

**Madera County
Local Child Care
Planning and
Development
Council (LPC)**

**STRATEGIC
PLAN
2024-2028**



*Cecilia A. Massetti, Ed.D.
Madera County Superintendent
of Schools*

November 2023



VISION

Every family in Madera County has access to quality, affordable child care and education services

MISSION

To plan, affect and promote child care and early education services and programs that meet the needs of families in Madera County



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The Madera County Local Child Care and Development Council (LPC) wishes to recognize the many community stakeholders and partners throughout Madera County who contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan

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First 5 Madera County

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Danny Morris, Vice Chairperson
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*As of August 2023

INTRODUCTION



The care and education that children receive, beginning at birth, lays the foundation for lifelong learning, health, and well-being of children, families, and communities. Investing in quality early learning programs has many long-term benefits. When children are in a high-quality program in their first five years, they are given a safe place to learn, explore their world and build relationships. By being in this type of environment, the foundation is set for them to be successful in school, work and life. In addition to improved math and language skills, children experience fewer behavior problems, fewer cognitive and social issues. Research shows that children from high-quality programs are less likely to need special education, repeat a grade, and most often graduate high school on time. All families deserve to have high quality, affordable, culturally responsive, inclusive care in which they and their children are supported and nurtured. Reliable child care also enables parents to work, attend school or other job training opportunities.

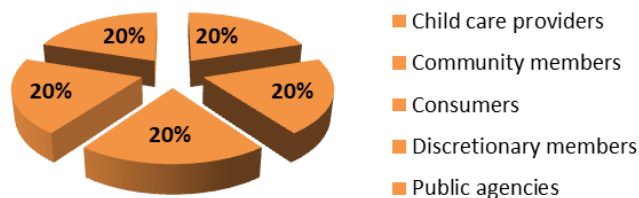
The Madera County Local Child Care and Development Planning Council (LPC) understands that Investing in early childhood is a solution that creates upward mobility through opportunity.

LPC Purpose and History

Purpose. The primary mission of the Local Planning Councils (LPCs) is to plan for child care and development services based on the needs of families in the local community. LPCs are intended to serve as a forum to address the child care needs of all families in the community for all types of child care, both subsidized and non-subsidized. According to the California Department of Education, there are currently LPCs representing every county in California.

History. In 1991, Congress established federal Child Care and Development Block Grants (CCDBG) and allocated funds to each state to assist low-income families in obtaining child care and development services. A plan was developed to ensure that California would have a local voice to establish priorities for the allocation of these funds in each community; Assembly Bill 2141 is mandated by AB 1542 (CalWORKS).

The Madera County LPC is an advisory body whose members are jointly appointed by the Board of Supervisors and the Madera County Superintendent of Schools and represent:



Program Requirements (include but are not limited to):

- Conduct an assessment of child care needs in the county at least once every five years.
- Determine local priorities for child care and development programs.
- Develop a comprehensive, countywide child care plan to address the identify needs.
- Seek and advocate for funding of child care services and programs.
- Promote public awareness of child care issues as an important part of family support.
- Foster local partnerships with subsidized and non-subsidized providers, county health and human service agencies, regional centers, job training programs, employers, parent organizations, early start family resource centers, and local child care resource and referral programs.
- Coordinate part-day programs, including state preschool and Head Start, with other child care and development services to provide full-day child care.
- Collaborate with local First Five Commission and other entities to carry out child care staff retention initiatives.



Purpose of the Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan serves as a guide and resource that will drive the work of the LPC in continuing to meet the needs of Madera County families and children in providing quality early learning programs and services. The Plan will be used by the LPC and its partners to:

1. Increase awareness of the importance of quality child care and learning experiences for all Madera County children, families and communities.
2. Provide a road map that leads to improved planning and coordination of programs, collaborative action, and meaningful advocacy for policy change.
3. Expand partnerships to implement strategies.
4. Mobilize public and private resources to address identified needs.
5. Provide stakeholders with a common frame of reference for future action.

The Strategic Plan identifies goals, objectives and strategies that are intended to be addressed over the next five years. Strategic plans are not static documents — they change as new circumstances and needs arise. The LPC is committed to monitoring ongoing needs and tracking results on an annual basis.

CREATION OF THE PLAN



Development of the Needs Assessment

This Strategic Plan was developed based on the results of a comprehensive needs assessment process designed to identify the major child care needs and assets within Madera County. The process was facilitated by Barbara Aved Associates and members of the LPC Executive Committee and gathered input across a wide range of stakeholders about the strengths of Madera’s early childhood care and education system and opportunities for improvement. Beyond the state requirements for certain demographics and child care capacity data, the assessment included additional information, such as local experts’ perspectives, that further allows the LPC, as a collaborative partner, a more strategic opportunity to address the early learning needs of children in Madera County.

