



Mono County Children & Families Commission

STRATEGIC PLAN

An Outcomes Based Accountability Approach to
Support the Healthy Development of Mono County's
Children 0-5 Years of Age

Revised March 2009



Mono County Children & Families Commission

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Executive Summary

The California Children and Families Act (also known as Proposition 10 or “First 5”) was enacted in 1998, increasing taxes on tobacco products in order to provide the funds to create a comprehensive and integrated delivery system of information and services to promote early childhood development from prenatal to age 5. Mono County currently receives approximately \$475,000 a year from these funds, through annual allocations, augmentations for small population counties, and school readiness and child care workforce retention incentive matching funds. In order to access these monies, the county must adopt a strategic plan that shows how Proposition 10 funding will be used to promote a comprehensive and integrated system of early childhood development services.

The Mono County Children and Families Commission (referred to as simply “the Commission” throughout) was created in 1999 to evaluate the current and projected needs of young children and their families, develop a strategic plan that describes how the community needs will be addressed, determine how to expend local First 5 resources, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and activities funded in accordance with the strategic plan. The **mission of the Commission** is:

The Mono County Children and Families Commission provides leadership for a network of support for all children, from the prenatal stage through age five, and their families, developed and operated in partnership with communities and families and accountable to them for improving outcomes in children's health, safety and learning.

The **vision of the kind of future** the Commission is working to create is:

All Mono County children will thrive in supportive, nurturing and loving environments, enter school healthy and ready to learn, and make a positive contribution to society.

In order to fulfill its vision and mission despite relatively limited resources, the Commission has adopted a strategic, targeted approach to using First 5 funds.

The starting point of the 2009 strategic plan revision was to reassess current community needs and resources. The Commission conducted open discussions/public hearings to obtain input on current community needs, including emerging priorities and new

opportunities for serving children ages 0-5 and their families. In addition, First 5-funded programs (e.g. First 5 Home Visiting, School Readiness, Family Child Care Trainer, and CARES) collected needs assessment data from the clients they served over the past four years, and reported this data to the Commission via quarterly reports. Over the past six years, a number of agencies have performed studies on issues facing young children and their families: Mono County Health Department, Mono County Office of Education, and Mono County Child Care Council. The Commission based its previous update, as well as much of the current one, on the above listed assessments of community needs.

Based on the findings of these assessment efforts, the Commission refined its previous goal to reflect its future direction. The Commission's one overarching goal is:

**Enhance the network of support services for families with children
ages 0 to 5 years.**

As a part of this 2009 Strategic Plan revision, the following two strategic results areas were adopted as the top priorities for First 5 Mono County:

1. Mono County children 0-5 are educated to their greatest potential.
2. All Mono County children 0-5 are healthy.

These result areas were identified as the best opportunities to improve the health, development, and well being of young children in Mono County. Parents, teachers, early care and education professionals, and health and human service providers gave input regarding which issues are the most important. Three public meetings were held by the Commission to discuss the options and make decisions about the priorities for First 5 Mono County and the strategies that will be used to achieve the desired results.

Two primary types of strategies will be used to make a measurable positive impact in the two priority areas of early care and education and children's health. The first type consists of integrated strategies that will make a difference in multiple priority areas. The integrated strategies that will be used are:

- *Home visiting services* whereby all families of newborns in Mono County will be given the opportunity to receive at least one visit from a paraprofessional working together with health and social service professionals, bringing information and services directly to the homes of families with young children. The purpose of the visit will be to provide information and support on topics linked to the top priority areas such as child development, optimal oral health practices, optimal nutrition including breastfeeding, selection of quality child care settings, and the establishment of linkages for the child and family to available and appropriate services and supports.
- *School readiness* programs are partnerships between schools, early care and education providers, health services, parenting and family support services, Commission-run school

readiness services, and other services to better prepare children to enter Kindergarten ready to learn. In order to strengthen the system of services available to families, current efforts will be enhanced and expanded to support a culturally competent network of health, social, early care and education service providers *countywide* to improve school readiness of young children. This is accomplished through coordination, information sharing, outreach, quality improvement, early literacy, education, and parent support.

These programs use special funding from the First 5 California Commission, whose guidelines were used to select the communities served by the Mammoth Elementary School, and later the Edna Beaman Elementary School in Benton, as the locations for school readiness programs. Building on these successes, the Commission will extend certain core school readiness programming to the schools and communities in the northern part of the county in an effort to ensure that all children in the county have access to these services. These communities, served by the Eastern Sierra Unified School District, include Lee Vining, Bridgeport, Coleville/Walker, Topaz, and the US Marine Corp. Mountain Warfare Training Center.

The other set of strategies are targeted strategies intended to address a specific issue. Early care and education will be enhanced by continuing to provide targeted training and support to formal and informal child care providers, and building public/private partnerships to address the lack of child care spaces throughout the county. To improve the oral health of young children, First 5 will seek to increase the capacity of dental services, link oral health with existing health and social services, and educate the public about oral health in the early years of life.

Through evaluation and monitoring of all Commission-funded program activities, the Commission will continue to gather additional information on the service needs of families of young children in Mono County as well as the most significant gaps between family needs and available services.

Based on the additional data gathered on service needs and current gaps in services, direct funding and other resources will continue to be targeted to improve or enhance access to referable services and to fill gaps in the existing network of support and services.

Essential elements of programs funded or promoted through this plan are:

- In-home services are family-centered.
- Effective referral of families to available services and follow-through on referrals.
- Multi-disciplinary approach that includes education, health, social work, mental health, and tobacco, alcohol and other drug use prevention and treatment.
- Multi-linguistic and culturally competent approach.
- Emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

- Emphasis on improving coordination and service integration.

Other key implications of the strategic plan revision are:

- ❖ The Commission will expect a high level of accountability from its funded projects, with strong demonstration of its outcomes and strong linkage to its goals. The Commission will take the lead, in partnership with its grantees, in program evaluation design and implementation.
- ❖ Over the next five years, the Commission will dedicate funds according to the following *estimated* guidelines: home visiting services – 24%, school readiness programming – 30%, north county school readiness – 6%, oral health – 4%, and child care quality and availability – 9%.
- ❖ The Commission will invest in an effective operating structure as needed to implement the evaluation, fiscal, and other requirements of the plan, as well as to assure quality service delivery among externally-funded and Commission-run programs. Operations may include using resources to advocate for a stronger network of support in Mono County, involving activities both inside and outside of the county.

