

Orange County
Family, Infant, and Early
Childhood Mental Health
(FIECMH)

Initiative Update

Issue 5: September 2025



Thanks for being part of the FIECMH Partner Community!

In this newsletter, you'll find information about upcoming events and recent learnings from the initiative. Do you know others who may want to stay updated? Please share this newsletter!

Join Us!

Virtual Community Update: October 30, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Please sign up to join us for the FIECMH Initiative's next community update! We will share more about the work of the Roadmap Working Group and talk about the recommendations that have been made by members of the group so far.

To receive a calendar invite with the video link, fill out the form by clicking the button below. If you or someone you know will need translation services, **please register by October 23** and indicate your needs on the registration form.

[Register Here](#)

In-Person Gathering to Present the FIECMH Roadmap: December 5, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (location TBA)

The FIECMH Initiative is thrilled to share an invitation to our third in-person community gathering. We will present the roadmap for FIECMH in Orange County and celebrate the work the Orange County community has put into its design. The agenda will include discussion on how to take action on the roadmap moving forward, and activities that will help organizations put the

roadmap into practice in the work they do.

We will share updated information about the location of the gathering as soon as those details have solidified—please stay tuned!

Refreshments, translation, and childcare will be provided during the event. Please identify your needs on the registration form by November 20.

[Register Here](#)

Roadmap Working Group Recap

Identifying Strategies and Actions to Advance FIECMH in OC

This summer, 16 Orange County community members with a range of backgrounds agreed to join a working group to support the design of the roadmap. They will help develop recommendations and action plans, and spread the word within their communities about this work.

At their first meeting in July, the group talked about how to best address the community's four highest-priority areas:

1. **Basic needs are met** (stable housing, living wages, quality childcare).
2. Families are **quickly assessed and connected** with appropriate services.
3. Parents and caregivers **understand child development** and behavior. This means they can identify when and how to **seek help *before* experiencing a crisis**.
4. Families have access to peer groups, parenting classes, and developmental playgroups. These activities **help them support child development** and identify when a child may need extra help.

At their August meeting, members focused on identifying strategies and actions for each priority area that are tied clearly to the community's [vision for FIECMH in Orange County](#)—and that have the potential to help make that vision a reality.

Group members also joined a series of smaller sessions to help deepen their conversations about the four priority areas. The group will support roadmap development until the roadmap is presented in December. To stay up-to-date on their work, make sure to join us at the community update on October 30 (link to register above)!

Community Resources

Developmental Playgroups for Babies

The Santa Ana Early Learning Initiative (SAELI) is piloting a series of

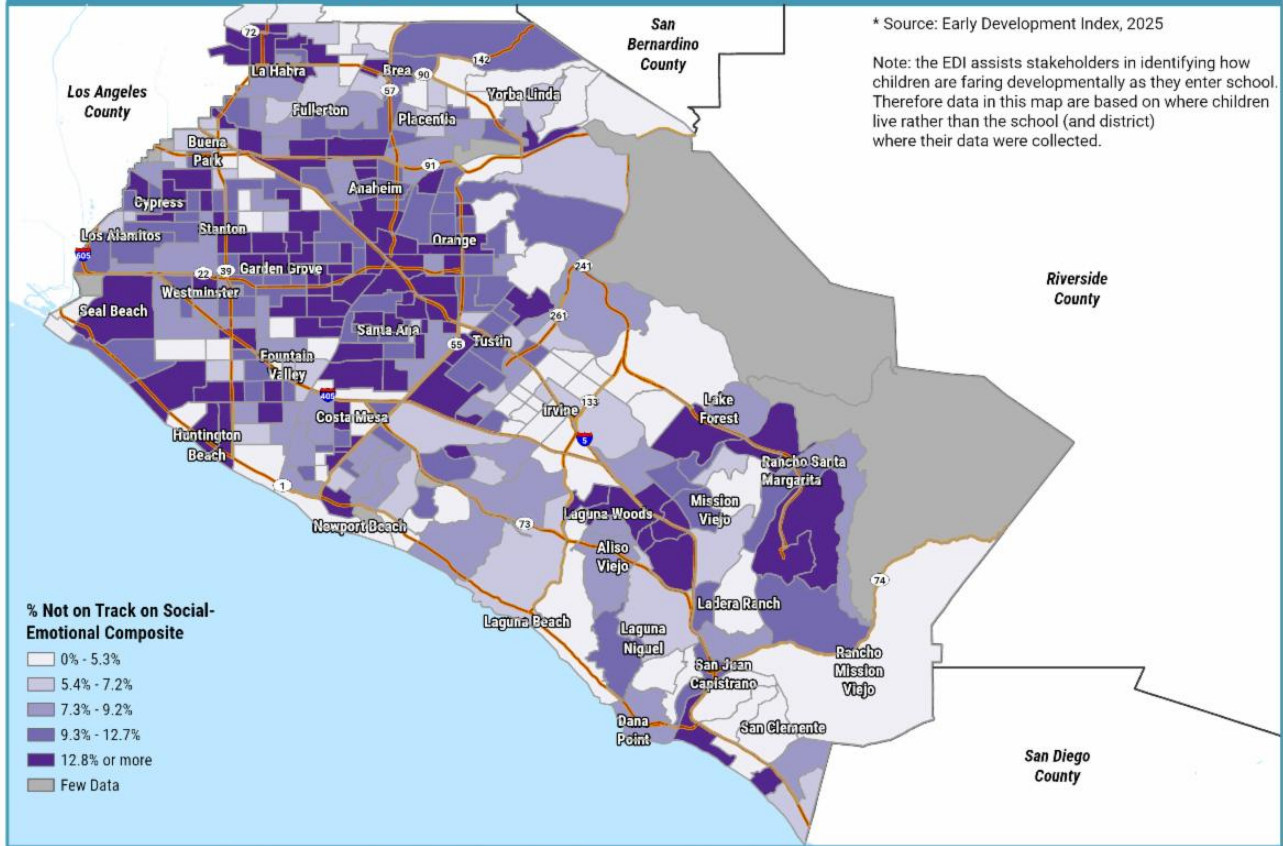
developmental playgroups for babies between 6 and 24 months old. The playgroups will be facilitated by local Community Health Workers, who will lead activities designed to strengthen bonds between families and their infants. They will also provide guidance on developmental milestones, as well as free essentials such as diapers and wipes. The groups are a good opportunity for Medi-Cal members to learn about the Community Health Worker benefit, which families with Medi-Cal coverage may not know they have access to. Parents and caregivers can sign up by clicking the button below, or using the QR code on the [flyers at this link](#).



[Register Here](#)

Orange County EDI Data for 2025

Each school year, Orange County kindergarten teachers fill out the Early Development Index (or EDI) for each child in their class. The EDI is a survey that measures child development by looking closely at five key areas of early development: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communications skills and general knowledge. When presented as a map, EDI data gives a bird's-eye view of kindergarten readiness in each Orange County community. The map below, which includes Orange County's data for both social competence and emotional maturity, offers a focused look at social-emotional development, an indicator of mental well-being for young children.



First 5 Orange County in partnership with the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, under license from McMaster University, is implementing the Early Development Index with its sub licenses in the U.S. The EDI is the copyright of McMaster University and must not be copied, distributed, or used in any way without the prior consent of the Commission, UCLA or McMaster.

By looking at the data this way, organizations can see where children have the highest needs. That makes it easier to know where to prioritize future investments, policies, and resources. First 5 OC has shared a presentation of Orange County's EDI data for 2025—[click here to see it](#). You can learn more about the EDI and how it's used by exploring the resources below:

[Orange County's Early Development Index \(EDI\)](#)

[EDI FAQ](#)

[EDI Background and Research Profile](#)

FIECMH stands for **Family, Infant, and Early Childhood Mental Health**. The OC FIECMH Initiative is focused on infants and children (and their caregivers) because the roots of lifelong mental health—and health and well-being more broadly—start at birth (or before). For everyone to be as healthy and well as possible, emphasizing early, proactive, and protective support versus reactive treatment is key.

The initiative's work is to envision what a "continuum of care" (the full range of

supports for mental health and well-being) looks like for Orange County families. Our goal is to work together to create a roadmap for how we do this, and make sure that the continuum of care envisioned by families, community partners, and systems leaders is realized and sustained.

Questions or comments? Please email us: fiemh@healthplusstudio.com

Please share this newsletter! Forward it to staff you know at Orange County public agencies, community-based organizations, and local advocates serving children and families, as well as healthcare providers and families interested in knowing about and participating in the initiative.

The FIECMH Initiative is supported by funding from First 5 Orange County and Orange County Health Care Agency.

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