

# Enhancing Early Intervention for Contra Costa's Young Children



## All children deserve to reach their full potential.

First 5 Contra Costa's Early Intervention efforts ensure that families have access to prevention and early intervention supports that foster the optimal development of all children.

Regular, evidence-based screenings can change the trajectory for children. Early identification of developmental delays, behavioral concerns, and other needs related to trauma help children access services during the critical years of their development. The earlier interventions begin, the more likely they are to be effective and the greater the chance a child has of reaching their full potential. Research has also shown intervening early enhances family functioning and resiliency, and can save significant taxpayer dollars that would otherwise be needed to address untreated issues later in life.

## Promoting trauma-informed and resiliency practices.

One of the most potentially damaging factors in a child's development is the effect of trauma and toxic stress, which can lead to children facing lifelong physical, behavioral and emotional challenges. The effects of toxic stress are detectable as early as infancy and can be associated with failure to thrive, growth delays, sleep disruption, and developmental delays.

First 5 Contra Costa works with public and private healthcare providers to build their capacity to screen, treat and heal toxic stress. Using a family-centered approach, First 5 Contra Costa created the Network of Care that helps build connections between health and social service providers to ensure all aspects of families' needs are met with trauma-informed practices that bolster families' resiliency.

First 5 Contra Costa builds the capacity of the professionals and the systems they work within to adopt proven prevention and early intervention approaches. Many providers working with young families are stretched thin with large caseloads of families with multiple needs.

**First 5 Contra Costa works across public and private sectors to bring training to providers, resources to pilot new approaches, and best practices to institutionalize proven methods.**

First 5 Contra Costa is working to ensure that all health providers in our county have the knowledge and systems to screen all children for Adverse Childhood Experiences at least once before they are age 5, and that healthcare providers can successfully refer families to the health or social services needed to heal.

**750+**

professionals from the health care, social service, and other fields trained on trauma in FY 2022

**65%**

of training participants, on average, said they plan to change their practice as a result of the training

***"The other piece that really made a difference is the idea that there is hope—that even though trauma can derail development, we can still rewire the brain and there's still things that can be done." - Training Participant***

## Developmental Screenings

To help children ages birth to 5 in Contra Costa County achieve their best development, the Help Me Grow program ensures children have regular developmental screenings and get connected to services they need.

Evidence-based developmental screenings help identify developmental delays and behavioral concerns that if left untreated can result in poor academic and health outcomes for children as they age.

The program works with a variety of agencies and families throughout the county to increase awareness of the importance of early identification and intervention, and enhance the way families are referred to support services. Families, medical staff, and social service providers can access a Help Me Grow hotline to speak to staff dedicated to helping families access screenings and services to support families' needs.

**1,375+**

referrals made to 778 families who were served by the Help Me Grow Contra Costa program in FY 2022

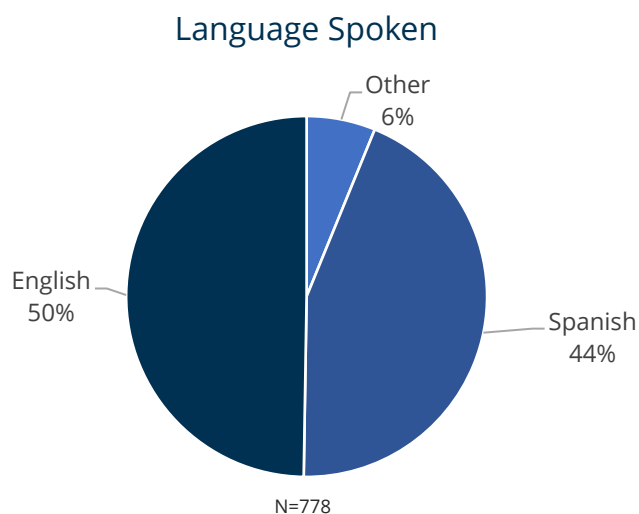
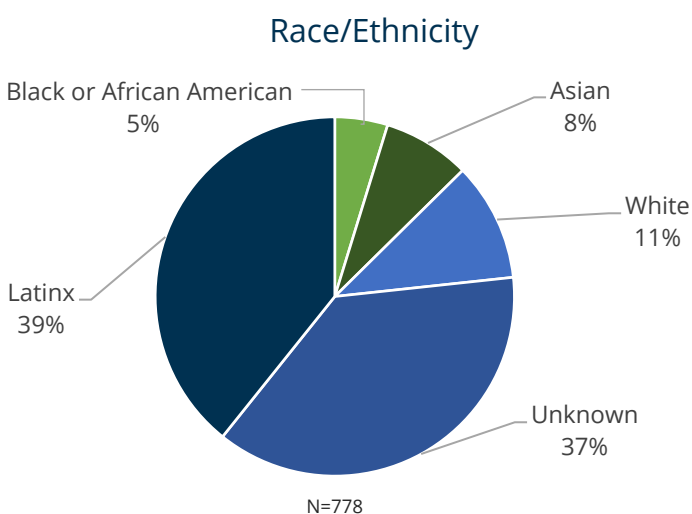
**175+**

professionals from healthcare, child care and other social service agencies trained in developmental screenings and/or the Help Me Grow Referral Pathways

**80%**

of professionals participating in a training said they felt confident in conducting development screenings as a result of the training

## Demographics of Parents Receiving Referrals to Services Through Help Me Grow Phone Line, FY 2022



## Working to Support Families and Address Mental Health Services Crisis

Contra Costa County has a severe shortage of mental health services to meet families' needs, which have only increased since the pandemic. Parents accessing services funded by First 5 Contra Costa continue to identify their child's development and behavior as one of their top concerns, above paying bills and making ends meet. For example as highlighted in this table, 15% of parents reported their child's development and behavior was their biggest concern.

**First 5 Contra Costa works with other partners to call attention to these unmet mental health needs and to strategize ways to access new and leverage existing resources to serve those families with the most critical needs.**

Biggest Concerns in FY 2022	% of Parents Identifying as 1 of their 3 Biggest Concerns
Development/behavior of my child	15%
Paying rent or housing	13%
Paying bills	10%

Note: Parents could select up to 3 of their biggest concerns. Percentages are based on parent responses, and do not total 100%. This chart only shows specific concerns. N= 1,527 responses.



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