Local Planning Council
of Ventura County

The United Voice for Early Care and Education

Strategic Plan

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Introduction

The Local Planning Council (LPC) of Ventura County is the united voice for early care and education and actively plans for quality care based upon the needs of children, families, and early care and education professionals. The LPC is comprised of 25 members who represent consumers of child care services, child care providers, community and public agencies, and child care advocates. Members are appointed by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors and Ventura County Superintendent of Schools.

The membership and responsibilities of LPCs were revised in 1997 as mandated by AB 1542 and outlined in California Education Code 8499 – 8499.7 and include:

- Complete a countywide Needs Assessment a minimum of every five (5) years
- Develop a Strategic Plan based on the findings of the Needs Assessment
- Establish county priorities for child care funding
- Facilitate the voluntary, temporary transfer of contract funds to maximize fiscal resources and utilization of child development funding
- Foster partnerships designed to meet local child care needs

The LPC hosted a series of public meetings for the Strategic Planning process beginning in January of 2017. These meetings were facilitated by Ventura County Office of Education staff with leadership from an external consultant. This process included Council members as well as local stakeholders.

Having a well-coordinated effort to identify early care and education needs is vital in our community; accordingly, the LPC works to establish short-term and long-term solutions for these needs. The LPC's Strategic Plan establishes goals addressing Ventura County's comprehensive early care and education needs. The Strategic Plan also provides a road map of how to effectively address the early care and education needs in Ventura County.

The vision of the Strategic Plan is to ensure Ventura County's children and families have access to high-quality early care and education programs. Implementation of the Strategic Plan will involve the ongoing collaborative efforts of the county's education community, child care providers, families, businesses, government agencies, community-based organizations, and other community partners.

The Quality and Professional Development Committee, also acting as the County Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) Consortium, will continue to provide guidance throughout the implementation process.

As stated by Stanley Mantooth, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools, "one of our best opportunities to level the playing field lies at the very beginning of the educational continuum – early childhood education. Access to quality

early childhood education ensures that the youngest learners of our county are guided along the path to lifelong successes."

The LPC of Ventura County Strategic Plan emphasizes strategy over fixed objectives in order to provide a fluid approach in an ever-changing environment. This Strategic Plan is intended to be a "living document" that inspires community engagement and helps to unite various stakeholders and groups toward the Council's common vision. Through a unified implementation of this Strategic Plan, Ventura County can become an environment that:

- Promotes high quality programming
- Improves availability of appropriate spaces
- Educates the public
- Maximizes resources

Planning Resulted in Four (4) Overarching Focus Areas:

1. Promote High-Quality Programming
2. Improve Availability of Appropriate Spaces
3. Educate the Public
4. Maximize Resources

2015 Needs Assessment Findings

Population and Ethnicity

City	Under 5	Ages 5-9	Ages 10-14	Ages 0-14
Camarillo	3,994	4,060	4,518	12,571
Fillmore	1,538	1,689	1,206	4,432
Moorpark	2,117	2,429	2,915	7,462
Ojai	323	541	451	1,315
Oxnard	17,163	15,966	14,369	47,499
Port Hueneme	1,613	1,482	1,395	4,491
Santa Paula	2,612	2,464	2,642	7,719
Simi Valley	7,488	8,237	8,986	24,711
Thousand Oaks	5,731	9,170	9,170	24,070
Ventura	6,883	6,130	6,668	19,682
Total	**49,464**	**52,168**	**52,320**	**153,952**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014

Key Trends

- 49,464 are under 5 years
- 104,488 are between 5 - 14 years of age
- 42% of residents are Latino
- 44% of households report speaking a language other than English at home
- Latino 3 and 4 year-olds are the least likely among the racial/ethnic groups to attend preschool

Supply, Demand, and Cost of Care

Type of Facility	Ventura County	California	National Average
Child Care Center			
Infant	$14,544	$13,327	$4,822-$17,062
Preschool	$10,348	$9,106	$3,997-$12,781
Family Child Care Home			
Infant	$9,344	$8,462	$3,972-$10,666
Preschool	$8,799	$7,850	$3,675-$10,030

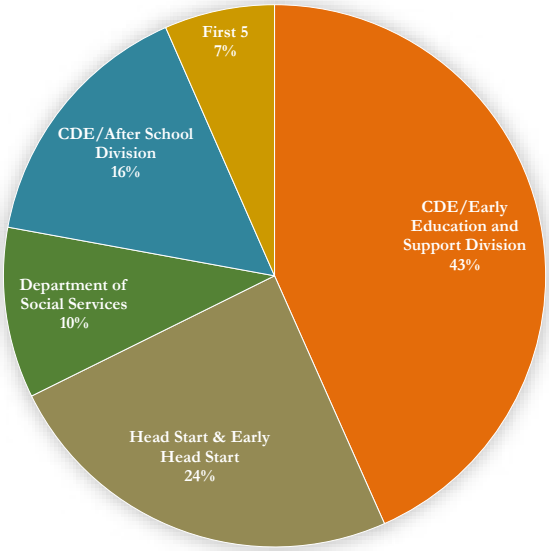
As a basis of comparison, California (in-state) annual tuition and fees for public four-year college: $9,172*

Sources: California Child Care Resource & Referral Network; *Child Care Aware of America, 2015

- 30,325 estimated child care supply:
  - 23,803 child care center spaces
  - 6,522 family child care spaces
- Demand for 0 – 5 spaces
  - 29% not served
- Demand for 0 – 5 *subsidized* spaces
  - 11,766 children in poverty
  - 4,997 children in subsidized care
  - 58% of eligible children not served

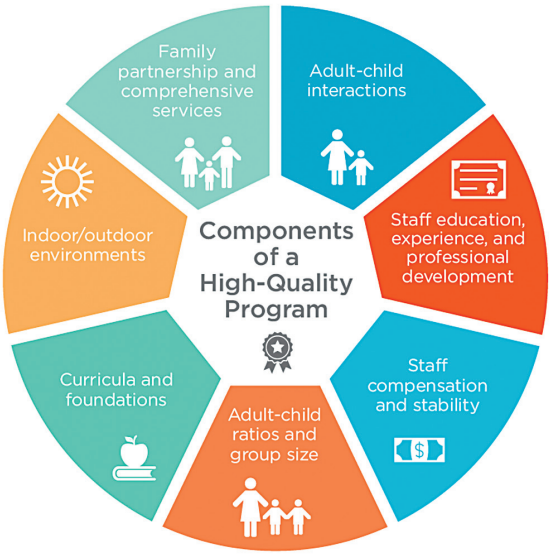
- A family of four in Ventura County with two children and two working adults need an annual income of $85,713 or $7,143 per month for a modest standard of living
- The annual cost for full-time center-based preschool is $10,348
  - Represents a 29% increase from 2010 and $1,242 higher than the California average
  - Preschool costs $1,176 more than the annual tuition/fees for public 4-year college

Subsidized Funding Sources



Funding Source	Funding Amount	# of Children Served
California Department of Education Early Education and Support Division	$23.4M	4,514
Head Start & Early Head Start	$13.1M	1,368
Department of Social Services	$5.5M	808
California Department of Education After School Division	$8.4M	6,220
First 5	$3.5M	914
Total	**$54M**	**13,824 Children Served**

- 25% reduction ($19M) in subsidized child care funding between 2010 - 2015
- California Department of Education (CDE) has since released RfAs to Local Education Agencies to increase spaces
- California is currently pursuing increased Standard Reimbursement Rates (SRR)
- Facility access remains a barrier in Ventura County



Quality

Ventura County's local Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), called Rising Stars, is a 5-star rating system that makes it easy for parents to identify quality early learning programs. Participating programs are rated on a scale from 1 to 5 stars; the more stars, the better the quality. Rising Stars provides family child care homes and centers with additional training and support so that they can give children a high quality early education experience and earn a higher rating.

All programs in Ventura County are invited to participate in professional development initiatives to continue the advancement of all early care and education programs to higher quality.

Conclusion

In summary, the 2015 Child Care Needs Assessment demonstrates the need to not only maintain, but increase quality early care and education efforts, while also advocating for new affordable spaces. The early childhood field must consider new ways to deliver services to meet the needs of young children and their families. In addition, Ventura County's early childhood leaders must continue to employ innovative ways to collaborate and leverage funds in order to make affordable early care and education a possibility for all children.