As of July 1, 2008, the First 5 Mono County trust fund had a net fund balance of \$522,522. Approximately \$677,563 has already been committed to programs and services for children and families in the fiscal year 7/1/2008 – 6/30/2009 and beyond.

A five-year financial forecast has been developed to help manage resources effectively and is updated annually or more often to reflect changes made in revenue projections and associated allocations at the State level. Several factors may affect Prop. 10 revenues at the local level over the coming years:

- Legislation pending at the State level may affect future Prop. 10 revenues following the May 19, 2009 California State election,
- The amount of Prop 10 money coming to Mono County may drop significantly starting July 1, 2011 because special funding support to small population counties provided by First 5 California may end,
- Matching funds provided to Mono County by First 5 California will end. School Readiness Initiative funds will expire at the end of FY 2010-2011, and CARES funding will expire on December 31, 2009. The outcome of the May 2009 election may affect these funds even earlier.

The projected drop in Prop 10 money coming into Mono County means that special actions are needed to provide sustainable funding for programs, services and projects that are newly launched or maintained because of this strategic plan update. Therefore, in August of 2008 the Commission established a policy to set a minimum fund balance of no less than

one year's current revenue (\$315,000), thus allowing the commission to sustain program operations, or close them out should the need arise.

First 5 Mono County will continue to pursue partnerships with other community and state-based organizations to attract new sources of funding for children and family services, to leverage funds in order to get as much value as possible from available resources, and to sustain services that are initially launched with Prop 10 funding, to the extent feasible.

Background

Proposition 10 – The Children and Families Act of 1998

In November 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10, the "Children and Families Act of 1998" initiative, which then became effective on January 1, 1999. The act levies a tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products in order to provide funding for early childhood development programs. The ultimate goal is to enhance the early growth experiences of children, enabling them to be more successful in school and ultimately to give them an equal opportunity to succeed in life. Revenues generated from the tobacco tax are used for the following purposes:

- To create a comprehensive and integrated delivery system of information and services to promote early childhood development;
- Provide funds to supplement existing community services or to establish new services that focus on parenting education, child health and wellness, early child care and education, and family support; and
- Educate Californians via a statewide multimedia campaign on the importance of early childhood development and smoking cessation.

Tobacco tax revenues are accumulated in a designated trust fund to meet the needs of children ages prenatal to 5 throughout the state. 80% of these funds are then allocated to the 58 counties of the state according to the live birth rate of each county. The remaining 20% of the money is directed to statewide programs, research, and media campaigns.

Proposition 10 is premised on new information about brain development. Young children learn and grow because of the key role their parents or caregivers play in their development. Although a wide range of individuals and institutions impact the health and well being of young children, the role of parents is paramount. Parenting is much more important between the ages of birth to five than we once believed. By providing children with safe, nurturing and stimulating environments, parents and caregivers influence long-term growth and development during these important early years.

Mono County Children and Families Commission Roles

The Mono County Children and Families Commission was created in 1999 by the Mono County Board of Supervisors, according to provisions of the Children and Families Act of 1998, to carry out the work of Proposition 10 in the county. The Commission serves several vital roles in improving conditions for young children and their families.

- ❖ The Commission provides leadership to raise the community's awareness of the importance of early childhood development, create clarity about the most critical results to seek for children age 0-5, and define how those results can be achieved.
- ❖ The Commission serves as a facilitator and catalyst in several ways – for acquiring and managing resources, building and strengthening partnerships that support children and families, and establishing effective programs to serve children and families.
- ❖ Advocacy at the state level is another role of the Commission. In order to promote state level policies that assist young children and their families and are able to benefit Mono County, the Commission must monitor and periodically speak out on legislation, initiatives of the California Children and Families Commission (the State Commission), and regulations and policies of other state agencies.
- ❖ Lastly, the Commission is a funder of programs, services and projects that are consistent with this strategic plan and the requirements of Proposition 10. More broadly, the Commission provides stewardship over the use of First 5 resources within Mono County.

Guiding Principles

The Commission intends to utilize the following guiding principles as underlying values evident in all of its efforts, whether through its leadership, policy development, grant making, contracts management, administrative activities, and program operations:

- ❖ Ensure full participation by all sectors and residents of Mono County through a county-wide, inclusive, open and responsive, customer-service oriented approach that is holistic, family-centered, culturally relevant, strengths based, incorporates community assets, and reaches out to all populations, including children with special needs.
- ❖ Optimize the Proposition 10 funds – achieve the most good for the most kids -- in Mono County through a customized, relevant, locally-driven approach that includes effective partnerships with the community and public and private organizations, leverages funding to maximize effectiveness of funds, and promotes sustainability of programs and efforts.
- ❖ Assure full accountability in all Commission endeavors via effective fiscal management and evaluation activities, applied to Commission activities and its funded programs.
- ❖ Maximize program flexibility and creativity, both with Commission activities and funded programs.

- ❖ Actively foster coordination and partnerships within service providers in Mono County through Commission efforts and program funding.
- ❖ Promote excellence in service delivery to children and families through provision and funding of high quality services that implement best practices in their approach and are strengths-based, holistic and family-centered, culturally relevant, and reaches out to all children and families in the county, particularly those with special needs.

Implementation of Prop 10 (First 5) in Mono County

This plan is the third major update to the strategic plan adopted by the Commission in 2000 and reflects the changing conditions in Mono County since inception of Proposition 10. Ten years of experience now exist with implementing Proposition 10 in Mono County. Key milestones are listed below.

- ❖ The period from mid-1999 to mid- 2000 was spent developing the initial strategic plan. An inclusive planning process was followed, using findings from various assessments of community needs that included interviews with over 100 community members, together with input from many of the existing committees and collaborations working on children and family issues. The first plan contained nine objectives within three overall focus areas of Improved Family Functioning, Improved Child Development, and Improved Child Health. The 2005 plan revision contained one overarching goal and 27 result and activity indicators.
- ❖ More than \$3.5 million in funding for programs and services to assist children and families has been dispersed. Programs were funded to conduct home visits that offer assistance to parents of all newborns in Mono County, train family child care providers, provide incentives to increase the training and retention of child care workers, provide targeted parent support and health education to Latino families, screen newborns for hearing problems, improve oral health access and education, offer free or reduced cost car seats to families that could not otherwise afford them, provide breast pumps for nursing mothers, and educational puppet shows for preschool children.
- ❖ Numerous state level changes have provided extra funding to Mono County over the past six years. The county received only \$200,000 per year of total funding for First 5 activities when the initial strategic plan was adopted. This has since been augmented with over \$115,000 of annual operational support funding, extra state funds to match local investments in child care worker training and retention, and a statewide School Readiness Initiative (approximately \$125,000 per year for four years).
- ❖ In July 2007, the Commission launched a second, four-year cycle of School Readiness programming. Cycle 2 matching funds from the First 5 California Commission

allowed the Commission to continue to focus on children and families served through the Mammoth Unified School District, and to include the Edna Beaman Elementary School District as well. The School Readiness program brings culturally relevant public education, pre-literacy, family support and education, and transition to school programming for young children attending Mammoth and Edna Beaman Elementary Schools, and serves as a model for the rest of the county.

Process for Revising the Strategic Plan

The strategic plan itself is a requirement of state law under California Health and Safety Code Section 130140. More than that, however, it is a blueprint for the continued implementation of First 5 in Mono County through a coordinated effort of service providers, funding sources, and other community resources.

The Commission participated in an extensive planning process in fiscal year 2004-05 to revise the strategic plan and future funding allocations. They developed and approved a financial plan, conducted in-depth community assessment data, considered input from community service providers (including those serving on the Commission), and developed a five-year funding strategy. Much of the community assessment data is still relevant and is included in this plan revision.

Valuable experience has been gained from First 5-sponsored programs like the First 5 Home Visiting Program, School Readiness Initiative, and CARES/Family Child Care Trainer Programs. Conditions are different today than when the plan was revised in 2005. It has become clear that First 5 funds are no longer sufficient to measurably impact all 27 result and activity indicators contained in the 2005 strategic plan revision.

In preparing for the third strategic plan revision, the Commission considered:

1. Program outcomes and on-going service demand for currently funded programs;
2. Information provided on the emergence of new priorities and opportunities, through discussion with community members, grantees, and Commissioners;
3. Capacity for sustained funding in light of limited and diminishing resources.

The Commission's investments over the past ten years focused on creating a better system of early childhood development and family support services. The intent is to improve the effectiveness of all existing services by improving how families are linked to services and how services are linked to each other. As a stronger service delivery system has emerged, targeted investments can now be made to fill major gaps in services based on objective data collected over the years.

A thorough process was conducted from October 2008 to March 2009 to revise the strategic plan. The steps in the process were:

1. **Gather updated information on community needs.** An effort was made to get current, reliable information about the health and well being of young children and their families. This effort included seeking information on gaps in existing services for children and families, and challenges faced by families in trying to access existing services. The home visiting and school readiness programs were used as vehicles to gather additional information on the service needs of families of young children in Mono County. Data obtained through "hands on" work with families was analyzed to more clearly identify gaps in services. Information was also obtained through analysis

of data about Mono County from public sources such as the California Department of Health Services, Children Now, and the California Department of Education. As anticipated, this strategic plan is being updated to reflect planned actions to address the gaps.

2. **Obtain public input on priorities.** Outreach was conducted to get input from parents, teachers, early care and education professionals, and health and human service providers regarding which issues are the most important. Public input was obtained in two ways. First, two public hearings were conducted by the Commission (one in Lee Vining and one in Mammoth) asking participants to learn about program outcomes from the previous fiscal year and comment on any new priorities or emerging issues. Second, members of the public were invited to submit ideas to the Commission in person or in writing. Letters and comments were summarized into one document and provided for public review and further comment. Findings are summarized in Appendix 1 of this document.
3. **Select top priority results to be achieved.** After collecting public comment as described above, the Commission held a planning retreat to review the feedback from the public input process, evaluate the potential strategic results that First 5 Mono could focus on, and make decisions about which of those potential issues should be targeted as the top priority results to be achieved. The priorities adopted at the meeting are the strategic results described in the “Results to Achieve for Children and Families” section of this plan.
4. **Define strategies.** The Commission considered existing and new potential strategies or courses of action that have been proven in our communities and other communities to be effective in achieving results within the priority areas selected by the Commission. They discussed what options would work best in Mono County and selected the specific strategies to be used to achieve the desired results. Choices made at this meeting are shown in the “Strategies for Achieving Results” section of the plan.
5. **Revise the fiscal plan.** The Commission’s five-year financial plan was revised to show how diminished First 5 resources could be invested in achieving results for children while also meeting all of the mandates imposed on the Commission by state law, and how funding for programs and services could be sustained long enough to continue to have a measurable impact on children and families. The “Resource Allocation” section of the plan contains the information and decisions produced from this step.
6. **Obtain public input on the complete strategic plan.** Once the entire strategic plan was drafted and reviewed by the Commission, it was released for public input. A public hearing was then held to review public input.

This document summarizes the key findings and decisions that resulted from the planning process.

Community Needs and Resources

Mono County's birth rate, while small, has increased over the last 9 years, with 161 births reported in 2007.

The following general findings provide the most significant relevance to Mono County's young children and their families, and therefore the First 5 Mono County's planning efforts:

- ❖ The Commission and partners have made significant investments to improve coordination of community services over the past ten years. The home visiting services funded through the Commission have facilitated improvements in information-sharing and co-case management among partner agencies; they have also improved resource linkages for participating families to available community services. The First 5 School Readiness partners also work to improve interagency communication and program coordination.
- ❖ With the continued high number of births to Latino mothers (47% of births in 2007), improved outreach and culturally and linguistically relevant and appropriate services continue to be important.
- ❖ On the whole, young children and their families appear to be fairing well in Mono County (based on a review of child indicators released through publicly accessible population-based data compilations, such as the 2007 Children Now County Data Book). The Commission's grant-funded programs have revealed that the most critical un-met needs faced by local families and children are high-quality early care and education, early learning opportunities with parents and children together, prenatal women and children's oral health, and affordable housing. The importance of addressing nutrition and obesity prevention behaviors is also an emerging need.
- ❖ Local resources are insufficient to tackle problems in a fragmented manner. Rather than trying to target individual issues like child abuse and parenting support, an integrated approach is needed that can simultaneously address multiple support needs of families and strengthen the service delivery system through better coordination of services and by breaking down barriers that families face in attempting to access services.
- ❖ Pediatricians and other providers in Mono County report seeing an increase in the number and severity of early childhood dental caries. Statewide and nationally, dental caries continues to be the most common chronic disease of childhood, occurring nearly five to eight times more frequently than asthma, the second most prevalent chronic disease in children. Virtually all of these dental problems are preventable. Untreated dental caries can lead to severe toothaches, destruction of bone, and spread of infection via the bloodstream. They can also affect a child's eating habits and nutrition. The pain and infection caused by dental caries can lead

to problems in speaking and attention in school. Other studies have shown that chronic dental problems in children can adversely affect self-image, school attendance, and school performance.