Gathering and analyzing data and community feedback from the following sources provided the rich information in the needs assessment.

Secondary Data (statistical)

- State and federal databases (website retrieval) , including sources provided in the CDSS Needs Assessment Template*

Primary Data (community input)

- Parent focus groups
- Parent survey
- Key informant interviews
- LPC member interviews
- Provider Survey (Early Learning Site providers)

Madera is a relatively small county, part urban, part rural, with a current population of 159,410—about 8%, or 12,804, of whom are ages 0-5. The county’s diversity of incomes, ethnic groups and limited resources makes it a considerable challenge to provide adequate child care and early learning resources for all children that need care. In addition, precise local data are often difficult to determine when conducting needs assessments in small counties. For this reason, in many cases state averages or regional data were used to provide a more complete and current picture. Additionally, time periods, age ranges, and similar data groupings often differ slightly from one another depending on the source of the currently available data.[†]

* The majority of these secondary data came from American Institutes of Research, Early Learning Needs Assessments Tool; U.S. Census, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Madera County Child Care Resource and Referral, Madera County Department of Social Services, and Madera County SELPA office.

† The Madera County LPC Needs Assessment can be accessed at Madera County Superintendent of Schools <https://www.mcsos.org/>



Highlights from the Needs Assessment

- 21.7% of all families with related children less than 5 years of age live in poverty compared to 10.2% statewide.
- 62.5% of children 0-5 are eligible for comprehensive health benefits under Medi-Cal.
- Nearly 80% (60% statewide) of school children receive free or reduced price meals.
- 2,709 children have been identified with a special need: 270 infants 0-2 with an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) created; and 2,439 3-12 with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- In 2022, the monthly cost of full-time center-based child care for infants was \$1,312, and for preschool \$834.
- 85.2% of children 0-5 live in working families earning <100% of the federal poverty level.
- 41.3% of parents who did use child care said it was because of financial constraints.
- “Concerns about “safety” and “trust” were the overwhelming concerns of more than half the focus group parents who did not use any type of early learning program.
- 34.6% of parents said they work different shifts to reduce or avoid the need for child care.
- Only 54% of the Madera County child care homes—but none of the child care centers—reported offering care during non-traditional hours—including evening, weekend, or overnight care.

Planning Process

The Needs Assessment findings were reviewed by the LPC Executive Committee and discussed relative to five main questions: *What were the implications of the data relative to future priorities? Did this information surprise us or were they mostly consistent with what we already knew? What were the common themes? What were the key take-aways? How will this input help to inform the strategic plan?* Based on the outcomes of these discussions, the Committee identified the three key priorities below, and developed goals and objectives and strategies to update the previous plan. The LPC Vision and Mission Statements were also reviewed and revised to affirm what the LPC wants to project for the next 5 years.

Community Awareness

Quality Workforce Development

Access and Capacity

Each priority represents a critical focus, and activities in these areas will be guided by principles of:

- Quality child care for all children ages 0-12
- Reducing the unmet need for licensed child care spaces
- Inclusion of children of all abilities in a diversity of programs
- Greater affordability of care for families of all income levels
- Supporting a professional workforce that cares for all children in Madera County

Input gained from the Committee planning process was incorporated into the 5-year Strategic Plan and presented to the full LPC in November 2023, where it was approved.

STRATEGIC PLAN At-a-Glance 2024-2028

STRATEGIC PRIORITY GOALS

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Develop and implement a community awareness plan about the importance of early care and education programs for children from birth to age 12

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Strengthen the early care and education workforce through professional growth and career development in collaboration with community partners

ACCESS AND CAPACITY

Advocate for an increase in available, accessible and affordable early learning programs in Madera County

OBJECTIVES

- Encourage local partner endorsement of the strategic plan goals and activities.
- Promote clear and consistent “one-voice” messaging on the importance of quality care and education.
- Advocate for sufficient funds to support a quality early care and education program.
- Educate community members, public officials and employers about the importance and value of early care and education for all children.
- Increase awareness of the availability of quality early care resources, particularly in the rural and mountain communities.

- Formally assess and support the training needs of the child care community to offer programs that are inclusive, culturally competent and meet the needs of special populations such as children with special needs and dual language learners.
- Increase the number of professional development and career opportunities provided to early care educators and professionals, strengthening equity, coordination and alignment efforts.
- Promote quality standards within the early care and education community.
- Utilize state and federal funds to provide professional development to early educators and continue to support a quality improvement system for subsidized early care programs.
- Collaborate with Madera First 5 and other entities to carry out child care staff retention initiatives.

