

Communications Plan 2009 - 2013

FIRST 5 FRESNO COUNTY



DEVELOPED BY:

Christina Bath Collosi & Victor Abalos
in coordination with First 5 Fresno County Staff

June 30, 2009

IT'S ALL
ABOUT
THE
KIDS.



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BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

The proposed Communications Plan and its accompanying Action Plan provides First 5 Fresno County with a blueprint on how all communications activities and public education campaigns will be developed, implemented and measured. The Communications Plan should be viewed as a long-term guiding document and includes overarching goals, standards, and strategies. The Action Plan details how the Communications Plan will be implemented on an annual basis. The plan takes into account time-sensitive information such as priority areas upon which to focus public education efforts and available staff and budgetary resources.

Multiple efforts informed the development of the 2009-2013 Communications Plan, most notably the 2008 Communications Audit and the 2009 Fresno County Public Opinion and Awareness Baseline Survey. The audit examined all previous and available communications efforts of First 5 Fresno County and concluded with a list of recommendations to strengthen future communications activities. It also pointed to a need for additional research to ensure that future efforts and expenditures were appropriately targeted as well as to hear and learn from community members about their beliefs and priorities. This research was completed through the 2009 Fresno County Public Opinion and Awareness Baseline Survey, which included random-digit-dial telephone interviews as well as focus groups. Communications consultants worked in partnership with First 5 Fresno County staff during all aspects of Communications Plan development to ensure that the knowledge and experience of all available parties was utilized.

The success of the 2009-2013 Communications Plan depends upon participation from staff, Commissioners, and other stakeholders as well as long-term commitment and financial support from the First 5 Fresno County Commission. This plan was developed with a clear understanding of the budgetary and political challenges that First 5 Fresno County and all the other county commissions are now facing.

FIRST 5 FRESNO COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS PHILOSOPHY

First 5 Fresno County resources committed to parent and caregiver education can make a significant impact in the community if they are targeted to specific audiences with clearly identified communications objectives. Those communications efforts must be produced in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner and delivered in the most cost-effective modalities and outlets. Because Commission financial resources are limited, it is imperative that communications efforts are prioritized and coordinated to enhance and augment the success of agency-wide efforts.

First 5 Fresno County is committed to using state-of-the-art social marketing strategies in an effort to have the greatest impact in reaching parents and caregivers with vital educational information that will inform parenting practices. Social marketing requires a dedication to research and measurement. First 5 Fresno County is committed to outcomes-based evaluation and accountability for all of its investments; the Communications Department will hold itself similarly accountable.

Resources will be maximized by committing to strategies that research and experience have proven to be the most cost-effective and have the greatest impact. This Communications Plan is based on specific standards that will inform and guide the execution of all communication-related strategies.

PROFILE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN FRESNO COUNTY

Fresno County is home to 90,869 children age five and under.¹ Over half the children under age 5 are of Hispanic/Latino decent (58%). Twenty-four percent are White, 8% are Asian, 6% are African American, and 4% are other ethnicities.² Forty-six percent of children speak a language other than English at home.³

Fresno County is a large county geographically. A majority of Fresno County families live in the city of Fresno (52%).⁴ Others live in significantly smaller cities or in one of the many rural communities such as Sanger, Firebaugh, and Coalinga. Many families living in rural communities are isolated from community-based services offered in larger cities. Agriculture is a large industry throughout the county and represents 7% of all employment. In 2006, the agricultural industry produced 4.8 billion dollars of revenue, making Fresno the top agricultural producing county in the nation.⁵

Many families in Fresno County struggle to make ends meet. More than 20% of Fresno County families have an income of less than \$20,000. Sixty percent of families with children birth to 5 are living at or below 199% of federal poverty level (FPL).⁶ This makes Fresno the 5th highest county in the state with children living in poverty.⁷

Children living in Fresno County have many health-related needs. Only 48% of all children birth through 5 have visited a dentist, even though 83% of these children are enrolled in dental insurance programs.⁸ Environmental factors, such as poor air quality, also contribute to health problems in young children. The prevalence of children diagnosed with asthma is much higher in Fresno County (30%) than the statewide average (16%).⁹ Fresno County children also face the problem of poor nutrition and lack of exercise. Thirty-five percent of children in Fresno County are considered overweight and 70% of children were reported to never exercise.¹⁰

