



To: Commissioners, First 5 Ventura County

From: Jennifer Johnson, Director of Finance and Administration (on behalf of the Administration/Finance Committee)

Date: June 17, 2021

Re: Recommendation to Approve a Policy and Procedures for the Prevention of Abuse and Molestation

Background

The Commission will begin implementing direct services in-house for the Neighborhood for Learning (NfL) initiative as of July 1, 2021. The nature of NfL services are different than typical child care or school settings where children are not accompanied by their parent/caregiver, in which liability for abuse and molestation is a necessity rather than voluntary precaution.

There is a need to obtain liability coverage for abuse and molestation for NfL services due to a requirement in some of the leases. Staff is attempting to maintain as many of the current sites as possible for the first year to minimize disruption and to evaluate program needs. While most of the current sites do not mandate this type of liability coverage, four school districts do require it. The Commission's insurance broker is attempting to obtain quotes for a stand-alone policy as the limit that can be acquired as an add-on to our existing general/professional liability policy does not meet the limitation required of the school districts. A policy and procedures are needed to proceed with the quoting process.

The proposed policy and procedures for the prevention of abuse and molestation are based on best practice guides and guidance from the National Education for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), tailored the NfL program approach.

Recommendation

The recommended action is to approve a new policy and procedures related to the prevention of abuse and molestation for the in-house implementation of Neighborhood for Learning Initiative, as attached.



POLICY AND PROCEDURES – PREVENTION OF ABUSE & MOLESTATION

Policy

It is the policy of First 5 Ventura County (“Commission” or “F5VC”) to provide safe environments and to have safeguards in place to prevent abuse and molestation from occurring in services delivered by Commission staff. Accordingly, the Commission shall follow the following procedures to mitigate the risk of incidents occurring. The Commission will report any suspected incidents to the proper authorities for investigation.

Procedures

1. Direct services will be delivered in the following manner:
 - a) Parent and Child Together (PACT) classes: Parents/caregivers and children attend the class together (called a dyad). The parent/caregiver of the child will be in attendance for the entirety of the class. Staff member(s) are not permitted to be left alone with a child(ren). Only the parent or the caregiver of the child may accompany their child to the restroom. Parents/caregivers may not leave their child while using the restroom. Parents/caregivers will be responsible for the discipline of their children.
 - b) Family Support Services: At least two (2) staff members will be present when there is only one (1) client receiving in-person services. Parents/caregivers are responsible for their children while receiving any family support services.
 - c) The program environment (both indoor and outdoor areas) will be designed to reduce the possibility of private, hidden locations in which abuse may occur.
2. Staff involved in providing in-person direct services must pass a Live Scan background and criminal history check, in addition to standard reference checks.
3. Staff will possess qualifications that meet or exceed industry standards for their position. Multi-level oversight will be employed to provide adequate supervision of program staff.
4. Staff will receive training at the start of employment, and additional training at least annually, that includes, but is not limited to:
 - a) Understanding of what constitutes abuse and sexual molestation;
 - b) Implementing prevention strategies and safeguards in the workplace;
 - c) Providing information to parents and families regarding child development and effective strategies for responding to children’s behavior;
 - d) Identifying signs of family stress and providing support/referrals to families; and
 - e) Reporting suspected cases of abuse and sexual molestation.
5. Staff involved in providing in-person direct services will acknowledge in writing that: 1) they have been given a copy of this policy and these procedures, 2) they have read and understand its contents, and 3) they have been given the opportunity to ask any questions.