- Coordinate part-day programs, including state preschool and Head Start, with other child care and development services to provide full-day child care.
- Address the needs of families experiencing adversity, decreasing barriers, serving more children with special needs in inclusive settings, and improving coordination between early childhood education and health services.
- Coordinate with and support partners involved in implementing Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) to ensure a smooth transition towards a robust early learning system with family choice and quality care.
- Advocate for an increase in the number of slots in early care programs for children from birth through age 2.
- Increase enrollment in UPK.



MEASURABLE INDICATORS

These measures are examples of how we will know the extent of difference we've made in addressing the Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

- Increased percentage of children with special needs enrolled in programs or getting services.
- Increased percentage of families reporting that the LPC was a resource they used to help decide on child care.
- Increased number of early education and care programs licensed or approved to serve infants and toddlers (birth-2 years).
- Increased percentage of children in early education and family child care centers.
- Increased number of available Pre-K programs.
- Increased percentage of families served by home visiting services.
- Communications campaign conducted through MCSOS/LPC, First 5, local media, and early childhood education infrastructure.
- Families in early care and education programs and using services report better understanding and confidence in parenting and supporting their child's learning.
- Increased number and type of professional development trainings, and attendance at trainings by early care educators and professionals.
- Increased number of workforce graduating with an ECE degree.

PRIORITY: COMMUNITY AWARENESS



Children who receive early childhood education are more likely to succeed in school and have better academic outcomes. They will also have better social skills and are more likely to form positive relationships with others. Early childhood education also benefits parents and caregivers. The LPC’s primary role is to increase community awareness of the value of early care and education, and advocate for a safe and nurturing early learning environment for children, so that parents are able to work or further their education, which is critical to the financial health of our community.

To support an integrated system of early childhood care and education that includes comprehensive approaches involving families and communities in program design, implementation, and evaluation, the LPC participates in developing and updating our local Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

GOAL

Develop and implement a community awareness plan about the importance of early care and education programs for children from birth to age 12

OBJECTIVES

1. Encourage local partner endorsement of the strategic plan goals and activities.
2. Promote clear and consistent “one-voice” messaging on the importance of quality care and education.
3. Advocate for sufficient funds to support a quality early care and education program.
4. Educate community members, public officials and employers about the importance and value of early care and education for all children.
5. Increase awareness of the availability of quality early care resources, particularly in the rural and mountain communities.

ACTIVITIES

- Formally share current strategic plan with community partners and look for ways to strengthen engagement.
- Maintain the LPC website and keep it updated with current information about programs and links to child care and early learning-related resources.
- Identify LPC “champions” who will use their positions to advocate for children and families in a variety of community settings.
- In collaboration with partner agencies, establish and support a parent leadership initiative to increase opportunities for parent-peer support.
- Conduct multilingual outreach and marketing for families.
- Utilize effective messaging to promote the value of early care and education by conducting a communications campaign and implementing parent navigator program countywide.
- Update the Needs Assessment as new data become available, and distribute a summary of highlights to the Madera County Board of Supervisors, City Council members and LPC membership.

PRIORITY: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Early childhood programs have the potential for producing positive and lasting effects on children, but this potential cannot be achieved unless more attention is paid to ensuring that all programs meet the highest standards of quality. Because of the complexity of these early learning environments, quality early care and education program depend on highly skilled and specifically trained workforce. Attributes of high-quality early learning settings typically include licensure and accreditation, low staff-child ratios and strong parent engagement. Decades of research shows that professionals who provide care and educate young children are essential to quality and better outcomes.

GOAL

Strengthen the early care and education workforce through professional growth and career development in collaboration with community partners

OBJECTIVES

1. Formally assess and support the training needs of the child care community to offer programs that are inclusive, culturally competent and meet the needs of special populations such as children with special needs and dual language learners.
2. Increase the number of professional development and career opportunities provided to early care educators and professionals, strengthening equity, coordination and alignment efforts.
3. Promote quality standards within the early care and education community.
4. Utilize state and federal funds to provide professional development to early educators and continue to support a quality improvement system for subsidized early care programs.
5. Collaborate with Madera First 5 and other entities to carry out child care staff retention initiatives.

ACTIVITIES

- Maintain a countywide system to share upcoming training notification.
- Coordinate with higher education partners to increase access to degree tracks within early childhood education to grow and expand the early learning pipeline.
- Implement training on critical competencies related to infant and toddler services, including partnering with California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN) and Program for Infant and Toddler Care (PITC).
- Promote “whole child health” by integrating nutrition education lessons as part of a child’s daily routine, offering fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy more often.
- Strengthen culturally responsive and equity-focused professional development opportunities focused on serving diverse populations, including children experiencing adversity.
- Implement innovative professional development experiences for early childhood educators, including by increasing opportunities for coaching, peer-to-peer learning and leadership development.
- Advocate for pay equity for the birth-12 years care and learning workforce.
- Develop sustainable funding opportunities to strengthen the workforce, particularly in high need areas.

PRIORITY: ACCESS AND CAPACITY



From birth to age 5, children’s brains grow and develop at a rate unmatched later in life. Research shows this critical window of brain development lays the foundation for all future learning and development. Considerable research shows that children attending high-quality preschool programs reap significant benefits. Unfortunately, access to preschool and child care, particularly high quality affordable child care, remains out of reach for many families.

It is estimated that families contribute roughly 60% of the costs of child care; federal, state, and local governments combined contribute 39%; and business contributes 1%. The need is great to provide affordable early learning programs in Madera County that are accessible to families and meet the criteria for high quality experiences. This can only be achieved through strong partnerships between government, families, and the private sector. The LPC’s goal is to foster those relationships.

GOAL

Advocate for an increase in available, accessible and affordable early learning programs in Madera County

OBJECTIVES

1. Coordinate part-day programs, including state preschool and Head Start, with other child care and development services to provide full-day child care.
2. Address the needs of families experiencing adversity, decreasing barriers, serving more children with special needs in inclusive settings, and improving coordination between early childhood education and health services.
3. Coordinate with and support partners involved in implementing Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) to ensure a smooth transition towards a robust early learning system with family choice and quality care.
4. Advocate for an increase in the number of slots in early care programs for children age birth through two.
5. Increase enrollment in UPK.

ACTIVITIES

- Conduct a communications campaign to ensure families know about local early child care and education two-generational and family support programs and services.
- Encourage programs to refer families to Resource and Referral for child care options.
- Support the development of collaborative transition frameworks and plans that engage schools, early childhood providers, and families.
- Increase coordination with home visiting programs and increase capacity, especially in rural areas.
- Support development and licensing of new family child care homes.
- Proactively seek out new funding opportunities to expand subsidized and affordable care.
- Support implementation of strategies to improve, renovate, and/or build new facilities.

This 5-year Strategic Plan will continue to serve as the catalyst for making the LPC’s vision a reality. The identified goals of this Plan are driven by the needs of Madera County and supported by the LPC with a continued commitment to facilitating the professional growth of early care educators, and advocating at all levels of government to treat child care as an essential service.

The Strategic Plan emphasizes strategies and activities that represent a fluid approach because of constantly-changing environments. Because of this, the Plan is intended to be a “living document” that inspires community engagement and helps to unite various stakeholders and groups toward the Council’s common vision. The Madera County LPC remains dedicated to promoting the understanding and improvement of quality in all early learning and care programs, and to provide a forum for continuous engagement with public officials, community leaders, stakeholders, and funders to inform, educate and advise to expand access to programs that are inclusive of all children.



COMMUNITY INPUT SOURCES

The LPC appreciates the participation of the following individuals and hosts who helped to inform the Needs Assessment that guided the development of the Strategic Plan



Key Informant Interviews

(In alphabetical order by first name)

Individual	Affiliation/Organization
April Cox	North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians of California
Danny Morris	Madera County Department of Social Services
Eric Griffin	Chowchilla Elementary Unified School District
Erika Wright	First 5 Madera County
Gabriella Sibley	Madera County Child Abuse Council
Jacklyn Jones	Madera County Superintendent of Schools
Juliet Okonkwo	Madera County Superintendent of Schools
Leticia Murillo	Community Action Partnership Madera County
Monica Ramirez	First 5 Madera County
Nathalie Gomez	Local Child Care Planning Council
Norma Blanco	Community Action Partnership Madera County
Sharon Diaz	Madera County Department of Social Services
Tina Luera	Madera Community College
Tina Najarian	Madera Unified School District
Yosimi Santoyo	First 5 Madera County

Parent Focus Group Hosts/Sites

(In appreciation to the following)

Event	Sponsoring Organization
Summer Jam	First 5 Madera County
Preschool parent information meeting	Madera Unified School District
Parent Story Time	Madera Library
Pre-K University	First 5 Madera County
Preschool parent meeting	Washington Elementary School
Parent Story Time/parent general meeting	Chowchilla Library