

First 5 Amador

2020 – 2021



Program / Evaluation Report

In 1998, California voters approved a \$.50 tax increase on tobacco products through the passage of Proposition 10, the Children and Families First Act. Each county created a local Commission and received revenue to be used for programs for children prenatal through age five. Governed by a Commission, First 5 Amador is charged with administering the funds to support these efforts.

Evaluation efforts reflect an ongoing commitment to ensure local accountability, documenting program quality and effectiveness, and measuring progress towards outcomes. Each funded program is diverse in terms of interventions and outcomes; therefore, evaluation plans are unique to each program.

First 5 Amador adopted the Strengthening Families Framework – Five Protective Factors and works closely with community partners and grantees to incorporate the objectives of the framework.

Research has shown that the Five Protective Factors are linked with lower incidence of child abuse and neglect: *

- 1) Parental Resilience – the ability to manage and bounce back from all types of challenges that emerge in every family’s life.
- 2) Social Connections – friends, family members, neighbors, and community members provide emotional support, help solve problems, offer parenting advice, and give concrete assistance to parents.
- 3) Concrete Support in Times of Need – meeting basic economic needs like food, shelter, clothing, and health care is essential for families to thrive.
- 4) Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development – accurate information about child development and appropriate expectations for children’s behavior at every age help parents see their children and youth in a positive light and promote their healthy development.
- 5) Social and Emotional Competence of Children – a child’s ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate their behavior, and effectively communicate their feelings has a positive impact on their relationships with their family, other adults, and peers. Challenging behaviors or delayed development can create extra stress for families, so early identification and assistance for both parents and children can head off negative results and keep development on track.

****<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/the-basics/protective-factors>***

Results - Highlights

2020-2021

Upcountry and Camanche Lake Community Centers

~Family Resource Centers~

Nexus Youth and Family Services

Five Protective Factors – Social Connections, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development and Concrete Support in Times of Need

Nexus Youth & Family Services utilized First 5 Amador funding to implement Family Resource Center (FRC) programs in the unincorporated areas of Upcountry and Camanche. Through the FRCs, Nexus provided access to needed services, socialization opportunities, and programs to ensure that families are strengthened and supported, children are better protected from child abuse and neglect, and are prepared to enter school healthy and ready to learn. The goal of the FRCs is to reduce disparities in access to services and programs for families residing in the Upcountry and Camanche areas of Amador County and to increase the success of self-sufficiency, stability, and resiliency.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, service delivery continued to look different this fiscal year with staff providing more opportunities via technology, home deliveries, and curbside events.

Objective 1: Expand high-quality case management services for families with high-needs with children ages 0 – 5.

Activity: Family Advocates will provide case management for 50 families with children 0 – 5.

Desired Outcome: Families are strengthened and supported; children are better protected from child abuse and neglect.

Program Activity Description: Family Advocates continued to be available at the Upcountry Community Center and Camanche Lake Community Center (FRCs) to work with individual families to help them identify and prioritize goals and create a Family Action Plan. Advocates provided emotional support, referrals to appropriate resources, transportation support for families to access services, and translation assistance when necessary. Families were linked with other 0 – 5 programs that promote children's health and education and focus on informing parents and caregivers about the important role they play in their children's first and formative years and supporting the familial relationship. Family Advocates provided quality comprehensive case management services (long term) and intensive case management services (short term) depending on individual needs. Services were time-limited with a written plan to meet identified goals.

Throughout the reporting period, client needs continued to escalate, and staff responded to multiple crisis concerns. In addition to offering ongoing remote support services, staff conducted emergency client

contacts and were able to aid and supply essential items such as household paper products, diapers and PPE. Medication deliveries and wellness checks were conducted to support families during this challenging time.

Referral Highlight: During this reporting period staff referred a client to multiple services including the Pregnancy Help Center. This client had a four-year-old child and a newborn. When she first came to the Camanche Center, the client shared with staff that she was new to the area and currently living in her vehicle. She stated that she was homeless and in desperate need of help. The advocate immediately provided emergency food, hygiene items, and child and adult clothing. She then transported the client and her two children to the Pregnancy Help Center where they received a supply of diapers, formula and baby bottles. Over the next several months the advocate continued to meet with the client on a regular basis and was able to provide additional referrals to services including housing, supplemental food, health and special education resources. To date, the client has followed through with every referral. Her children are receiving needed services and the family has secured safe and stable housing.

Service Counts: Throughout the past year, the family advocates provided comprehensive case management services to 118 clients, 38 with children ages 0 – 5. Advocates also provided intensive case management services to 42 clients, 14 clients with children ages 0 – 5.

There was a decrease of more than 50% in the number of clients served compared to the previous year report. The grantee's staff attributes this to the pandemic due to fewer referrals from partner agencies, schools, and other typical sources being closed to the public or operating with a reduced workforce. In addition, the Family Resource Centers were not open to the general public throughout the majority of the program year therefore onsite staff were unable to readily connect with community members who may have benefited from case management support.

Nexus Youth and Family Services utilizes the Apricot Essentials case management database to track Family Action Plans, case management activity, and family engagement. Throughout the reporting period, the overall success rate on case management referrals averaged over 70%.

Outcome data indicated that 79% of 0-5 case management clients made significant progress toward or achieved their goals.

Unexpected Benefit: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to temporarily close the Family Resource Centers to the general public, staff were unable to schedule regular office visits onsite with case management clients. This resulted in Family Advocates increasing home-based client contacts through resource deliveries and wellness checks. The consistent exposure to the client's home environment provided an enhanced opportunity for staff to observe exigent circumstances and offer support to address those needs in order to ensure client health, safety, and well-being. (Multiple components of the Protective Factors.)

FRC Portrait: During the reporting period, the advocate worked closely with "Mary", a mother of a one-year-old child. Mary was first introduced to the advocate during a parenting class held at the Nexus office. Mary struggled with bipolar disorder and had suffered a recent breakdown which led to her child being removed from the home due to safety concerns. Mary had been court-ordered to attend the parenting course as a component of the time-limited family reunification plan. At the time, she was able to have supervised visits with her child for up to three hours. When Mary began participating in the classes, the parent educator observed challenging behaviors. She was very antagonistic, verbally aggressive and often combative interacting with other participants. The parent educator immediately provided a referral for

Portrait (Continued)

Mary to access advocacy services through the Camanche Lake Community Center and directly introduced her to the advocate through a warm linkage so she could get the comprehensive support she needed to stabilize her bipolar disorder, build structure into her life and be successful in the reunification process. Eventually, visits were extended to overnight and Mary received approval for family reunification.

Services:

Both the Camanche Lake and Upcountry Community Centers remained closed to the general public throughout the mandated shut-down, however, staff maintained a modified service delivery model to provide as much support as possible for those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. In March, the FRCs opened back up for limited onsite service restricting capacity to allow for ample social distancing and safe community connection.

In addition, staff continued to facilitate monthly workshops in English and Spanish. Workshops included – Mental Health 101, Pandemic Parenting series, Unemployment and Mental Health, Social Media and Mental Health, Agoraphobia and Germaphobia in the Midst of COVID-19, etc.

Food distribution continued with 75 families with children 0 – 5 benefiting, toddler playgroup kit distribution (110), Kindergarten Readiness Activity Kits (110), Hispanic Women’s Group (12 with children 0 – 5), Baby Welcome Wagon visits – Spanish (9 families) and MediCal application assistance (30 families).

Participant Surveys: 121 participant surveys were completed during this reporting period. Nearly 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed all subjects (food distribution, Back-Pack-2 School, Support and Engagement, etc.) were useful and effective services offered by the FRC’s.

Toddler Playgroups:

First 5 Amador provided the material for take-home activity kits for the centers. Throughout the reporting period, the Upcountry Community Center assembled and distributed the kits to 26 parents / caregivers with 30 children. The Camanche Center served 19 parents / caregivers with 33 children. 76% of participating families are eligible for Medi-Cal benefits and/or free or reduced-price school meals.

Comments from Parents: “The stay-at-home order took a big toll on our family. We were not able to see any family or friends for a long time which made it hard on all of us.” “These kits have been invaluable to my family. They help me plan other activities that my children can do at home since they cannot go to preschool.”

Participant Surveys: 43 parents completed the surveys at the end of the reporting period. 100% agreed or strongly agreed that the curbside activity kits were developmentally appropriate and engaging, encouraged parents to be actively involved in their child’s learning, and provided convenient and educational experiences for themselves and their child.

Unexpected Benefit: Due to the pandemic and modified service delivery model, multiple families who had previously been unable to participate in the program were now able to benefit from this important community service.

Challenge: During the program year there were several instances when staff were not present during scheduled distribution events. Management attributed this issue to the FRCs being closed for regular services and staff experiencing difficulties with monitoring and adhering to a modified schedule. Acknowledging the unique challenges caused by the pandemic, management began providing additional support for staff to maintain center services according to the established interim plan.

Information and Resource Services: During the reporting there was a significant rise in the number of requests for information and referrals to formal and informal support systems. Four volunteers regularly staffed the Upcountry Community Center providing an average of five hours per week of coverage. The Camanche Lake Community Center has the consistent support of two dedicated bilingual community members who helped staff the center approximately 4 hours per week.

Nexus launched online platforms and updated the website template to include a direct contact link of the page tabs so that community members could request information and inquire about services quickly and conveniently.

To promote parent leadership and societal involvement, parents are provided opportunities to assist others at the centers. Parents of young children provided 594 hours of volunteer service at the centers. Volunteer services included food distribution, the Angel Tree, Hispanic Women's Group, and Peer Advisory Council. A decrease in the number of parent volunteers able to provide services decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ten parents provided services. 100% have family members who are eligible for Medi-Cal benefits and/or free / reduced-price school lunches.

Baby Welcome Wagon -Universal Home Visiting

Amador County Public Health

Five Protective Factors – Social Connections, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, Parental Resilience and Concrete Support in Times of Need

The goal of the program is to strengthen family functioning and improve children's readiness for school by ensuring all new parents have access to the tools needed to optimize their children's home environment, whatever the socioeconomic status. The Kit for New Parents, developed by First 5 California, is used as the basis for the delivery of parenting information and customized with Amador community services and resources. The program provides paraprofessional face to face home visiting services. The first visit will preferably be actualized in the prenatal period. With the distribution of the Parent Tool Kit this home visit serves as the arena in which the family can express difficulties or family challenges are detected by the home visitor and services arranged to limit the negative effects on the caregiver and infant relationship.

Education regarding Ages and Stages (ASQ/ASQ-SE-2) developmental screenings is incorporated in all visits and the tool is made available for siblings (0 - 5) already in the home. The Baby Welcome Wagon is unique compared to other home visiting programs in the county. In this program, all Amador County residents with a newborn child are eligible for health education and referral services. The program will build on each family's individual strengths ultimately improving the health of their infant as well as overall family strength.

The Baby Welcome Wagon visit provides an opportunity to enroll families in the Imagination Library – home literacy program. Children enrolled in the Imagination Library at birth will receive 60 books in the mail by their 5th birthday. Introducing families to the importance of early literacy immediately after the birth of their child reinforces the impact talking, reading, and singing has on the development of their child and bonding with the adults in their life.

COVID-19 Pandemic Impact: Amador County Public Health's need to focus on the pandemic made it challenging for other programs managed by the department to operate as they had in prior years. A significant amount of staff time was spent tracking and responding to COVID cases; therefore, initial contact and follow-up was affected creating a backlog of referrals. 67% of referrals during the 19/20 year completed a home visit. 33% of referrals during the 20/21 reporting year completed a visit.

