



AGENDA ITEM 5
SEPTEMBER 5, 2012

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Subject	Authority to Negotiate with Children’s Fund Inc. for Daily Referral/Voucher Program
Recommendations	Authorize First 5 staff to enter into negotiations with Children’s Fund Inc. for Daily Referral/Voucher Program services. (Affected Districts: All) (Presenter: Karen E. Scott, Executive Director, 387-1502)
Background Information	<p>In the past First 5 funded Resource Centers have been able to budget and make provision for “hard goods” to participants within their programs. Per evaluation data for 2010/2011, 5,998 core services (aggregate) were provided with expenditures totaling more than \$892,000.</p> <p>The Life Skills Progression (LSP) tool was used as the basic essentials scale to measure improvement in the family’s circumstances. It is a pre and post tool, and is not designed to report volume nor capture how the provision of hard goods and/or other emergency services such as food, housing and utility assistance, improved the overall family functioning and self-sufficiency. This is a recurring challenge for First 5 in reporting outcomes as the expectations for provision of hard goods has not been well defined, the eligibility for such items and services can vary greatly dependent upon the program design and the population utilizing the services, and historically, these provisions have not sufficiently been recorded in case files.</p> <p>Under the <u>Investing in Children</u> RFP, resource centers can no longer distribute gift cards or hard goods, such as appliances, furnishings, rental and utility assistance, and extraordinary medical and dental provisions, especially as an inducement to participate in funded services. The Commission commits to investing in more direct services and connecting those services to reportable outcomes which demonstrate improvement in the lives of children ages 0-5, required by the Prop 10 mandate. Resource Centers do have small budget allocations for items such as diapers, formula, emergency food, children’s clothing, etc. however, First 5 San Bernardino is the “payor of last resort.”</p> <p>A goal of the First 5 Strategic Plan is to strengthen child serving systems countywide. In order to improve the outcomes for provision of hard goods, it is vital to instill a centralized system that maximizes the appropriate use of scarce resources. Operating within an established child serving system, implementing a standard referral process, using a single authority to give final approval of requests, and comprehensive training of the program expectations with case managers in the Resource Centers reinforces accountability and ensures a more effective and efficient service delivery under the Family Support strategy.</p> <p>Utilizing an experienced administrator that supports this type of “safety net” system is the objective for partnering with Children’s Fund. Besides currently operating the Daily Referral/Voucher program to support agencies countywide, Children’s Fund is unique in that they are a non-profit fund-raising organization, provide no direct program services, and have the capability of negotiating and strengthening buying power for “hard goods” needed to sustain “at risk” children and families in crisis, unlike any other entity within the system of care.</p> <p>Focusing on the priority to strengthen systems, First 5 San Bernardino seeks to contract with Children’s Fund as the final authority for approval of requests for hard</p>

goods, and in dire emergencies, services such as emergency food, housing and utility assistance generated from the First 5 Resource Centers.

Recipients of the hard good provisions must be enrolled in and participating in case management with a First 5 funded Resource Center. Along with the request for service, the referring case manager must include case notes that detail all of the following:

- Why the need is immediate
- Why the need cannot be met through any other resource provider
- How the provision of the need improves the trajectory of the child as it relates to the Strengthening Families Matrix- Protective Factor: Concrete Support in Times of Need
- How the provision aligns with the First 5 San Bernardino goal that "families are safe, healthy, nurturing and self-sustaining"

The Children's Fund program manager, experienced with triage and assessment of requests countywide, will support the First 5 funded Resource Centers (14) throughout the County. The proposed referral and approval process will remain "in-house" with Children's Fund during a 6-9 month trial and evaluation period. First 5 case managers and Children's Fund will provide information and data related to fiscal effects and the participant outcomes. This information can be utilized by First 5 to determine the effectiveness of the intervention strategy, any necessary program modifications, required delivery system changes and quality of provider performance. First 5 San Bernardino proposes to align with the Children's Fund voucher guidelines currently established in most part and will establish in writing, any exceptions such as disallowing payment for sports and camp registrations.

The proposed project includes funding:

- a dedicated position (program manager) to manage referrals
- a staff support person to complete data entry, (both Persimmony and maintain and modify a necessary external database)
- a prepaid account from which expenditures for hard goods will be made and accounted for

First 5 anticipates meeting the immediate need of more than 1,000 children/families more efficiently and effectively with this commitment. As this is a new project, the initial plan is for a 6 -9 month contract with possible 2 year extension and work will be conducted throughout the period to determine if there is a better way to deliver the support to First 5 Resource Centers.

With the Commission's approval to move forward, a contract between First 5 San Bernardino and Children's Fund can be developed with the scope of work clearly detailed as well as the timeline and plan for training and implementation. The recommended contract would be brought back before the Commission for final approval.

Financial Impact

Review

Regina Coleman, Commission Counsel

Report on Action as taken
Action:
Moved: _____ Second: _____
In Favor:
Opposed:
Abstained:
Comments: _____
Witnessed: