilient, and participate more in society.

At First 5 Orange County, we aim to build bridges and remove barriers so children of every culture, color, and condition can thrive. In partnership with health, social service, family support, and education agencies in Orange County, we strive to provide programs and initiatives that build up children and encourage whole family engagement and health.

Conditions for Children to Thrive

For children to thrive, the following set of situational and environmental conditions are needed.



These conditions reflect our conviction that the entities surrounding children (parents, caregivers, communities, and early childhood systems such as health care and child care) directly influence their development and are inextricably linked.

Early and Ongoing Health and Development

Decades of research support the benefits of early intervention for children and the importance of physical and mental healthcare. When met, the health and development condition looks like this: children prenatal to age 5 and their families receive support to optimize children's physical and mental health and cognitive development; and a planned progression of quality services is available at a variety of natural interaction points with systems of care. For example, a mother might receive breastfeeding education, a depression screening, and support if needed for a healthy pregnancy during a prenatal visit. Or a child might receive a developmental screening and their family could be connected with services during a pediatric well visit appointment.

A Safe, Stable, and Nurturing Home

The value of nurturing environments for young children to build resiliency and protective factors is well documented. A child's family is its first and most influential setting, and well-equipped parents and caregivers provide foundational relationships and emotional stability. When the Home condition is met, parents and caregivers have access and capability to attend to their own mental health and can provide positive, responsive parenting to the young children in their care.

Neighborhoods that Support Young Children and Families

Beyond the home, the community surrounding a child also influences their growth and development. Children thrive when they have safe places to play, access to early learning opportunities (such as child care or libraries), and other supports such as family resource centers, nearby healthcare, and access to healthy food. When this condition is met, neighborhoods have the infrastructure to support children and the capacity to sustain healthy social relationships.

Equitable Distribution of Resources

A condition for all children to achieve their full potential is a society where inclusion, diversity, and equity are a value and a priority, and policies and practices are put in place to address the structural barriers that perpetuate equity gaps and racism. When this condition is met, parents and families are put at the center and supported to co-create and advocate for solutions to the pressing issues facing them. First 5 Orange County prioritizes the county's most vulnerable families to reduce disparities in access to equitable, quality services and positive outcomes

We believe these conditions are non-negotiable, minimum standards Orange County must meet for all its families.

Strategies to Make a Positive Change

We believe these four strategies have the most impact on improving the conditions needed for children and families to thrive. These strategies guide us and are the lens through which we prioritize our work:

Get Involved Early

We invest in programs, services, and partnerships that focus on prevention, identify mental and developmental health needs as early as possible, and link children and families to resources.

Elevate Equity

We prioritize the county's most vulnerable families to reduce disparities in access to quality services and outcomes for kids.

Empower Champions

We connect with, strengthen, and support parents, community leaders, public agencies, and community organizations to co-create and advocate for solutions to pressing issues facing young children and families.

Align Systems of Care

We coordinate early childhood systems of care to work together, creating a supportive infrastructure so families can experience seamless connections to quality services.

In summary, this is **First 5 Orange County's** logic for how we achieve change:

Strategies

Agency parameters to guide how we select funded partners, prioritize our work, and interact with our community

Conditions

Situational and environmental truths that must exist for a young child/family to thrive

Vision

All children reach their full potential

Our focus between 2021 and 2025

1 Well-child visits, screenings, and linkage to services

Partner with stakeholders to help families get the most out of well-child visits and screenings:

- Identify and remove barriers to well-child visits, where most needed
- Set a community target for completion of well-child visits
- Promote the importance of medical homes (a regular place for health care) in children's health
- Improve parent and provider messaging about well-child visits and screenings (developmental, behavioral and trauma)
- Promote earliest possible screenings and linkage to services
- Expand use of the OC Children's Screening Registry
- Smooth transition to school-based services
- Advocate to increase compliance with screenings in the medical home

2 Resilience among children and families

Promote services that support Protective Factors¹ for children and families:

- Improve diagnosis of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders and linkage to treatment and dyadic care models
- Expand home visiting through coordination and advocacy
- Expand opportunities for families within Engaged Neighborhoods to access concrete supports, grow parent knowledge, build resilience, increase social connectivity, and strengthen children's social/emotional competencies
- Improve coordination, linkage to, and expansion of services to special populations²
- Support community efforts to increase awareness of and access to financial supports,³ including addressing barriers, streamlining application processes, and identifying advocacy opportunities

¹ Protective Factors include parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development and social and emotional competence of children.

² Special populations include children at risk for abuse and neglect; infants who have been substance-exposed; foster youth who are parenting; families experiencing homelessness.

³ Examples of financial supports are CalFresh, CalWORKs, and WIC.



3

Quality infant and toddler child care

Increase availability and accessibility of quality infant and toddler child care:









- Co-create a policy and advocacy agenda with community partners to increase the quality and amount of infant and toddler child care
- Strengthen and build capacity of infant and toddler child care providers through connections with school districts; technical assistance in the operation of 0-3 services; business resources; and shared learning opportunities
- Streamline access to child care for special populations to ease the burden on families that have unique needs for child care but lack ability/resources to find it
- Engage local community businesses, philanthropists, and the construction industry to assist in the acquisition and development of property that can house infant and toddler programs



Measuring Progress

We use a set of progress indicators to determine whether we are contributing to the achievement of the four conditions needed for children and families to thrive.

Though we understand First 5 Orange County is one of many organizations influencing these metrics, they are critical representations of the reality children and families face and reflect our commitment to definitively contribute to the achievement of each condition in Orange County.

Progress Indicator	Desired Trend	Baseline
Percentage of children on Medi-Cal completing well-child visits in the first 15 months of life		66.7%
Age of children entered in the OC Children's Screening Registry		29% 0 – 11 months 35% 12 – 23 months 27% 24 – 35 months
Children's social and emotional vulnerability (Resilient Families Measure)		9.7%
Gap between the percentage of young children who are eligible for and enrolled in CalFresh (Resilient Families Measure)		29.2%
Availability of infant and toddler child care		5,170 licensed spaces (5% of OC's children ages 0-2)
Proportion of children who are ready for kindergarten		52.9%
Neighborhoods with increasing proportion of children ready for kindergarten		35 neighborhoods (15%)
Gap in children's likelihood of being ready for kindergarten (Disparity Index)		Not yet available

A full set of progress indicators are available on our website. See **"First 5 Orange County Strategic Plan Progress Indicators."**