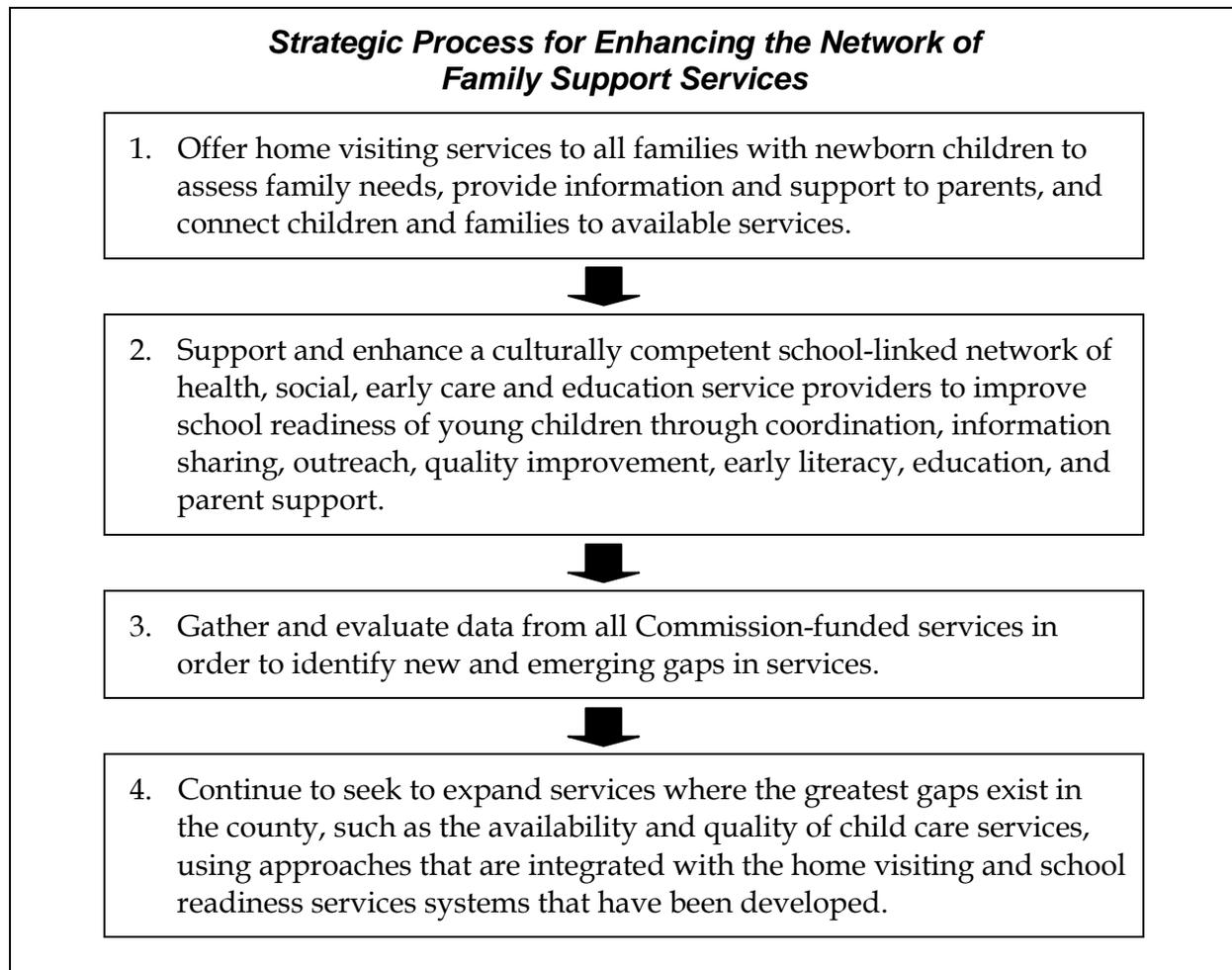
These findings provide the basis for the strategic plan for early childhood development support services in Mono County.

Results to Achieve for Children and Families

For First 5 to have a lasting effect on the well being of children in Mono County, a concentrated effort must be made over multiple years. It is necessary to focus resources in a consistent way and give that direction enough time to really have an impact. The planning process provided clear direction regarding how First 5, working together with many partners throughout the county, could make the greatest difference in realizing the Commission's vision that *all Mono County children will thrive in supportive, nurturing and loving environments, enter school healthy and ready to learn, and make a positive contribution to society*. The following two strategic results areas have been adopted as the top priorities for First 5 Mono County:

1. Mono County children 0-5 are educated to their greatest potential.
2. All Mono County children 0-5 are healthy.

The Commission is committed to one overarching goal: to **enhance the network of support services for families with children ages 0 to 5 years**. This goal is relevant to Commission efforts and is the priority outcome to be examined through annual strategic plan reviews. A systematic approach will be used to achieve this goal, with four main steps of equal value.



1. Offer home visiting services to all families with newborn children to assess family needs, provide information and support to parents, and connect children and families to available services.

Continue to offer home visiting services whereby all families of newborns in Mono County will be given the opportunity to receive at least one visit from a paraprofessional working together with health and social service professionals, bringing information and services directly to the homes of families with young children. The purpose of the visit will be to provide information and support on topics linked to the top priority areas such as child development, optimal oral health practices, optimal nutrition including breastfeeding, selection of quality child care settings, and the establishment of linkages for the child and family to available and appropriate services and supports.

