



First 5 Orange County's Ongoing Commitment to Equity

Introduction

First 5 Orange County is committed to promoting equity and ensuring that all children in our community have an equal opportunity to reach their full potential and thrive. To First 5 OC, equity means that every child deserves the support and resources they need to succeed, regardless of their background or circumstance.

Equity differs from equality. Equality means providing the same level of opportunity and assistance to all. Equity means providing different levels of support and assistance depending on specific needs or abilities.



EQUALITY: Everyone gets the same – regardless if it's needed or right for them.

EQUITY: Everyone gets what they need – understanding the barriers, circumstances and conditions.

To achieve this, we are committed to engaging with parents and families to ensure their voices are heard and their perspectives are included in our decision-making processes. We believe that parents and families are the experts on their own children and are essential partners in promoting the healthy development of our community's children. We will continue to partner with and support service providers and other early childhood system partners as they are fundamental in providing services and supports directly to families.

First 5 Orange County is uniquely positioned to support equity in our many roles including as a partner, funder, convener, service provider and policy advocate. We call on our partners, stakeholders, and community members to join us in this commitment to promoting equity and ensuring that all children have the opportunities they need to succeed. Together, we can create a bright future for the children in Orange County.

Grounding Values



Partnering with Communities

We believe that in order to responsibly support families and children, organizations and institutions need to listen to and partner with families in meaningful ways to create systems that work for them and their children.



Fostering Diversity and Belonging

We believe that Orange County is a better place because of the vast diversity in race, ethnicity, culture, faith, ability and life experiences of its residents. We believe that children and families deserve to feel a strong sense of belonging to their community, however they choose to define it.



Promoting Equity

We are committed to ensuring that every child has an equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of their race, zip code, income level, ability, or any other personal characteristic. We believe that every child deserves the support and resources they need to reach their full potential and thrive, and we will work to eliminate any barriers that may prevent them from doing so.



Using Data

We are also committed to using data, such as our Early Development Index data, to inform our work and identify areas where disparities and inequities exist. This data allows us to understand the specific challenges and needs of our community and work with families to develop targeted strategies and interventions to address them.

Equity in Action

Since our inception more than 20 years ago, First 5 Orange County has become a leading convener and collaborator, as well as a valued capacity builder and funder of best practices with an emphasis on elevating equity. In these roles, we offer the community deep expertise on the importance of early childhood in human development and the conditions that children and families need to thrive.

Here are some examples in how First 5 Orange County's work has shifted with our focus on equity:

We **invest our resources differently**, shifting our focus from providing general support to all families to targeting our investments and resources towards addressing specific disparities and inequities in our community.

We **champion parent experience** through the work with **Family Ambassadors** which empowers parents and families to share their experiences and perspectives with our organization.

We **lift up and listen to families** through focus groups, surveys, check-ins and more. These conversations help us understand the needs and challenges faced by families in our community, and to develop targeted interventions.



We **work with Engaged Neighborhoods and other community partners to develop and implement strategies** that promote equity and support the healthy development of all children in our community.

We use **data and metrics**, such as the **Early Development Index**, to more **effectively compare and evaluate the outcomes** of our interventions across different racial and ethnic groups.

We **shift our language** away from talking about children and families as vulnerable and at risk, and are working to address systemic barriers that get in the way of children and families' wellbeing.

Accountability

We understand that having an Equity Commitment is not enough; we also need to measure our progress and hold ourselves accountable. In order to do this, First 5 Orange County is committed to creating and consistently updating a living, organizational Accountability Plan that lives in concert with this Equity Commitment. We commit to:

1. Continuing to partner with parents and families to ensure that their voices are heard and included in our decision-making processes. This is done through a relationship centered approach so staff can fully partner with parents and the community.
2. Using data to inform our work and identify disparities and inequities.
3. Developing targeted strategies and interventions to address identified disparities and inequities.
4. Continuing to learn and grow as an organization, staying up to date on best practices and emerging research in the field of early childhood development and equity.