Almost half of Fresno County babies live in families where the mother has minimal education. First-time mothers in Fresno County most likely have a high school education (42%) or less and many are living in poverty (31%).¹¹ Only 15% have B.A. degrees or higher.¹² In addition, rates of teenaged parents are high (13%), especially among Latino and African-American women.¹³

Many children in Fresno do not have access to early learning opportunities that can help prepare them for school. In Fresno County, licensed child care is available for 26% of children with parents in the labor force. Only 6% of all licensed child care slots in center-based programs are dedicated to children under age 2.¹⁴ One third of Fresno County children ages 3 to 4 are enrolled in preschool programs compared to 42% statewide. Children who are least likely to attend preschool reside in middle income families (200%-299% FPL).¹⁵

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH STANDARDS

The standards listed below represent the tone and expectations of all future First 5 Fresno County communications and outreach efforts.

- **Best practices are utilized in all communications strategies and campaigns.** First 5 is knowledgeable about target populations including, where populations can be reached, effective messages, and appropriate calls-to-action.
- **Commitment to accountability.** Communications campaigns will be measurable to ensure they are as cost-effective and efficient.
- **Clear and concise communication.** Language will be friendly, accessible and always linguistically and culturally relevant to parents, caregivers and other important audiences.
- **Reliable source of information about young children and their families.** Community members and organizations view First 5 Fresno County as an accurate and well-informed leader.
- **First 5 Fresno County prides itself on being transparent.** Any inquiries received by First 5 will be responded to quickly and objectively.
- **Well informed internal stakeholders.** Staff and Commissioners will receive ongoing updates about important First 5 efforts and activities.
- **Grantees and service providers are important and valuable ambassadors in the community.** Service providers and other key stakeholders will receive regular communications and technical assistance.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are used across First 5 Fresno County efforts and are listed here to ensure consistent terminology.

- Goal:** A statement of intent or an end that a person or a group strives to attain. A goal tends to be more general than an objective and tends to be relatively timeless and unbounded.
- Objective:** The expected impacts/benefits/changes for participants that are measurable and attainable, as a result of a program, process, or policy. Objectives tend to be more specific than goals and often are considered on the way to accomplishing the goal. As distinguished from outcomes, objectives are measureable milestones that mark progress towards the achievement of outcomes.
- Strategy:** How resources and actions are organized and focused to maximize effectiveness and efficiency in achieving the objectives.

- Activity:** Specific action to be taken in response to achieve the objectives and make progress toward that goal.
- Outcome:** Actual impacts/benefits/changes for participants as a result of a service, program or activity. Usually defined according to when the outcome is expected to occur, either in the short-term or in the longer-term.
- Indicator:** Tangible evidence of progress towards outcomes. The types of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, or attributes that are expected to how that an outcome has been attained.

PRIMARY GOALS (NOT LISTED IN ORDER OF PRIORITY)

The long-term goals listed below will serve to inform communications priorities as well as help develop annual Communication Action Plans.

1. First 5 Fresno County is recognized as a knowledgeable early childhood resource and community leader
2. Promote a policy and advocacy environment in Fresno County that nourishes a community supporting children 0-5 and their families
3. Support and enhance the success of programs serving children 0-5 and those that care for them
4. Influence parent and caregiver behavior that supports positive outcomes for children 0-5

TARGET AUDIENCES

Below are target audiences for each goal area listed by primary and secondary audiences. These are intended to be specific targets and not comprehensive of all audiences who may receive or view First 5 Fresno County communications materials or public education efforts.

1. First 5 Fresno County is recognized as a knowledgeable early childhood resource and community leader
 - i) **Primary target:** Policy makers, organizations serving children 0-5, media outlets, voters
 - i) **Secondary target:** Business leaders, large employers, parents

2. Promote a policy and advocacy environment in Fresno County that nourishes a community supporting children 0-5 and their families
 - i) **Primary target:** Policy makers, business leaders, large employers, city and county planning departments
 - ii) **Secondary target:** Voters, parents, advocates of children 0-5
3. Support and enhance the success of programs serving children 0-5 and those that care for them
 - i) **Primary target:** Funded and unfunded partner organizations
 - ii) **Secondary target:** Media outlets, parents of children 0-5
4. Influence parent and caregiver behavior that supports positive outcomes for children 0-5
 - i) **Primary target:** Pregnant women, parents, and those that care for children birth to 5
 - ii) **Secondary target:** Trusted providers (based on 2009 Public Opinion Survey) such as family doctors, nurses, and preschool teachers

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

Based on all information and resources that were available at the time of the development of the 2009-2013 Communications Plan, six strategies were identified as strong choices to meet the communication and outreach needs of First 5 Fresno County. These strategies are listed below and are not in order of priority. As stated in the operational definitions, a strategy is “How resources and actions are organized and focused to maximize effectiveness and efficiency in achieving the objectives.” Each strategy heading is followed by examples possible activities to consider when developing the Communications Action Plan.