Objective: Parents of children from zero to three years will be given the opportunity to participate in the Baby Welcome Wagon (BWW) program.

Number of Referrals: 143

Jackson	39	Sutter Creek	15
Ione	29	Pine Grove	21
Pioneer	25	River Pines / Fiddletown	04
Plymouth	05	Volcano	05

1st Home Visits Completed: 47

Jackson	07	Sutter Creek	09
Ione	06	Pine Grove	03
Pioneer	06	River Pines / Fiddletown	02
Plymouth	04	Volcano	01
HHS	01	Telephone/Zoom	08

2nd Contact Completed: 33

Jackson	09	Sutter Creek	01
Ione	07	Pine Grove	01
Pioneer	04	Telephone / Zoom	08
Plymouth	02	HHS	01

Ethnicity of BWW families (mother's ethnicity):

White	40	Lanina	03
Unknown	01	Multi-Racial	02
African American	01		

Number of children within the home after the first home visit:

0-2years	57
3-5years	08

7 Developmental Screenings (ASQ/ASQ-SEII) were provided to families. Six returned the screenings for scoring and follow-up. No children required referrals for follow-up services.

85% of second home visit (contact) families will report having insurance:

98% of the families reported having insurance after second contact.

BWW - Continued

Number of Women Screened for PMAD (Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders)

13	Women were screened with the Edinburgh tool
08	Women had elevated scores
08	Referred for counseling services
07	Entered clinical services



Toddler Playgroups – Jackson and Ione (H. Hall)

Five Protective Factors: Social Connections, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



The Toddler Playgroup program allows parents / caregivers to introduce their children to a range of activities that enhance their development and learning. The program's goal is to provide an opportunity for children to develop social skills at their own pace by building confidence and encouraging them to be independent while supporting the adults as their child's first teacher.

To adjust for the Public Health mandates regarding social distancing, masking, etc., playgroups moved to a curbside kit distribution model. This strategy proved to be very effective engaging families sometimes unable to attend in-person. Toddler playgroup kits offered support to parents / caregivers by providing information regarding other support services throughout the county and screenings that helped them to understand early childhood development. The kits provided age-appropriate activities for children and their parents to complete at home. When possible, outdoor play activities were hosted to provide parents and caregivers a comfortable space for social interaction, community networking, and an opportunity to play/interact with their child.

Jackson / Ione - Toddler Playgroup Participation: 96 children / 76 parents - caregivers Programs funded by First 5 Amador such as the Imagination Library, safety net resources, and community events and services are discussed and material made available for parents and child care providers. Nutrition and health, social/emotional skills, and literacy are focus areas of these playgroups. Ages and Stages Questionnaires are provided to parents to complete to determine any resources that would benefit each child's development.



Nexus Youth and Family Services Camanche Lake and Upcountry Kindergarten Readiness

Five Protective Factors: Social Connections, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Nexus Youth & Family Services utilized First 5 Amador funding to implement a Kindergarten Readiness Program at the Upcountry and Camanche Lake Community Centers. The Kindergarten Readiness Program was designed to help participating children build the school readiness skills which have been outlined by local teachers, administrators, parents and professionals in the following categories: Social Readiness, Number Readiness, Colors & Shapes, Life Skills, Motor Skills (Large & Fine), Reading Readiness, Writing Readiness, Music & Art, and Health & Safety. The goal of the Kindergarten Readiness Program is to reduce disparities in access to school readiness programming for families living in these two outlying areas, and through this increase the number of children who are ready to enter Kindergarten with skills for success in life.

Objective: Children will enter school with the skills for success in life.

Activity: Provide a Kindergarten Readiness Program once per week at the two centers.

Outcome: Nexus implemented a modified weekly Kindergarten Readiness Program for children ages 3-5 at the Camanche Lake and Upcountry Community Centers utilizing curbside kits during COVID-19 closures to encourage families to complete the activities at home. 21 parents and caregivers and 27 children received the kits at the Camanche Lake Community Center. 19 parents and caregivers and 22 children received the kits at the Upcountry Community Center. Both sites experienced an increase in the number of children participating in the Kindergarten Readiness services. Staff attributes this to the implementation of the interim program model which has provided an opportunity for working families to be able to engage in the services at home.

Participant Surveys: 21 parents responded to a satisfaction survey at the end of the fiscal year. 100% agreed or strongly agreed the kits helped enhance their child's school readiness and strengthened their parenting skills. The respondents reported the kits encouraged them to be actively involved in their child's learning and the kits provided convenient and educational experiences for themselves and their children.

By providing the kits, program staff were able to engage with families and connect them with additional resources as needed. Based on feedback received by First 5 Amador, staff provided technical assistance to Nexus staff to improve the quality of the kit contents.

Commission-Run Programs

COVID-19 Pandemic Support Services

First 5 Amador continued to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), diapers, etc. supplied by First 5 California to child care providers and families experiencing challenging times during the pandemic.

Transition to Kindergarten

Background

The Bridge Program in Amador County began in 2003 and initially served 16 children. This program was designed for children who would be entering kindergarten in the fall and had spent little or no time in a preschool setting. The program was designed to introduce the children to the structure and rhythm of the classroom. It was called a Bridge Program because it was aimed to help children cross from the pre-Kindergarten environment to kindergarten.

This year saw a significant decrease in interest by teaching staff to administer the program and parents to enroll their child(ren). The program served 11 children in classrooms (Pine Grove and Ione) compared to prior years that served 110. First 5's program coordinator created 300 school readiness kits to distribute to families. Kits were distributed to families by elementary school sites, through First 5 curbside events, Upcountry and Camanche Lake Community Center home deliveries, and child care providers / preschools.



First 5 California IMPACT (Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive) is an innovative approach that forges partnerships between First 5 California and counties to achieve the goal of helping children ages 0 to 5 and their families thrive by increasing the number of high-quality early learning settings, including supporting and engaging families in the early learning process.

Participation rate in Amador's Quality for Kids (Q4K) continued to be high with eight alternate sites (playgroups, etc.), 65% of family child care homes and 87% of centers actively engaged. Q4K participants earn monetary incentives and educational material to address the goals in their site quality improvement plans.

Families and caregivers are invited to attend all educational opportunities and a new program for Family, Friends and Neighbors (FFN) was launched to engage grandparents, aunts / uncles, neighbors, etc. caring for children outside their own. FFN kits were provided to support the early learning of children in this form of unlicensed child care.

Quality for Kids - Continued

Amador's P.E.E.R. (Provider Early Education Resource) supported participants by providing coaching support and workshops. The P.E.E.R. transitioned to monthly educational opportunities as well as individual and group support during the last quarter of the fiscal year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The P.E.E.R. created a monthly calendar for early care providers to assist with technical assistance, educational and support opportunities.

Amador's P.E.E.R. generates a social / emotional "Tips" post that ties in with an Imagination Library book for First 5's Facebook page. These are extremely popular and frequently receive comments from parents as well as providers. The P.E.E.R. is responsive to the individual needs of each family child care provider assisting them with everything from recruiting new families, bookkeeping, early learning resources, etc.

Amador's Quality for Kids consortia includes members from the Child Care Council, State Preschool, Nexus Youth and Family Services, Amador County Adult Education, private preschools, The Resource Connection, and First 5.



Established by Dolly Parton in 1996, the program mails a new, age-appropriate book every month to registered children from birth until their fifth birthday. Approximately 55% of age eligible children in the county are enrolled in the program. More than 9,000 books were mailed to children in Amador County during this reporting period. First 5 funds the majority of the program, however, community service groups and individuals have contributed toward sustainability.

Children receive a "Welcome Book" – the *Little Engine that Could* upon enrollment and "*Look Out Kindergarten Here I Come*" as they graduate from the program. Amador's highest monthly participation was January 2020 with 843 children receiving a book in the mail. 790 participants were enrolled at the end of this reporting cycle. First 5 Amador has conducted multiple surveys that indicate that approximately 25% more children 0 – 5 benefits from the books due to their caregivers opting out of enrollment for a second or third child.

Anecdotal feedback from families continued to be extremely positive with comments regarding the frequency of requests by their children for the same book, excitement in anticipating the arrival of the books -- even to the point of conversing with postal carriers regarding their expected deliveries. Early childhood and school district personnel continue to share their appreciation of the program and the opportunities it provides children in Amador to establish early literacy skills. Beyond literacy, the consistency of this program supports parent / caregiver and child bonding by encouraging daily reading.

Dad and Me

(Grandpas, Uncles, Brothers, etc.)

First 5 Amador understands the importance of father-involvement and sponsors Dad & Me monthly events. Research shows that children who grow up with warm, nurturing, and actively involved fathers reap tremendous benefits, including better school performance, increased self-esteem, healthier relationships with peers and caregivers, and future access to greater financial resources, according to a recent review of the research. When fathers read to their young children on a regular basis, they tend to raise children who are superior readers, who perform better in school, and who have better relationship skills (Green, S. 2002). Each of these events:

- Provides fun and educational opportunities to help children get ready for school.
- Provides opportunities for fathers, grandfathers, uncles, etc. to foster relationships.
- Provides families with ideas for future family field trips and activities.
- Encourages literacy with each family taking home a book related to the activity.

Adjustment to the delivery of the Dad and Me program occurred this last year to accommodate the COVID-19 restrictions. Activity kits were provided to families to take home to complete together. Staff has discussed the ultimate goal which is for adults to engage with the children in their care which is occurring with the distribution of the kits. Staff has determined that continuing a hybrid model for this and other programs will meet the needs of more children and their families.

60 Fathers / grandfathers and 63 children participated throughout the year.



First 5 Amador offers consultation services funded by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) by experienced behavioral specialists (LCSW / MFT) to assist preschool and child care, and stay-at-home families experiencing challenging behavior. The consultants are available to assist family child care providers and early education teachers with a wide range of resources and services. The consultants offer phone and on-site assistance to families and programs serving children ages 0-5.

Number of children served: 8 child-specific (Multiple children served at a child care site.)

Some of the referrals recommended by the behavioral specialist included Nexus Youth and Family Services for ongoing counseling and ACUSD Special Education.

No child was removed from their current setting due to behavioral concerns. Reports back regarding a child who transitioned to kindergarten were very positive. The child's mother was extremely appreciative of the support.

First 5 continued to provide support for families and early care providers by offering training opportunities and resources regarding challenging behavior, stress reduction and self-care.

First 5's monthly e-newsletter and Facebook posts provide information and resources that support children's mental health. First 5 staff continue to be actively engaged in ongoing Behavioral Health / Mental Health Services Act Steering / Cultural Competency meetings and the Student Assistance Program to reinforce the importance of early identification and services for children and families.

Radio and bus ads continue to promote the importance of supporting children's mental health and developmental screenings.



Eight local behavioral health clinicians participated in a Zero to Three training that focused on early intervention services for young children. First 5 Amador utilized MHSA funding to sponsor these local service providers.



Research tells us that as many as 1 in 7 moms (1 in 10 dads) experience symptoms of depression and anxiety during the postpartum period. People in every age, income level and culture can develop Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADs) during pregnancy and within the first year after delivery. To address these concerns, First 5 and Amador County's Public Health Department brought together local agencies and organizations to establish the Amador - Calaveras Perinatal Wellness Coalition. Due to the high number of Calaveras babies born at the Sutter Amador Hospital, it made sense to include Calaveras agencies and organizations in the Coalition.

First 5 Amador continued to coordinate Coalition activities. The Coalition continued to have a robust level of participation from the hospital, Amador Public and Behavioral Health, community-based organizations, private clinicians, and a retired OB/Gyn. The Coalition's ongoing work and accomplishments included refining the current system of care to eliminate barriers and reduce re-traumatizing.

Amador's Baby Welcome Wagon (BWW) program continued to provide support to families experiencing perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. The home visitor offered an Edinburgh screening at all visits and follows-up with referrals to clinical services and support.

Clinical services: Six women were referred and followed through with services provided by marriage and family therapists and licensed clinical social workers coordinated through First 5 utilizing MHSA funding.

To assist in the reduction of stigma associated with mental health, First 5 Amador continued to create and disseminate information regarding early childhood mental health as well as perinatal wellness. First 5's monthly e-newsletter is opened by more than 300 individuals and our Facebook page is extremely active and updated daily. First 5 monitors the open-rate to determine the effectiveness of messaging.

First 5 continued to educate parents, caregivers, early care and the community at-large regarding the importance of early identification and treatment through developmental screening for children and perinatal wellness screening for parents. Information for new parents and their families is distributed through the Breastfeeding Coalition's Grandmother Teas, social media, playgroups, etc.

Oral Health Services and Systems Change

In partnership with the Amador Dental Partnership, First 5 Amador spearheaded an effort to establish a systems change that would provide ongoing fluoride varnish treatments and education where the majority of children in the county receive their primary care. Currently, 80% of children receiving care at this medical office are covered by Managed MediCal. There is one DentiCal provider in the county that provides services primarily to Native American families. Few dentists in the county will see children less than 5 years of age making it more challenging for families to access services.

First 5 will continue to work with the Amador Dental Partnership through Public Health. The partnership provides opportunities for leveraging resources such as dental kits, educational material, local media, events, etc.

Support during Covid-19 changed due to the lack of in-person services. Dental education was included in Toddler Playgroup, School Readiness and Bridge to Kindergarten take-home kits. Nexus Youth and Family services incorporated dental education material and activities provided by First 5 and Amador Public Health in their home deliveries.

Home Visiting Services and Systems Change

First 5 Amador took the lead with a tri-county home visiting grant in an effort to improve the referral and service delivery systems throughout the region. To date, assessments have been completed for each of the three counties. Meetings were held with stakeholders and the results of the conversations were not moving the planning in a positive direction. The Executive Directors of the counties determined the process should be put on hold until which time in-person meetings could be conducted. In the interim, First 5 Amador received approval from First 5 California to pilot a project that would provide a staff person to shadow the current universal home visiting paraprofessional to identify opportunities to improve system delivery and coordination with other community organizations, hospitals, etc. The staff person has been identified and the pilot launched. Areas of improvement within the First 5 system have already been identified and streamlined systems are being implemented.

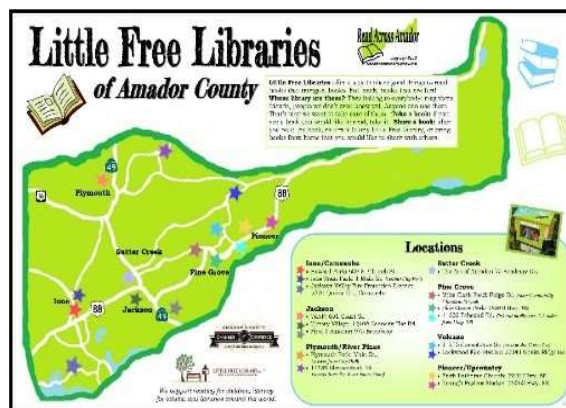
Read Across Amador



In an effort to increase literacy opportunities for children and adults in Amador County, First 5 Amador launched Read Across Amador (RAA) – a coalition that includes community-based organizations, Friends of the Amador Library, the Amador Community Foundation, and First 5. Barriers to literacy opportunities such as limited hours and days of operation for satellite public libraries led RAA to expand a successful program launched by the Amador County Library system.