The primary objectives of the home visiting services are:

- Provide information and support on child development, optimal oral health practices, optimal nutrition including breastfeeding, selection of quality child care settings, and other topics relevant to families with newborns.
- Link families to community services designed to support the healthy development of families with young children, and assist them in overcoming barriers to accessing those services and supports.
- Begin to overcome the sense of isolation and lack of connectedness to the community that is felt by many families in Mono County.
- Establishment of strong referral linkages and follow-through on referrals so that there is certainty that each family has been connected to the most appropriate services and supports that are available.
- A multi-disciplinary approach will be used that includes education, physical and mental health, social work, and tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use prevention and treatment.
- All services must be multi-linguistic and culturally competent.
- All families of newborns will be given a Kit for New Parents, which covers step-by-step advice for new parents with advice for all stages of development, from pregnancy to age five.
- The home visits are expected to provide education and support on topics linked to the top priority areas, including but not limited to oral health, understanding of child development stages, positive discipline, the importance of reading to young children, selection of quality child care settings, and other positive parenting skills.

2. Support and enhance a culturally competent school-linked network of health, social, early care and education service providers to improve school readiness of young children through coordination, information sharing, outreach, quality improvement, early literacy, education, and parent support.

The School Readiness program brings culturally relevant public education, pre-literacy, family support and education, and transition to school programming, and other services to better prepare children to enter Kindergarten ready to learn. In order to strengthen the system of services available to families, current efforts will be enhanced and expanded to support a culturally competent network of health, social, early care and education service providers countywide to improve school readiness of young children. This is accomplished through coordination, information sharing, outreach, quality improvement, early literacy, education, and parent support.

These programs use special funding from the First 5 California Commission, whose guidelines were used to select the communities served by the Mammoth Elementary School, and later the Edna Beaman Elementary School in Benton, as the locations for school readiness programs. In these communities, school readiness programs have become a platform for addressing the top priority results described in this plan while also achieving other positive results such as improved academic performance of children in Kindergarten and beyond. Building on these successes, the Commission will extend certain core school readiness programming to the schools and communities in the northern part of the county in an effort to ensure that all children in the county have access to these services. These communities, served by the Eastern Sierra Unified School District, include Lee Vining, Bridgeport, Coleville/Walker, Topaz, and the US Marine Corp. Mountain Warfare Training Center.

Research results and experience from other counties clearly shows that home visiting services are more effective when they are provided in coordination with, and linked to, community supports and services. Key themes running through the Mono County School Readiness Program are outreach and communication. Major emphasis is placed on utilizing and strengthening programs and relationships that currently reach out effectively to underserved communities and groups (primarily Latino families and families with children not served through existing early care and education resources).

The objectives of the school readiness services are:

- Improve the accessibility and coordination of available services for children age 0-5 and their families.
- Enhance the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children so they are ready to succeed in school when they reach the elementary grades.
- Enhance the schools' readiness for children by creating a smoother transition between home and school and greater continuity between early care and education programs and elementary grades.

3. Gather and evaluate data from all Commission-funded services in order to identify new and emerging gaps in services.

Commission-funded programs will continue to be used as the primary vehicles to gather additional information on the service needs of families with young children in Mono County. As data are obtained through the “hands on” work with families, the data will be analyzed to identify gaps in services and what families really want and need. This strategic plan will continue to be updated to reflect planned actions to address the gaps.

4. Continue to seek to expand services where the greatest gaps exist, using approaches that are integrated with the home visiting and school-linked service systems that have been developed.

Based on the additional data gathered on service needs and current gaps in services, direct funding and other resources will be targeted to improving or enhancing access to referable services and fill gaps in the existing network of support and services.

Strategies include:

Child Care Quality and Availability

Through analysis of current needs, it is apparent that child care quality and availability remain significant problems for parents of young children in Mono County. The lack of child care also serves as a barrier to generating income and allowing parents to work outside of the home.

Through their work with partners such as the Inyo Mono Advocates for Community Action, the Mono County Child Care Council, and Commission-run School Readiness Program, the Commission will continue to fund programs to increase the quality of child care settings, including the recruitment and training of new providers.

The Commission will also continue to provide leadership and facilitation services to public-private partners working to address the critical need for additional child care spaces. Strategies include continuing to commit resources to seek grant funding to assist with community planning and development efforts, such as the Community Development Block Grant Program. Work to inform policymaking at the town and county government level regarding child care friendly policies and partnerships will also continue.

Oral health

1. Increase service capacity for prevention, detection and treatment of dental caries.

More trained people are needed in Mono County to do basic oral exams of young children, provide preventive care such as fluoride varnishes, detect more serious dental problems, and treat those problems. This strategy therefore emphasizes recruitment

and, where necessary, training of professionals and paraprofessionals to offer a continuum of oral health services.

Another aspect of this strategy is to evaluate other methods of increasing access to oral health services that do not depend on securing more dentists. Options that will be considered include training of paraprofessionals to conduct basic oral screenings, and use of mobile dental vans to provide screening and preventive care services around the county.

2. Link oral health with existing services. This strategy calls for adding an oral health component to services already being delivered. For example, oral health risk assessments and targeted counseling can occur during well-child visits. Mother/caretaker oral health information and anticipatory guidance can be provided during prenatal visits. Instruction on fluoride varnish application and health promotion of other topics related to oral health (e.g., nutrition) can be provided to pediatricians and other paraprofessionals. The goal is to educate both parents and providers about the importance of early childhood oral health, and link families to available services.

- Training and informational materials must be delivered to existing service providers to increase their awareness of the importance of oral health for young children and to seek their involvement in delivering information to parents.
- Physicians, nurses, WIC, Head Start and other early care and education programs, prenatal care and birthing programs, and formal and informal child care providers can be targeted with this outreach.

3. Educate service providers and the public about oral health for young children. Various forms of media and outreach can be used to increase public awareness of proper oral hygiene for young children and specific actions that parents can take to prevent dental caries for their children, such as limiting exposure to sugary liquids like milk and juice in baby bottles.

- The bulk of the education of parents about oral health issues is expected to occur through the preceding strategy to link oral health with existing services, school readiness services, and home visits. The Commission will assess the effectiveness of these actions to determine if extra investments are needed in public education related to oral health issues.

Nutrition and Obesity Prevention

Childhood obesity is a problem of epidemic proportions. The prevalence of obesity among children ages two to five in the United States has more than doubled to 14% in the past 20 years and the rate is even higher (and growing more quickly) for low income children. California's young children are disproportionately low income, and, as a result, they, and their families, represent an important target audience for education about childhood obesity, healthy eating, and the importance of regular physical activity.