The 2017 – 2022 Strategic Plan that follows addresses critical needs facing Ventura County and sets forth a plan to strengthen the early learning system.

Focus Area 1: High-Quality Programming

Introduction

Current research by James Heckman indicates that high-quality birth-to-five programs for disadvantaged children can deliver a 13% per year return on investment; this further emphasizes the continuous need to strive for high-quality programming. High-quality early learning environments and teacher-child interactions translate into markedly better developmental results. Many states and regions, including Ventura County, have developed and implemented Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS). QRIS defines quality for both centers and family child care providers (FCCs), addressing the comprehensive needs of young children. Public and privately funded centers and FCCs have access to the QRIS system and/or QRIS supports, including professional development (PD) and targeted technical assistance (TA).

Goal

The Local Planning Council will lead and facilitate community partners in achieving high-quality programming.

Objectives

- Inform/educate the public on what high-quality programming includes
- Identify and promote high-quality standards within the early education field
- Identify and promote the education and training needs of the early care and education workforce within Ventura County
- Support the implementation of high-quality developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) in Transitional Kindergarten (TK) programming

Activities and Action Steps

- Provide leadership and guidance on quality initiatives through the Quality and Professional Development Committee/QRIS Consortium
- Align county quality initiative work with regional and state implementation planning; ensure access to resources is provided to all programs
- Support workforce retention and professional development through ECE degree attainment and quality instruction
- Provide opportunities to expand the use of CDE's Early Learning System (ELS) and Competencies in all higher education coursework; provide forums to address barriers
- Partner with CA Preschool Instructional Network to deliver professional development on the CDE's Early Learning System
- Lead the QRIS Consortium in implementing CLASS, ERS, DRDP, ASQ, Teaching Pyramid, and Family Strengthening
- Identify and explore barriers to high-quality programming (as defined by QRIS) and develop corresponding strategies
- Support the TK workforce in accessing ECE units and/or professional development to implement DAP; provide resources and PD to district leadership on appropriate TK implementation practices

Focus Area 2: Availability of Appropriate Spaces

Introduction

In 2015, 1 in 2 eligible children in Ventura County did not have access to a subsidized child care space. While the California Department of Education (CDE) Early Education and Support Division (EESD) is releasing Requests for Applications (RfAs) for expanding early care and education, the take up rate has been slow. Program operators cite a lack of available facilities in appropriate locations and the cost of operating programs as barriers in providing and expanding services. To adequately address these barriers, child care advocates need to join with economic development planners, elected officials, and business leaders to promote the importance of the county-wide benefits of investing in Ventura County's early care and education industry. Fortunately, the 2017 state budget has increased the Standard Reimbursement Rates (SRR) for early care and education programs. This increase will assist in preparations to provide additional appropriate spaces to Ventura County.

Goal

The Local Planning Council will work with community partners to promote the availability of high-quality early care and education for all children.

Objectives

- Document the need for high-quality early care and education
- Support the increase of high-quality early care and education programs for all children throughout Ventura County

Activities and Action Steps

- Collect and share anecdotal evidence on the need for more spaces to support advocacy efforts; track and update child care supply and demand data on an annual basis
- Increase awareness of the need for additional spaces accurately targeting specific audiences
- Present data on availability of spaces to Ventura County Board of Supervisors, First 5 Ventura County Commission, Ventura County Office of Education and other stakeholders
- Link and leverage services for families needing more than 3 hours of care (non-traditional care)
- Partner with stakeholders to raise awareness regarding barriers (including facilities, transportation, and location of spaces)
- Promote developing new and expanded child care facilities in Ventura County
- Coordinate CDE Early Education and Support Division technical assistance on contract compliance for state-funded partners
- Continually advocate for updated eligibility guidelines to reflect the current State Median Income (SMI) to ensure low income families have access to subsidized services

Focus Area 3: Educate the Public

Introduction

Making intelligent choices about early care and education begins with a well-informed community that understands the importance of quality programming. A community empowered with information can influence the opinions of legislators, policymakers, and, ultimately, decisions that will improve the lives of our children. To accomplish this, open lines of communication between all stakeholders must be established. Additionally, ensuring that countywide programs, policies, and support strategies are in place is critical to consistently engage all partners. The LPC provides a platform for sharing information and resources with other Council members and with the public. This forum supports the efforts of many groups to improve the early childhood infrastructure in our county.

