



October 22, 2020

## **INFORMATION ITEM**

### **SUBJECT: SMALL POPULATION COUNTY FUNDING AUGMENTATION (SPCFA) UPDATE**

**Strategic Plan Priority Area:** II. Child Development

**Goal:** All children birth through age 5 have high-quality nurturing environments that ensure their learning readiness.

### **SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE**

Commissioners will hear from small population county executive directors (EDs) about the crucial role local commissions play in their county and successes reaching hardest-to-reach populations in preparation for a funding action item in January 2021.

The State Commission has authorized additional funding to small population counties since the implementation of Proposition 10 in fiscal year (FY) 1999–2000. The statutory funding formula for counties with a small population of births did not provide adequate funds to fully operate a commission and effective First 5 programs. First 5 county commissions in small population counties play a crucial role in programming for prenatal to five-year-old populations; without them, children in most of these counties would not have access to necessary services.

The current funding cycle for SPCFA ends June 30, 2021. F5CA is working with the First 5 Association of California (Association) and the small county workgroup to develop a proposal for the next term of SPCFA.

### **BACKGROUND OF KEY ISSUES**

Proposition 10 is designed to be a statewide effort that promotes, supports, and improves the early development of children ages 0 to 5 in every county in California. The Act asserts every county has the opportunity to develop a local commission if they are able to meet the goals, objectives, and accountability requirements of the Act. However, the statutory funding alone is insufficient for small population counties to operate a commission and implement effective programs. The F5CA Commission has approved funds for small population counties since its inception, enabling every county to operate a First 5 county commission in order to make Proposition 10 a statewide effort and ensure all children can be served.

SPCFA has evolved since its inception in FY 1999–2000. Attachment A (*Child Trends' Small Population County Funding Augmentation: County Experiences*), Appendix A (pages 17–20) summarizes the evolution of SPCFA funding, requirements, and accountability over the last 20 years. During the current four-year funding term, F5CA provides approximately \$4.5 million to augment revenue in the 20 smallest population counties.

### **The Role of First 5 in Small Population Counties**

Between Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, Child Trends reviewed SPCFA Annual Performance Reports and interviewed every small population county ED to learn about their unique successes and challenges. Their findings are detailed in the aforementioned report (Attachment A) and summarized below.

Small population counties play a crucial role as effective conveners with the ability to bring all partners to the table quickly to respond to issues affecting families with children ages birth through 5 years and ensure children receive the services they need. Yet, small population counties encounter unique challenges due to their size and geography which translate to issues of isolation and transportation, as well as limited services, funding, and staffing. In 13 of the 20 counties, 6 counties reported the ED is the only staff member, and 7 indicated they have 2 people on staff including the ED; without SPCFA, these positions would not be possible.

Despite local challenges, small population counties are flexible and creative in finding solutions to limitations and meeting the needs of their communities. The following are few examples:

- In some small population counties, the local commission is the only entity that looks comprehensively at the whole child and family. In other counties, they are the only entity that addresses the needs of children prenatal through age 5.
- EDs in small population counties report being able to convene partners and be more nimble than larger counties. Because of the county's small size and multiple roles a small county ED must play, they tend to know key decision makers and influencers in the community. As a result, they build relationships and develop partnerships more easily than larger counties, which enables them to garner the commitment of partners on behalf of young children. This role puts small county EDs in the drivers' seat of systems work in their county.
- Small population counties reach a greater proportion of children and families in the most marginalized communities compared to medium and large population counties. According to 2018–19 Annual Report data, small population counties reach about 60% of children ages 0 to 5 years with their services. Small population counties also

serve a large proportion of traditionally underserved children and families, such as Native American and Hispanic populations.

SPCFA funding is critical to small population counties' survival and the ability for F5CA to achieve the Commission's Strategic Plan, Priority II goal that "All children birth through age 5 have high quality nurturing environments that ensure their learning readiness."

### **Next Steps**

It is current practice of F5CA to collaborate with small population counties and the Association on the development of proposed funding and program requirements for SPCFA. A workgroup comprised of executive directors from Amador, Calaveras, Del Norte, Lake, Modoc, Mono, and Siskiyou were selected to participate in a workgroup. The small population counties requested a large county also be part of the workgroup and identified Los Angeles.

Virtual meetings were held in June and August with the workgroup and the Association to discuss the current requirements of SPCFA, findings and recommendations from the report prepared by Child Trends, and the context of declining Prop 10 revenues, and prepare for the future. The workgroup is focused on developing an approach that ensures the mandate and intent of Proposition 10 can be met for all children throughout the state. The approach will consider for small population counties:

- A fundamental level of funding for basic operations as well as to meet the legislative requirements
- Enough funding to operate programs, develop initiatives for young children and their caregivers, and leverage and partner for systems change
- A level of funding proportionate to their size

F5CA, the Association, and the workgroup will continue to meet to develop a proposal for the January 2021 Commission Meeting, when staff anticipate bringing a new request for funding authorization.

### **SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

The Commission last authorized funding for SPCFA in January 2017, for a four-year period ending June 30, 2021.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Small Population County Funding Augmentation: County Experiences (report by Child Trends)