While we're not able to gather specific data related to obesity in the 0-5 population in Mono County, we know that Statewide, one in three children is overweight or obese. Body mass index screening results data collected in 2006 on Mono County school children grades K-12 confirm this statistic; close to one in three students were at-risk of being overweight or overweight (obese). Rather than funding a specific initiative, the Commission will interweave education about the risks and consequences of childhood obesity and the importance of healthy eating and regular physical activity into all of the work they do with children and families.

The Mono County Public Health Department is planning to create a Mono County Health Taskforce in 2009 to address issues of community health, including nutrition/breastfeeding and oral health. The taskforce will help to inform the Commission's work, including determining which strategies may best address the needs within each community.

The stepwise approach described here is believed to be the best use of First 5 resources in Mono County for the following reasons:

- ❖ It is a family-centered, community-oriented approach. Services are tailored around the needs and strengths of families, starting from birth with home visiting and school readiness services.
- ❖ The approach emphasizes partnerships with schools, town and county government, Mammoth Hospital, private-practice medical and dental providers, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, and other organizations, seeking to build on, coordinate, and strengthen existing services.
- ❖ The investments focus on creating a better system of early childhood development and family support services. The intent is to improve the effectiveness of all existing services by improving how families are linked to services and how services are linked to each other.
- ❖ In partnership with other organizations that provide services to young children, prevention and early intervention is emphasized, again starting at birth rather than waiting for acute problems to emerge.
- ❖ Investing in a systematic approach over multiple years, giving it the time needed to be developed effectively and to produce results, is much more likely to have a lasting, positive impact on the community than funding a series of disconnected programs on an annual basis, with programs coming and going from year to year.

Evaluation of Results

The First 5 Mono County Commission recognizes that evaluation is an important part of the effort to develop programs that work and are cost effective. In the context of this strategic plan, evaluation refers to the process and methods by which the Commission and community stakeholders can assess the degree of progress made toward achieving the goals and objectives described in this plan as well as assess the effectiveness of funding allocation decisions. A formal evaluation process and written report must be completed at least once each year in compliance with state law.

An “**indicator**” is defined as a specific process or performance measure – a statistic – that can be used to determine whether one or more goal(s), objective(s), or outcome(s) are being achieved. Indicators are a vital part of the evaluation process. Two types of indicators are utilized. *Result indicators* are the measurements that will be used to determine the extent to which the ultimate results or outcomes sought for children and families are being achieved. *Activity indicators* are measures that show the extent to which the shorter-term strategic objectives are being successfully impacted. Indicators that apply to the two result areas are outlined below, and are indicated as by (R) Result Indicator, or (A) Activity Indicator.

A. Result Area (Outcome): *Mono County children 0-5 are educated to their greatest potential.*

1. Family Education

- a. % of parents and other family members improving in knowledge about child development. (R)

2. Caregiver Education

- b. % of children served in home child care settings that exhibit moderate to high quality as measured by a quality index. (R)
- c. % of licensed child care providers in Mono County advancing on the Child Development Permit Matrix. (R)

3. Early Learning

- d. % of children served in child care centers that exhibit moderate to high quality as measured by a quality index. (R)
- e. % of licensed center and family child care spaces per 100 children. (R)

4. School Readiness

- f. % of entering Kindergarteners assessed for school readiness prior to entry. (A)
- g. % of children “ready for school” upon entering Kindergarten. (R)
- h. % of children receiving Kindergarten transition support (A)
- i. % of children who have ever attended a preschool, Pre-K, or Head Start program by the time of Kindergarten entry. (R)

B. Result Area (Outcome): *All Mono County children 0-5 are healthy.*

1. Physical Health

Optimal Nutrition

- a. % of children where breastfeeding is successfully initiated and sustained. (R)
- b. % of children 0 to 5 years of age who are in the expected range of weight for their height and age, or BMI. (R)

Oral Health

- c. % of children who regularly access preventive dental care. (R)
- d. % of children at Kindergarten entry with untreated dental problems. (R)
- e. % of prenatal women who receive dental hygiene education. (A)
- f. % of children ages 1 or older who receive annual dental screenings. (R)

2. Emotional Health

- g. Number of families provided with information about appropriate community services. (A)

The Commission will expect great accountability from its funded projects, with strong demonstration of outcomes and linkage to Commission goals. The Commission will take the lead, in partnership with its grantees, in program evaluation design and implementation.

In addition, the Commission will continue to include the following elements in its approach to evaluation of funded programs and Commission activities:

- Maintenance of a system within the appropriate agencies or contractors to collect data specified as indicators within the strategic plan.
- Alignment of evaluation with the goals, outcomes, strategies and indicators outlined in the strategic plan.
- Incorporation of program evaluation into overall program implementation.
- Training of staff in data collection procedures.
- Coordination and integration between evaluation and service delivery components through ongoing communication and information sharing between evaluation staff and key program personnel.
- Coordination with State Commission on evaluation procedures and indicators across participating counties.

In addition to quantitative data, the Commission collects information from programs and participants supporting process evaluation and qualitative data on topics such as successes, and unanticipated barriers and challenges. To implement an effective evaluation framework, the Commission implements outcomes-based contracts and may purchase professional evaluation support. Evaluation resources and technical assistance funded by First 5 California is also utilized where appropriate.

Resource Allocation

Resource Allocation Guidelines

As of July 1, 2008, the First 5 Mono County Children and Families trust fund had a net fund balance of \$522,522. All of these funds have already been committed to programs and services for children and families in the fiscal year 2008-09 and beyond. The challenge becomes how to manage the remaining resources, and new funds allocated to Mono County through the Prop 10 system, in a way that allows the strategies described in this plan to be successfully implemented and then sustained for a long enough period of time to allow measurable improvements in the well-being of young children. This is especially difficult in light of the current national economic downturn and the California State budget crisis, which places additional demands on Prop 10 funding by legislators and others looking for ways to fix the state budget crisis.

The State Commission has been providing an annual augmentation to support small county operations, which has allowed the Commission to free up tax revenues for programs. The rationale for this allocation was to address the administrative burden on small counties, who must use a proportionately greater share of their tax revenues to provide basic operations, including administrative services, planning, outreach, and evaluation. Currently, First 5 Mono County receives a guaranteed minimum allocation of \$200,000 per year regardless of the county's birth rate, plus an additional \$115,000 in support for operations costs. Mono County is eligible for \$115,000/year through FY 2008-2009, which constitutes 37% of the Commission's revenue.

