



# Annual Report AR-3

## Ventura County Evaluation Summary and Highlights

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

### County Evaluation Summary

#### Evaluation Activities Completed, Findings, and Policy Impact

First 5 Ventura County (F5VC) promotes results-based accountability by conducting ongoing analysis of its investments and outcomes to monitor performance, facilitate continuous quality improvement, and to guide strategic decision-making. In FY 2021-22, F5VC changed database systems and fully transitioned to Apricot 360 to make significant enhancements in functionality, referral tracking, family engagement, and system output/reporting. F5VC contracted with an external research and evaluation firm, Applied Survey Research (ASR), to develop a new evaluation plan based upon F5VC's strategic goals to provide effective evaluation strategies that will enable the utilization of results in data-based decision-making. This new evaluation framework was operationalized in FY 2021-22, with the development of additional outcome measures for F5VC's signature Neighborhood for Learning initiative, a place-based family resource center network offering Parent and Child Together (PACT) classes, parent education, developmental and health screening, and care coordination services. ASR was contracted to analyze data collected by a newly developed Parenting Ladder retrospective survey for PACT families to provide recommendations on the next steps for survey design and continuous program improvement. The first data memo was issued in February of 2021 and featured preliminary findings and recommendations, including developing a pre-post approach to data collection, adding demographic data points to the survey, and potentially converting open-ended questions to multiple-choice ones. The latest report included additional data collected between April and June of 2022 using the same tool and provided corroboration of the findings presented in the previous iteration. Together, the two samples yielded a robust body of data (N = 214) which increases the certainty in the findings that PACT has a statistically significant impact on parental self-efficacy, effective parenting practices, ability to get support services, and expanding parental social support systems. Additionally, parental daily practices of talking, reading, and signing with children saw a significant increase due to participation in the PACT program. Importantly, compared to White participants, non-White families (of which over 80% were Hispanic) were 7 times less likely to have any college education and 15 times less likely to earn over \$30,000 annually. Due to the possible lack of opportunities, these families may know less about child development and positive parenting strategies. Program participation closed these gaps, "leveling the playing field" for participants from different socioeconomic backgrounds. In conclusion, findings illuminated program effectiveness in narrowing racial- education- and income-related disparities that affect parenting, pointing to a powerful potential of the program to promote equity in diverse communities. In addition to the quantitative analysis, a series of open-ended questions were included in the survey to gather feedback on parent satisfaction with services to further inform continuous quality improvement. Results indicate overall high rates of participant satisfaction, and that services are meeting family needs. Lastly, F5VC conducted a series of parent focus groups in English and Spanish in May 2022. Focus group responses highlighted how PACT has helped parents 1) build trust, community, and a sense of support, 2) develop positive parenting practices that enhance their relationship with their children, and 3) better recognize developmental milestones and improve parenting confidence.

# County Highlights

---

## County Highlight

First 5 Ventura County (F5VC) FY 2021-22 investments continued to be directed towards designated direct services and systems integration, advocacy, and building organizational capacity in order to strengthen the overall early childhood system of care. The investments in direct services include the continuation of the Neighborhoods for Learning (NfL) Initiative and programs that provide linkage to resources and early intervention countywide. In FY 2021-22 the Commission began in-house implementation of the NfL, rather than contracting out the services. The NfL is a place-based service model whereby service sites are located in high-need neighborhoods so that families can access services more easily. Services include 1) Parent and Child Together programs (PACT), primarily for families with children ages prenatal to three, and 2) family support services targeting the broader age group of prenatal to five. F5VC launched a Shared Services Alliance (SSA) two-year pilot to strengthen the fragile business model of family child care providers through access to an online child care business management system “Wonderschool”, enhanced business advisement, and technology stipends. F5VC actively partnered with the Ventura County Human Services Agency, Children and Family Services on the development of the Ventura County Prevention Plan and, as a result, the Neighborhoods for Learning initiative has been identified as a building block for creating a countywide wellness system for children and their families. F5VC continued to refine the in-house implementation of Help Me Grow (HMG) and launched a new [www.HelpMeGrowVC.org](http://www.HelpMeGrowVC.org) website, making it easier to navigate, allowing parents, providers, and the community to access relevant information, including online developmental screenings. Significant strides were also made with the Commission’s parent engagement strategy, which is built upon a national model, in collaboration with the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s EC-LINC.

