

# First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission

## Minutes of Meeting – Tuesday, June 3, 2008, 5:30 PM Solano County Health and Social Services Center 2101 Courage Drive, Multi-Purpose Room, Fairfield, CA

### Attendance

Commissioners: Dr. Sharon Tucker, Chair; Dan Ayala; Stephan Betz; Sheryl Fairchild, Debee Gossell and Dr. Elaine Norinsky.

Staff/Public: Commission staff and approximately thirteen members of the public were present.

### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at: 5:42 PM by Chairperson Tucker.

#### I. Greetings, Introductions, Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Commissioners and staff introduced themselves.

Christina Arrostuto, Executive Director of First 5 Solano, introduced Elena Villalpando, the new Community Programs Manager for First 5 Solano.

#### II. Consent Items

***Commissioner Ayala moved to approve the Commission Meeting Agenda for June 3, 2008. The motion passed unanimously.***

***Commissioner Betz moved to approve the Minutes of the April 1, 2008 Commission Meeting). The motion passed unanimously.***

#### III. Rescheduled Consent Items

There were no rescheduled consent items.

#### IV. Prenatal Issues Presentation

Chris Shipman, Health Programs Manager for First 5 Solano, introduced Dr. Ira Chasnoff, President of the Children's Research Triangle. Dr. Chasnoff began his talk by commending Solano County for its high level of collaboration, which is unusual in his experience.

Dr. Chasnoff explained that Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is a syndrome wherein children affected by their mother's ingestion of alcohol often experience low birth weight and fail to thrive as they grow. There are various negative effects on the nervous syndrome and mental retardation. The majority of children with FAS have no outward symptoms, but their brains and neuro-cognitive abilities are greatly affected.

Dr. Chasnoff reviewed the facial irregularities that are common with FAS, including epicanthic folds on the eyes, flat nasal bridge, flat philtrum and a thin upper lip. Another symptom of FAS is

“fisting” after a certain age (around three months), which means the baby clenches his/her fists constantly instead of having open hands.

Currently, approximately 80% of obstetricians tell women it’s safe to drink during their pregnancy. 4% of obstetricians tell women eight or more drinks a week is safe. Research shows that any alcohol use during pregnancy puts the child at three times increased risk for delinquent behavior and/or FAS. Each fetus reacts to alcohol differently, which is why it is not safe to tell women it is okay to drink during her pregnancy. There is no way to know how severely the fetus will be affected by the alcohol.

Consuming alcohol at any point in the pregnancy, even before women realize they’re pregnant, can result in the corpus callosum being severely affected. The corpus callosum begins to form at twenty days, and controls the movement of information between the right and left sides of the brain. If information cannot travel through the brain, it will cause the child to not recognize danger when it is presented and also not be able to control their behavior and/or impulses.

However, identifying and halting alcohol use at any point in pregnancy is beneficial. For example, Dr. Chasnoff informed the Commission that alcohol use in the third trimester of pregnancy inhibits brain cell migration, which can cause the brain to flatten instead of folding, leading to mental retardation. This can be prevented if alcohol use is identified and stopped before the third trimester.

Dr. Chasnoff presented a national study showing that children who were prenatally exposed to drugs and alcohol run a significantly higher chance of having mental health problems, dropping out of school and being incarcerated at some point in their lives. Through early intervention, these numbers can be drastically reduced. The physical damage done to children’s brains through prenatal drug and alcohol exposure is not reversible, but it is treatable. Children can be taught how to work around their deficits.

In Solano County, 18% of 1,554 pregnant women screened so far were found to be smoking cigarettes. 28% of the 1,554 pregnant women screened were using alcohol during pregnancy. *This is the highest rate found in the counties across the country (currently in 40 states) in which the Children’s Triangle has worked.* 36% of pregnant women screened in Solano County are using some type of substance that affects the development and functioning of the developing fetal brain.

Dr. Chasnoff informed the Commission that early prenatal screening for alcohol, tobacco and other drugs can drastically reduce the number of infants with low birth weight, premature births and babies needing to be on ventilators when they are born. This is all made possible by instituting the type of screening and intervention system BabyFirst Solano is currently operating in Solano County.

Dr. Chasnoff reiterated throughout his presentation that early prevention, identification and intervention are key to getting children with FAS to a point where they will be ready to enter kindergarten. Without the early prevention, identification and intervention, the children will most likely not enter kindergarten at the level of children without FAS, and they will be at a disadvantage in school.

Commissioner Tucker congratulated Commissioner Fairchild, who recently completed her Master’s Degree from California State University, San Francisco and wrote her thesis on women’s literature. She also received a Distinguished Graduate award from the university for her program.

The Commission took a ten minute break.

## V. Committee Meetings

### A. Program Committee

1. Steven LaFrance, principal of LaFrance Associates, presented and reviewed a PowerPoint to the Commission on the FY2007/08 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA).