Amador County's Library was awarded a grant to establish four Little Free Libraries (LFL) in outlying areas of the county. The establishment of the first four LFLs was successful which led RAA to embark on a project that would significantly increase the number of LFLs throughout the county. This year, several LFLs were installed bringing the countywide total to 33. The mission of the official Little Free Library program is *to promote literacy and the love of reading by building free book exchanges worldwide and to build a sense of community as we share skills, creativity, and wisdom across generations*. Most Amador LFLs are registered with the international organization and can be located on their website.

To encourage families to read during the COVID-10 pandemic, First 5 Amador continued to help stock the LFL's and encouraged others to do the same.



Outreach and Community Engagement

- First 5 continued to supply community partners and parents with copies of the **Plays Well with Others – A Guide to Social and Emotional Development**. The guide includes an overview of social and emotional development, local resources, and parenting tips.
- First 5 also provides the Bridge to Kindergarten Calendar to families with children 3 – 5 years old – an early learning booklet created in-house and purchased for use throughout the state.
- First 5 provides administrative support for the **Amador Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) / Resilient Amador (RA)**. The Council continued to provide Mandated Reporter training online throughout the pandemic. Articles to inform the community about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma Informed Care as well as homelessness were written by the CAPC / RA coordinator and published in the local newspaper. The educational piece received positive feedback. A new clinician to First 5 learned about the organizations through one of these newspaper articles.
- **First 5's facility** (Margaret Dalton Children's Center – rented from the Jackson Rancheria) allows for more community involvement and awareness of the opportunities available for local families. The venue provides space for on-site child care which allows more parents to participate in ongoing activities. Head Start, State Preschool, Kene Me Wu, Operation Care, Nexus Youth and Family Services, Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency, and the Child Care Council have utilized First 5's location to host events and educational forums.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic First 5's office has been utilized for distribution of PPE and take-home learning kits. The site is centrally located and convenient for families and providers accessing shopping, medical appointments, etc.

- **First 5's website, monthly e-newsletter, and Facebook page** provided up-to-date information for parents and providers. First 5 monitors participation rates through data management. Staff has noticed an increase in the number of fathers, policy makers, and community members accessing information provided through our social media.
- First 5 staff continued to take an active role on the Domestic Violence Council, Behavioral Health Advisory Board, Mental Health Services Act Cultural Competency / Steering Committee, Local Child Care Planning Council and Children and Families Program Committee.
- First 5 staff continued to provide support for Child Protective Services by providing developmental screening assistance for foster parents caring for children in Amador.

Professional Capacity Building

First 5 partnered with the Sacramento State Nursing Program to host two students. This partnership resulted in a presentation regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences that was made available online to local child care providers. In addition to the presentation, the nursing students supported First 5's effort to promote early childhood mental health by emphasizing nutrition and outdoor play. The students spent hours prepping and planting a vegetable and flower garden that provided an opportunity for children and families to enjoy the outdoor learning space and an abundance of fruit and vegetables.



Opportunities:

- Expand outreach to families who live in rural parts of Amador County.
- Expand community messaging around protective factors, trauma informed care and ACEs through the partnership with Resilient Amador and the Child Abuse Prevention Council.
- Encourage more providers to accept Medi-Cal and Denti-Cal
- Continue to develop a system that connects children to developmental screening and appropriate referrals.
- Expand referrals from hospitals outside the county for home visiting and community-based organization services.
- Build on successes of the Little Free Libraries and Imagination Library to encourage increased literacy activities in the home and child care system.
- Support the self-care of providers and staff
- Expand evaluation efforts to include families who do not complete / continue services to learn how program can be improved to meet their needs.
- Continue to review, research and practice home visiting strategies to meet the needs of more families in Amador County. Continue to build on lessons learned and look for opportunities to solidify a home visiting system of care.
- Expand opportunities for families and services providers utilizing First 5 Amador's indoor and outdoor learning labs.