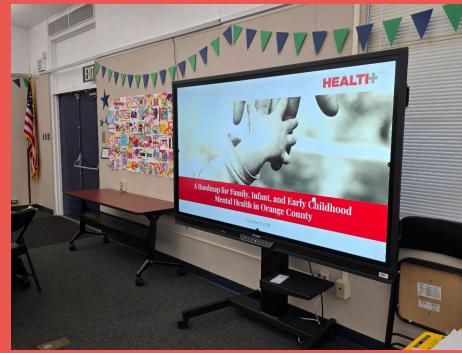


# Orange County Family, Infant, and Early Childhood Mental Health (FIECMH)

*Initiative Update*  
Issue 7: January 2026



## Thanks for being part of the FIECMH Partner Community!

In this newsletter, we'll report back on end-of-year happenings and share an exciting update on the FIECMH project. Do you know others who may want to stay updated? Please share this newsletter!

### The Finished Roadmap for FIECMH in OC

It was a busy end of 2025 for the Initiative! After two years of hard work, the Roadmap for Family, Infant, and Early Childhood Mental Health in Orange County has been finalized. It was a key milestone in reimagining mental health support for families, infants, and young children in Orange County.

The process started in early 2023 with a period of listening to and learning from Orange County community partners (including families) about existing mental health supports, as well as the gaps. From there, community partners came together to develop the Vision for FIECMH In Orange County (linked below). The vision outlines a system of mental healthcare that supports all families with young children, including expectant parents—actively and equitably. With the Vision in hand, the Roadmap Working Group convened for the first time in July of 2025 to develop a set of strategies and actions for making the Vision a reality. The result of that work is the OC FIECMH Roadmap, which offers a plan for addressing the most significant areas for promoting and advancing FIECMH.

In early December, Sara Marques from Health+ Studio presented the Roadmap to the First 5 Orange County Board. Board members acknowledged the value of the work and were especially interested in the strategies for addressing basic needs and service access/affordability, as well as understanding the needs around policy advocacy.

If you participated in the process of developing the Roadmap in any way over the past two years, this report represents your work and wisdom. We hope you will see your ideas and aspirations represented. You can access the full version or the executive summary by clicking the buttons below.

## Roadmap Executive Summary

## Vision for FIECMH in Orange County

## A Recap of the Initiative's Final Convening of the Year

### Identifying Roles and Next Steps for Implementation

On December 5, community partners gathered to celebrate the completion of the Roadmap. Attendees included county agency staff, nonprofit representatives, educators, parents, and other community members. The goals were to build a shared understanding of the Roadmap, identify roles for implementing it, and talk about immediate next steps. Over a third of those who attended were brand new to the project, which shows that we have more work to do in terms of engagement.

We started by asking participants to celebrate their own accomplishments—a way to appreciate their efforts in work that is ongoing and difficult.



The majority of our time together was spent reviewing and discussing the five key strategies for advancing the FIECMH Roadmap:

1. Enhance Navigation and Accessibility to Services
2. Increase Knowledge and Awareness
3. Strengthen Capacity at the Organizational and Systems Levels
4. Empower Informal Networks and Community-Based Initiatives
5. Create and Sustain a Focused, Reflective, and Responsive System

Attendees had many ideas about how to put these strategies into action. Many brought up the importance of sharing the Roadmap with those who are positioned to support practice and systems change. Some suggestions were local government leaders, pediatricians, and educators and school district representatives.

## Key Takeaways

- Participants continue to affirm Orange County's vision for FIECMH. Seeing the strategies and actions in the Roadmap sparked ideas for next steps at the individual, organizational, and collective levels.
- 95% of participants who responded to the convening survey were confident in the Initiative's success.
- Attendees felt eager to build awareness of the Vision for FIECMH through presentations and other similar strategies.
- A clear opportunity exists for advancing strategies 3, 4, and 5, while supporting participants in strategies 1 and 2 in coordinating and aligning their work.
- Attendees particularly appreciated the opportunity to collaborate in small working groups. They expressed interest in more opportunities like this to collaborate, network, and build relationships.

If you weren't able to join us, you can access the presentation deck and a summary of the event by clicking the buttons below.

[Slide Deck](#)

[Convening Summary](#)

## What's Coming Up Next

### Stay Tuned!

Although the Roadmap has been finalized, the work continues. At their December meeting, the First 5 Orange County Board approved funding for Health+ Studio to support the transition into implementing the Roadmap into 2026. Keep an eye out for more information on what that will look like and how you can get involved in the months ahead, and in the meantime—Happy New Year!

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

For the past two years, the Initiative has supported the OC community in envisioning what a “continuum of care” (the full range of supports for mental

health and well-being) looks like for Orange County families. Now that we have the OC FIECMH Roadmap to guide us in making that vision a reality, the Initiative's work is to 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: [fiecmh@healthplusstudio.com](mailto:fiecmh@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.

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

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