One item that changed this year was that “active consent” (i.e., returning a signed consent form) was required from parents to participate in the Modified Desired Results Developmental Profile (MDRDP) and the Parent Survey. In previous years, only “passive consent” was required (only returning a signed form if declining participation) This change was required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Commissioner Tucker asked staff to why the pre-kindergarten academy at Silveyville seems so much more successful than the other schools on the KRA. All of their trend lines are up on the study. Ms. Arrostuto informed the Commission that the pre-kindergarten academy at Silveyville has been in existence one year longer than the other academies. Also, Silveyville draws from multiple school catchment areas, whereas the other academies draw from the highest- poverty areas of the city. However, Lynn Guest, School Readiness Programs Manager for First 5 Solano, explained to the Commission that all the site coordinators participate in the School Readiness Collaborative, which meets monthly to share information and best practices. In addition, most site coordinators have visited each other’s sites.

Mr. LaFrance informed the Commission that one surprising statistic in the KRA was that children who attended a home- or family-based day care were assessed comparably with children who attended a formal preschool. On most studies, children who attended formal preschool score significantly higher on the MDRDP than children who didn’t.

Ms. Arrostuto mentioned that two other First 5 Solano funded programs have been focused on enriching and raising the levels of family child care in Solano County. Those two programs are the Children’s Network Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) project. These programs could very possibly have resulted in seeing higher scores from children in family- and home-based child care.

### B. Internal Systems Committee

***1. Proposed Motion: Consider approval of a revision to the projection methodology for the First 5 Solano Long-Term Financial Plan as follows: A) revise annual tobacco tax revenue projection from an annual 4.5% to 3% decline; B) revise annual interest income projection from 2% to 3.25%; and C) revised annual net program investment projection by adding an additional assumption of 5% in unspent program investment funds (revenue).***

Discussion: Michele Harris, Deputy Director for First 5 Solano, reviewed the staff report and background information for this motion.

***Commissioner Betz moved to approve this motion. The motion passed unanimously.***

***2. Proposed Motion: Consider an extension from June 2008 through October 2008 of the authority for the First 5 Solano Commission Chair/designee to sign letters (concerning FY2007/08 and FY2008/09 State Budget issues and other legislation) which are consistent with the Solano County Board of Supervisors 2008 Legislative Platform.***

Discussion: Commissioner Betz requested that the Commissioners get copies of all letters signed. Ms. Arrostuto informed him they will be included in the Commission packets

***Commissioner Gossell moved to approve this motion. The motion passed unanimously.***

#### C. Community Engagement Committee

There were no action items for the Community Engagement Committee. Commissioner Betz asked Commissioners to view the Commissioner Partner Visits calendar in the packet and contact Elena Villalpando at 784-1334 to sign up for visits.

### **VI. Commissioner Remarks**

Commissioner Fairchild shared a story with the Commission regarding one of her fellow graduates who lives in Kenya, Helen Mudora. Ms. Mudora used First 5 Solano as a comparative model for her thesis.

Commissioner Gossell reported that she has been appointed to the Area for Developmental Disabilities Autism Committee and has already attended her first meeting.

Commissioner Ayala attended the First 5 California state conference and attended the workshop on the Results Fair conducted by Mr. LaFrance, Venis Jones Boyd (Family Support Programs Manager for First 5 Solano) and Gloria Diaz (Vacaville FRC). This outstanding workshop drew a standing-room-only crowd and was very well-received.

### **VII. Executive Director's Report**

Ms. Shipman showed the Commissioners a flyer and stand that the CDC sent to First 5 Solano to be distributed to medical offices around the county. It was very well received by the pediatricians that attend the Early Childhood Developmental Health meetings and is now being distributed in their offices.

Ms. Guest showed a backpack to the Commission that is being distributed to the students in the pre-kindergarten academies at Silveyville, Loma Vista, Markham and Anna Kyle. The backpacks have the First 5 Solano logo on the outside and school supplies on the inside, including writing tablets, erasers, crayons, scissors and glue sticks.

Ms. Arrostuto discussed ideas circulating in the Capitol to divert or reprogram First 5 funds to deal with the state budget deficit. There are currently many activities going on with the different Commissions around the state to raise awareness of First 5 and show the benefits of local control and outcomes achieved with this funding. Ms. Arrostuto conducted a "cost/benefit" presentation at the First 5 California annual conference in May, showing the costs potentially saved or avoided in expensive, state-funded crisis programs due to the excellent leveraging and collaborative programs funded by First 5 Solano.

Norma Lisenko, the current Community Programs Manager for First 5 Solano, will be leaving her position. Ms. Lisenko informed the Commission that she truly appreciated being a part of an organization that has a mission and vision so close to her heart. She said she would continue her work in the community. Commissioner Tucker presented Ms. Lisenko with a plaque commending her for her two years of dedicated work on behalf of the Commission.

### **VIII. Future Agenda Items, Meeting Time/Date/Location**

The next regularly-scheduled Commission meeting will be held on **August 5, 2008 at 5:30 PM, Florence Douglas Senior Center (333 Amador Street, Vallejo, CA 94590)**. Future agenda

items include: Vallejo Services Presentation, 2007-08 Family Survey and 2009 Commission/Committee Meeting Calendar.

Meeting adjourned at 8:14 PM.

Heather Devaney, Administrative Secretary  
Approved: