



## FIRST 5 SANTA BARBARA COUNTY STATEMENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE & RACIAL EQUITY

The longstanding decades of repeated individual and systemic racism and violence against people of color are contributing to a climate of intense sadness, fear, and outrage throughout the nation and in our community, with harmful consequences over many generations. We acknowledge that the effects of racism are a particular threat for young children from birth to age five who are undergoing a formative period of rapid development and are especially vulnerable to the very real and pervasive consequences of bigotry, poverty and violence that is a result of racist and classist systems and structures. Toxic stress develops when children and their communities experience prolonged adversity such as economic hardship, community disinvestment, the ongoing fear of violence, and constantly being reminded that they don't fully belong in our society. The lasting impacts on children's physical and emotional health and the limitations on future opportunity are certain, significant and unconscionable.

First 5 Santa Barbara County stands united with First 5's across California against injustice and racism, joining those who are working for change in policies and practices that perpetuate bias and discrimination. We want all children and families, appreciating their diverse backgrounds, to have access to high quality, culturally competent programming and services so that they can reach their full potential. We can best ensure all children's wellbeing in our county with our intent to structure services and opportunities accordingly to meet the individual needs of our most vulnerable children.

In this national moment of reckoning, we join our communities of color and all those that find themselves marginalized and disadvantaged. We invite you, along with our colleagues, partners, collaborators, and the entire Santa Barbara community to denounce racism and bigotry in all its forms. We further invite you to support and participate in the adopted commitments to the Children and Families of Santa Barbara County.

**Racism and bigotry have no place in the world we're building for young children and families and will not go away unless we work together to do so.**

**Our children's future depends on the actions we take today.**



## OUR COMMITMENT TO THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

We commit to supporting and safeguarding the life-long potential of children and families by evolving, strengthening, and deepening our practices of:

1. Looking critically at all aspects of our organization to ensure our policies, procedures, and practices reflect a more just and equitable space.
2. Engaging in ongoing staff professional development and training on implicit bias and an anti-racist framework to inform agency practice regarding racial, economic and social justice.
3. Striving for equity and inclusion for every child, every family, and every member of society.
4. Doing more than close gaps and point to disparities. Striving in all of our work to achieve social and race equity, a state in which all children have the same opportunity to reach the potential we know they have.
5. Advocating for just systems and social policies through our policy agenda and membership in the First 5 State Association, advocacy at the local, state, and federal level, and as a partner and a resource to families and community organizations.
6. Along with our partners, investing in and advocating for programs and policies that address the structural causes of inequity, meeting basic needs with access to quality health, mental health, housing, food, transportation, jobs, childcare, and educational experiences, economically stable communities and opportunities for social connections.
7. Providing the tools and skills for parents, teachers, and families to have balanced discussions with their children to include compassion, empathy, racial and social justice.
8. Promoting parent leadership and civic engagement, and engaging community and parents in the selection of investments and the design of programs and evaluation, with opportunities for culturally and ethnically focused settings and forums to meet the cultural values of diverse ethnic communities throughout the County.
9. Documenting disparities through ongoing data collection and evaluation and using equity to guide our research questions and practices. Over 70% of births are to mothers of color. The adverse impacts of racism begin prenatally, and reflect in large disparities rates of maternal mortality, infant mortality, and childhood asthma.