The State Commission has committed to continuing these augmentations, at some level, through FY 2010-2011 for eligible counties. Starting with FY 2009-2010, First 5 California will identify a new funding model for small population county augmentations. The implementation of an updated funding model may result in a reduction of the number of counties who are eligible, or may result in a reduction in the amount of funding small population counties currently receive, or both. However, with no information available, the administrative augmentation revenue remains at the original forecast. This assumption is based upon the history of State Commission support for small county augmentations.

The Commission's fund balance on July 1, 2005 was \$687,214. The fund balance on July 1, 2009 is projected to be \$377,159. The potential drop in Prop 10 augmentation revenues coming into Mono County, and the decrease in fund balance, means that special actions are needed to provide sustainable funding for programs, services and projects that are newly launched or maintained because of this strategic plan update. Therefore, in August of 2008 the Commission established a policy to set a minimum fund balance of no less than one year's current revenue (\$315,000), thus allowing the commission to sustain program operations or close them out, should it be necessary.

In addition, the Commission will also continue to seek partnerships with other local agencies in order to work collaboratively on fiscal matters. The Commission will prioritize funding programs that are able to leverage Commission funding to draw resources from

other sources (such as local government, federal Medicaid and Targeted Case Management, State Commission or other state funds). The Commission will encourage and assist programs in seeking funding from other sources to assure sustainability. Finally, the Commission will seek funds from additional sources (aside from Proposition 10 revenues) to sustain the activities in its strategic plan.

The Commission has made significant, successful investments in home visiting and school readiness services. In order to preserve and enhance their investment in existing infrastructure, the Commission does not anticipate issuing new general Requests for Applications (RFAs). Rather, funds have been allocated below to refine and continue these existing strategies, as well as establish new services that address gaps identified through data gathered from the home visiting and school-linked service systems.

In compliance with state law, First 5 monies will be used only to supplement existing levels of service and/or create new services, and not to fund existing levels of service. No monies from the Children and Families Trust Fund will be used to supplant state or local General Fund money for any purpose. During the next five years (beginning in July 2009), the Commission will dedicate funds aligning with the objectives of this strategic plan, using the following estimated guidelines:

Strategic Objective	5-Year Investment	Percent of 5-year Investment
1. Home visiting services	\$469,715 (approx. \$100,000 per year)	24%
2. School readiness services	\$592,929 (variable investment, plus \$31,684 in carry-forward)	30%
3. Child Care Quality	\$ 149,593 (variable investment each year)	8%
4. Child Care Availability	\$22,460 (variable investment each year, some may be one-time only)	1%
Expansion of Services to Address Gaps		
5. North County School Readiness	\$118,828 (approx. \$25,000 per year)	6%
6. Oral health services	\$70,737 (variable investment each year, some may be one-time only)	4%
7. Commission Operations/Support* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative costs – not to exceed 20% of total operations budget • Program – varies, approximately 7% annually • Evaluation – varies, approximately 3% annually 	\$547,147 (approx. \$115,000 or less/year)	28%
*Commission Operations/Support costs are categorized as Administrative, Program, and Evaluation Costs, consistent with the definition of these functions as defined in the First 5 Financial Management Guide. The percent of administrative costs that may be spent on administrative functions in a fiscal year shall be no more than 20% of the Mono Commission’s total operating budget.		
Total	\$1,971,409	

Financial Position

Over time, as tobacco use decreases, tobacco tax revenues and Proposition 10 funding may also decline. The Commission will prioritize funding programs that are able to leverage Commission funding to draw resources from other sources (such as local government, state Commission or other state funds). The Commission will encourage and assist programs in seeking funding from other sources to assure sustainability. Finally, the Commission will seek funds from additional sources (aside from Proposition 10 revenues) to sustain the activities in its strategic plan.

Commission Operations

Implementation of this plan will require solid Commission staffing to provide a strong operating structure in order to fulfill each of the following responsibilities:

- Planning - manage annual updates to the strategic plan, including developing and monitoring the annual fiscal budget.
- Fund allocation - organizing and conducting processes to solicit partners to implement elements of the strategic plan.
- Contract management - development, execution and monitoring of contracts with organizations selected to receive First 5 money through a fund allocation process.
- Quality service delivery - provide coaching and technical assistance to First 5 grantees to assure high quality programming with First 5 funds.
- Evaluation - management of local evaluation of funded programs and Commission activities and monitoring progress and data on indicators and goals in the strategic plan.
- Advocacy - efforts to advocate for a stronger network of support for early childhood development issues in Mono County, involving activities both inside and outside of the county.
- Public and provider relations - educating the public about the work of First 5 and the importance of the first years of life, maintaining positive relations with funded organizations and other community based organizations, and assisting service providers as needed with outreach efforts to increase awareness and participation in funded programs.
- Collaboration and service integration - provide leadership within the community to promote coordinated planning, service delivery, information sharing, and other initiatives with and among providers of early childhood development and family support services.
- Sustainability - ensure sustainability of program services by leveraging funds with other sources.

- Fiscal management – tracking the timely receipt of First 5 funds from the state, monitoring investment income, authorizing and processing expenditures, and monthly financial status reporting.
- Statutory compliance – preparing annual audits and reports required by state law, adhering to laws governing public meetings, and ensuring compliance with all other provisions of applicable local, state and federal laws.
- Administrative support – support for public meetings held by Commission and general administrative duties.

The Commission will maintain a staff sufficient to fully implement its strategic plan and approved priorities, and adhere to statutorily-mandated administrative requirements, whether through the use of Proposition 10 or other funds.

Conclusion

Early childhood development lays the foundation for success in school, and indeed success later in adult life. There is a compelling need in Mono County to create and implement a comprehensive, collaborative, and integrated system of information and services to promote, support, and optimize early childhood development from the prenatal stage to five years of age. This strategic plan represents the next step toward a long-range effort to establish such a system so that one day all children in Mono County will thrive in supportive, nurturing and loving environments, enter school healthy and ready to learn, and make a positive contribution to society.

Appendix 1: Summary of Public Comments from the 2009 Strategic Plan Update Process

Minutes and correspondence from all public hearings, including public comment submitted directly to the Commission, are available by contacting the Commission office in Mammoth Lakes.