Goal

The Local Planning Council will work with community partners to educate the public about quality early care and education.

Objectives

- Educate families, government officials, and community members about:
  - The importance of high-quality early care and education
  - How to identify and access early care and education
- Develop a clear, consistent message on the value of quality early care and education

Activities and Action Steps

- Develop and provide advocacy materials, tools, training and opportunities for involvement
- Advocate for sound legislation and public policy intended to improve early care and education capacity, accessibility, quality, professional development, and the healthy development of children
- Host community events with partner agencies to increase awareness about quality early care and education
- Utilize local media outlets as a resource for providing information and support for leaders in the early care and education community
- Survey family advocacy groups to discover ways that the LPC can assist in providing resources and support
- Encourage and support the use of technology in linking educators and families in accessing resources
- Maintain communication and relationships with legislators through all channels including inviting them and their representatives on tours of child care facilities
- Increase awareness of the effects of immigration changes compromising access to services for children 0 - 13 and understand its impact on families and workforce
- Maintain the LPC website with information about programs and links to other child care related agencies and information
- Distribute a monthly newsletter with ECE news and training opportunities
- Expand ECE "stakeholders" to include local businesses, employers, law enforcement, public health officials, community members, elected officials, and parents
- Promote Resource & Referral and 211

Focus Area 4: Maximize Resources

Introduction

Ventura County has a long history of strong early care and education partnerships. These partnerships have resulted in the ongoing leveraging of funds and the exchange of ideas. This exchange makes it possible for the Ventura County early care and education community to benefit from several expansion and quality initiatives.

Goal

The Local Planning Council will work with community partners to promote healthy, sound partnerships that will maximize early care and education resources in the county.

Objectives

- Work with child care agencies and advocacy groups to determine the best course of action to leverage knowledge and resources and eliminate duplication of services
- Establish a platform that will allow the early care and education community to create a family advocacy group or support the strengthening of an existing parent advocacy group
- Keep the early care and education community informed about child development legislation and policy, professional development opportunities, funding opportunities, and latest research
- Support local early care and education agencies with planning and implementing outreach events and activities designed to educate the public about the child care system and/or to provide professional development for providers

Activities and Action Steps

- Establish traditional and nontraditional partnerships which work collaboratively to pursue funding for the development and expansion of child care and development services
- Facilitate the voluntary, temporary transfer of funds between state contractors, maximizing services available to families in Ventura County
- Convene a conversation about the role of LPC in relationship to informal child care providers, including family, friends, and neighbors
- Support articulation between early care and education operations and school districts, moving toward a Birth - 20 model in Ventura County
- Link early childhood and school district resources to best serve the continuum of learning, starting with preschool and Transitional Kindergarten (TK)
- Continue to provide the early care and education community information through panels at Council meetings and LPC News Updates

Local Planning Council of Ventura County

Chair and Co-Chair

Carola Oliva-Olson	CSUCI Early Childhood Studies
Adria Taha-Resnick	CA Association for the Education of Young Children

General Membership

Dawn Anderson	VCOE Comprehensive Health
Nancy Ballard	Ventura County Public Health
Linda Bays	Ventura County Public Health
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Rachel Champagne	Child Development Incorporated
Amy Cranston	VCOE Expanded Learning
Stephanie Curtis	Moorpark/Simi Valley NfL
Jennifer Escamilla	CA Association for the Education of Young Children
Janet Fleming	Child Development Resources
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Laurie Jordan	Rainbow Connection
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Lisa Sadowsky	VCOE Cal-SAFE
Pegi Stenberg	Ventura County Child Care Association
Susan Walsh	California Preschool Instructional Network
Pat Wilka	Professional Association for Childhood Education
Patty Zoll	County of Ventura Human Resources

The Local Planning Council extends gratitude to the many partner agencies that contributed to both the 2015 Needs Assessment and accompanying 2017-22 Strategic Plan. In its role as the united voice for early care and education in Ventura County, the needs of children and their families have been identified and a plan to address these needs has been developed for the community to support. Special acknowledgement is extended to the Strategic Plan Ad Hoc Committee.

Strategic Plan Ad Hoc Committee Members

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