First 5 Fresno County will not have the internal staff capacity or budget to make large strides in all six strategies listed below each fiscal year. Rather, staff should work in partnership with appropriate stakeholders and the Commission to identify top priorities and develop/revise the Annual Communications Action Plan accordingly. Lastly, it is assumed that Communications staff will provide overall communications support to First 5 staff and the Commission every fiscal year; this expectation is not separated out as a strategy. Examples of overall communications support include activities such as responding to community and media inquiries, producing a newsletter, and other public relations functions.

1. Redevelop the First 5 Fresno County Website

Commit resources to renovate the website and develop it into a resource for parents, public, grantees, policymakers and other important stakeholders. The website can be used to:

- Measure the effectiveness of outreach efforts by making it a primary call-to-action
- Connect parents and caregivers to useful local resources and engage them in an on-

- going dialogue about children's issues
- Provide parents and caregivers with vital information about their children's health and development
- Attract strategic and media partners who are interested in online co-branding campaigns
- Create a platform for grantees to interact with First 5 Fresno County staff and other grantees particularly for administrative support (access to forms, submission of reports, etc.)

2. Establish A Strategic Partner Program

There are several Fresno County businesses and organizations that share First 5 Fresno County's mission and vision or target audiences. By partnering with these businesses and organizations, First 5 Fresno County can leverage and maximize diminishing resources used for outreach and parent/public education. Partnerships can also provide First 5 Fresno County the opportunity to "share" in the confidence that parents and caregivers have for trusted organizations. Some examples of partnerships utilized by other First 5 Commissions include:

- An oral health education program aimed at parents co-sponsored by a local toothpaste manufacturer. The commission provides oral health information and access to local resources and the toothpaste company provides marketing resources. Both get the opportunity to reach their respective target audiences
- A literacy campaign that teams First 5 with local booksellers and the county library system
- A newspaper campaign that features columns by local pediatricians co-sponsored by a local grocery chain

3. Focused Public Education & Awareness Campaigns

First 5 Fresno County has already developed and launched a successful outreach campaign, Make the First 5 Years Count, which utilized an extensive media buy in local television and radio. This campaign introduced one particularly memorable element known as the "Ladybug spot." Future campaigns should consider the success of these and other elements. In order to maximize dollars, future campaigns should consider:

- Coordinating Public Education efforts with other high priorities such as the an area within the First 5 Fresno County Policy Agenda or a Program Initiative investment
- Deeply saturate the target population of the campaign with different modalities of information on the selected educational topic (Community Events, Media Buys, "Grassroots" Community Publications, Strategic Partnerships, Website page/s, Collateral Materials)

- Narrowing buys to either radio or television, but not both
- Focusing on one or two stations that scored high in the 2009 Fresno County Public Opinion & Awareness Baseline Survey
- Developing stringent measurement strategies to determine which station(s) offer First 5 Fresno County the most effective use of media resources
- Utilizing media buys only if they are produced with partners
- Identifying lower cost media outlets such as community publications that can reach target audiences
- Narrowing Target Audience focus. For example, instead of reaching out to “Fathers of Children 0-5” it may be more effective to target Hispanic, males, 18-34, who are fluent in both English and Spanish, living in rural zip codes

4. Publish “Branded” Education Information & Materials

First 5 Fresno County has developed and produced several useful collaterals such as brochures and fliers for distribution to parents and caregivers. All materials should be properly branded, which can be facilitated through the development of a Style Guide.