Needs identified through public comment:

A. Oral Health in children and pregnant women:

- ⊕ Health professionals who work with children report high levels of tooth decay in young children.
 - Pediatricians report seeing children at their clinic with high levels of visible tooth decay. Specific issues that should be addressed include education and prevention around baby bottle tooth decay, the importance of oral hygiene, and education for first generation immigrants.
 - Many families have poor (or no) oral health hygiene practices.
 - Greater focus should be placed on providing treatment and education services to the outlying communities where there is a greater need for accessible resources.
- ⊕ Greater attention should be paid to informing pregnant women of the importance of dental care during pregnancy and assisting them in accessing care as to decrease the incidence of poor birth outcomes.

B. High-quality early care and education

- ⊕ Child care quality and availability remain a significant problem for parents of young children in Mono County.
 - To date, there are no licensed family child care homes north of Mammoth Lakes.
 - As of December 2008, there were 68 families on the waiting list for Head Start/State Preschool. Lack of physical space prevents these families from receiving services.
 - In Mammoth Lakes and throughout the county, there are families who qualify for subsidized child care services, but are unable to find available space at *any* center or home.
- ⊕ A Pre-Kindergarten Program is needed for children of Kindergarten age who are not developmentally prepared to enter a formal Kindergarten program.
- ⊕ There needs to be more attention on the importance of literacy. Pediatricians report hearing from patients that there are no books in their homes for children.
- ⊕ Families residing in communities in the north part of the county should have access to core school readiness services as do families currently residing in the Mammoth Unified

School District, in order to prepare children to be successful learners and prevent problems before they begin.

C. Nutrition/Obesity Prevention

- ⊕ We need to increase awareness of the importance of nutrition and obesity prevention in the preschool population.
- ⊕ There needs to be more attention paid at an earlier point in time to childhood obesity, lack of physical activity, and poor diet.

D. Other needs identified include:

- ⊕ Consistency of messaging by medical professionals and paraprofessionals concerning pre- and post-natal health issues and practices, especially in regard to breastfeeding.
- ⊕ Affordable housing.
- ⊕ Countywide transportation.
- ⊕ More parent-child activities such as playgroups, story hour and parent discussion/support groups, countywide.

Appendix 2: Description of Mono County

From high desert brushlands to towering peaks of 13,000 feet, Mono County is located on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada. Only three passes in a 400-mile long mountain range connect Mono County with the rest of California. These are often buried by winter storms until June or July. While almost three times larger than the state of Rhode Island, Mono County is not nearly as populated with a mere 3.38 people per square mile. Communities are isolated. Up to two hours of travel is required to drive between communities or schools at opposite ends of Mono County.

Many parents must work two jobs in order to earn a living. Many work nights to make ends meet, especially during weekends and summer. This creates a lack of supervision in an area with minimal child care.

The Latino population is increasing annually, making up a significant percent of some communities. One Native American reservation and several informal tribal clusters exist in Mono County.

In addition to the geographic and seasonal weather barriers, the long distances between communities, service providers and schools make face-to-face encounters difficult. Lack of year round employment opportunities and high cost of living add to a cycle of poverty.

In Mono County, an effective model exists to address general challenges and specific issues. Agencies, schools, service providers, and business, community and faith leadership are usually open to collaborative efforts. Joint projects are common. Due to the small population base, communication is effective and consistent. Momentum builds quickly and efforts are far reaching.

Mono County has many strengths in addition to active collaboration. The natural splendor and the opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation are wonderful. Residents in these small towns, each with relatively sparse populations, enjoy low crime and safe living. The increasing ethnic diversity adds depth to local cultural awareness.

Appendix 3: Committees and Collaborations

Below is a list of coalitions, collaboratives and committees that work to promote health and wellness for families, including children age 0-5, in Mono County:

Early Start Interagency Committee

Chair: Lisa Powell, Mono County Office of Education

Purpose: Coordinates services for special needs children ages 0-3

Members:

- Mono County Office of Education
- Mono County Social Services Dept.
- Mono County Health Dept. - CCS
- Kern Regional Center
- Mammoth Hospital
- Mono County Mental Health Dept.
- IMACA HeadStart
- IMACA Community Connection for Children
- Heart to Hand Family Resource Center
- First 5 Mono County

Child Abuse Prevention Committee

Chair: Amy Grafius, Chair

Purpose: Provide a forum for interagency cooperation and coordination in the prevention, detection, treatment, and legal processing of child abuse cases.

Members:

- Mono County Health and Social Services Departments
- Inyo Mono Advocates for Community Action
- Wild Iris
- First 5 Mono County
- Parent and Community Representatives

Mono County Child Care Planning Council

Chair: Barbara Miller, Husky Club

Purpose: Planning for improvement of child care options in Mono County

Members:

- Parents/consumers of child care
- IMACA Community Connection for Children
- Mono County Social Services Dept.
- Mono County Office of Education
- Mammoth Elementary School Husky Club
- Mammoth Lakes Parent Preschool
- Mono County Health Dept.
- Mammoth Kids Corner

First 5 Mono County Children and Families Commission

Chair: Daniel Steinhagen, Inyo Mono Advocates for Community Action

Purpose: Oversee the distribution of First 5 funds to benefit children 0-5

Members:

- Catherine Hiatt, Mono County Office of Education
- Byng Hunt, Board of Supervisors
- Rick Johnson, Mono County Public Health Officer
- Jeanne Sassin, Lee Vining Kindergarten Teacher
- Daniel Steinhagen, IMACA
- Ed Zylman, Mono County Dept. of Social Services
- Anne Winston, Parent

Multi-Agency Council

Chair: Leah Garratt, Mono County Office of Education

Purpose: Children and family issues

Members:

- Mono County Mental Health Dept.
- Mono County Social Services Dept.
- Mono County Sheriff's Dept.
- Mammoth Lakes Police Dept.
- Mono County District Attorney
- Eastern Sierra Unified School Dist.
- Town of Mammoth Lakes
- Mono County Office of Education
- Mono County Health Dept.
- Mammoth Unified School Dist.

Partners in Community Wellness

Chair: Nancy Mahannah

Purpose: Provide leadership in collaborative, responsive and mutually beneficial ways to meet the needs of Mono County residents by supporting healthy and self-determining communities.

Members:

- Mono County Office of Education
- Mono County Tobacco Education Program
- Mono County Health Dept.
- Community members
- Faith community leaders
- First 5 Mono County
- Mono County Mental Health Dept.
- Mammoth Hospital
- Town of Mammoth Lakes
- Wild Iris