- Create a “First 5 Fresno County Style Guide” that includes items such as primary and secondary fonts, an official color “palette,” and proper logo usage
- The Style Guide should first be introduced to all internal stakeholders to ensure everyone understands its purpose and how to use it
- The Style Guide should be used by all outside contractors that produce materials for First 5 Fresno County, especially designers and advertising agencies
- All printed materials should be “coded” to provide date, audience, producer and other important information. This internal code is used to identify and measure all printed materials

5. Develop Strategic News Media Relationships

The 2009 Fresno County Public Opinion & Awareness Baseline Survey revealed the most popular media outlets in the County for parents of children 0-5. First 5 Fresno County should negotiate partnerships with radio, television and/or newspaper partners to provide content for news programs. Some examples:

- A TV news series focusing on post-partum depression. First 5 Fresno County can provide interview subjects, especially women who have gone through this experience, as well as experts on this subject
- A regular feature on a morning TV or radio show focusing on development issues for

young children. First 5 Fresno County can compile a list of several topics, as well as contacts, research and interview subjects

- A monthly newspaper column written by a local physician or teacher utilizing content provided by First 5 Fresno County, perhaps even authored by staff, focusing on health or development issues
- Partner with a local TV station to co-produce television show that focuses on 0-5 health and development topics

6. Develop a Service Provider Communications Capacity Building Program

First 5 Fresno County staff understands the important role grantees and service providers play regarding parent and community outreach. Grantee and service provider staff are the initial, and sometimes, the only point of contact that parents and the community have with First 5 Fresno County.

- Targeting a smaller number of organizations (5-8) per year to do intensive communications training and capacity building as opposed to less intensive training for all Commission grantees may result in better outcomes.
- The Commission should consider building cohorts of grantees that move through this training and technical assistance. This effort could be coordinated to maximize other Commission program or policy investments. For example, coordinating communications training targeted to grantees providing developmental screenings and assessment services with a public education campaign on developmental milestones that occur in the same fiscal year.

CONCLUSION: EXECUTION OF THE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The 2009-2013 Communications Plan gives direction to First 5 Fresno County staff and the Commission regarding overarching communications goals and strategies utilizing the findings from extensive research including an Audit and a Public Opinion and Baseline Survey. The annually developed Communications Action Plan should be viewed as the Communications Department Work Plan, including staff roles and responsibilities, budget, and timeline. The 2009-2010 Communications Action Plan, which accompanies the Communications Plan, was developed in partnership with First 5 Fresno County staff.

ENDNOTES

¹ California Department of Finance Projections 2006. Available online at: <http://www.dof.ca.gov/Research/Research.php>

² United States Census Bureau 2000

³ Children NOW, 2007 California County Data Book. Available online at: http://publications.childrennow.org/publications/invest/cdb07/databook_2007.cfm

⁴ State of California, Public Records 2007. Available online at: <http://www.dof.ca.gov/Research/Research.php>

⁵ ABC, Fresno County KFSN-TV/DT. May 22, 2007.

⁶ California Health Interview Survey 2005. Available online at: <http://www.chis.ucla.edu/>

⁷ 2005 California Child Care Portfolio, Resource and Referral Network. Available online at: <http://www.rrnetwork.org/publications/2005/2005-portfolio-fresno-data.pdf>

⁸ Children NOW, 2007 California County Data Book. Available online at: http://publications.childrennow.org/publications/invest/cdb07/databook_2007.cfm

⁹ Children NOW, 2007 California County Data Book. Available online at: http://publications.childrennow.org/publications/invest/cdb07/databook_2007.cfm

¹⁰ Children NOW, 2007 California County Data Book. Available online at: http://publications.childrennow.org/publications/invest/cdb07/databook_2007.cfm

¹¹ 2007 California Child Care Portfolio, Resource and Referral Network. Available online at: <http://www.rrnetwork.org/publications/2007/fresno.pdf>

¹² 2007 California Child Care Portfolio, Resource and Referral Network. Available online at: <http://www.rrnetwork.org/publications/2007/fresno.pdf>

¹³ 2005 California Department of Public Health. Available online at: <http://www.dof.ca.gov/Research/Research.php>

¹⁴ 2007 California Child Care Portfolio, Resource and Referral Network. Available online at: <http://www.rrnetwork.org/publications/2007/fresno.pdf>

¹⁵ Children NOW, 2007 California County Data Book. Available online at: http://publications.childrennow.org/publications/invest/cdb07/databook_2007.cfm



First 5 Fresno County

550 East Shaw, Suite 215 Fresno, CA 93710

Phone: (559) 241-6515 Fax: (559) 241-6510