



MINUTES
FIRST 5 RIVERSIDE COUNTY
Commission Regular Meeting
Wednesday, July 8, 2026
2:00 PM

First 5 Riverside County
585 Technology Court
Riverside, California 92507

Commissioners Present: Supervisor Chuck Washington, Jose Campos, Charity Douglas, Elizabeth Romero (left the meeting at 2:45 p.m.), Kimberly Saruwatari, Takashi Wada (arrived at 2:07 p.m.), and Zachary Ginder.

Commissioners Absent: Edwin Gomez and Cheryl-Marie Hansberger

Administrative Staff Present: Charna Widby, Executive Director; Ben Slagter, Assistant Director; Patricia Perez, Deputy Director; Lynn Stephens, Executive Assistant IV; Carol Abella, Regional Manager; Larissa Wills, Regional Manager; Charity Webb, Regional Manager; Estella Briseno, Regional Manager; Maria Machuca, Regional Manager; Alicia Corona, Regional Manager; Seraphina Hui Wang, Principal Accountant; Sean Pravica, Senior Public Information Specialist; Michelle Rodriguez, Public Information Specialist; Martina Guevara, Commission Coordinator; Steve Hernandez, Administrative Services Analyst II

Legal Counsel: Kristine Bell-Valdez, Supervising Deputy County Counsel

A. Call to Order – Supervisor Chuck Washington, Commission Chair

1. Pledge of Allegiance — Led by Chair Washington
2. Roll Call — Conducted by Ms. Stephens, Executive Assistant IV
Commissioner Wada was not present at roll call.
Commissioners Gomez and Hansberger were absent. A quorum was established.

B. Public Comments (for items not listed on the agenda) – Supervisor Chuck Washington, Chair
None.

C. Commission and Advisory Committee Business – Supervisor Chuck Washington, Chair

1. Director's Report — Charna Widby, Executive Director; Ben Slagter, Assistant Director; Patricia Perez, Deputy Director

Ms. Widby provided updates on the ribbon cuttings for the Jan Peterson Child Development Center in Moreno Valley and the Lakeland Village Childcare Center. She also provided an update on the upcoming opening of the French Valley Early Learning Center on August 8. Ms. Widby highlighted the Proposition 64 Public Health and Safety Grant Award. She noted that it is the only award specifically focused on early childhood and a collaborative countywide continuum of services. She

concluded with updates on Mother's Day events and baby showers held across Family Resource Centers.

(Commissioner Wada arrived at 2:07 p.m.)

Mr. Slagter provided updates on the Quality Start Region 9 Summit, hosted by First 5 under the theme "United for Quality: Commitment, Collaboration, Celebration," at the RCOE Conference Center. He also shared highlights from his presentation at the Partnerships for Well-Being Institute at UC Davis, which he attended with Rachel Zorn from the Office of Child Abuse Prevention. Mr. Slagter also reported that former First 5 Executive Director Tammi Graham received the Individual Collaboration and Integration Award.

2. Public Information Report — Sean Pravica, Senior Public Information Specialist and Michelle Rodriguez, Public Information Specialist

Ms. Rodriguez presented an overview of the Mecca Splash Water Safety Event, highlighting the Commission's drowning prevention and water safety outreach efforts. She reported that attendees registered for swim lessons, one of the event's primary objectives. Ms. Rodriguez also reported that water safety billboards were installed in each district and were displayed throughout June and early July.

Chair Washington asked whether drowning and near-drowning data are being tracked in a manner that allows the Commission to evaluate outcomes.

Commissioner Romero asked about the heat-related campaign and whether First 5 planned to bring it back this year. Ms. Widby confirmed that First 5 planned to continue the campaign this year.

3. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Douglas expressed her appreciation for the Commission's accomplishments, particularly First 5 Riverside County's award of Proposition 64 funding. She commended First 5 staff for their intentional implementation of the Strategic Plan and thanked staff for their continued effort.

Chair Washington shared a story about the impact of Transitional Kindergarten (TK) on home-based preschool providers and noted the importance of continuing the conversation around services for children ages 0–5.

- D. **Presentations/Information Item – Supervisor Chuck Washington, Chair** (A copy of all Presentation/Information Items and attachments can be viewed at www.First5Riverside.org and at the Commission Business Office)

1. Presentation of Champion for Children Awards to Sophia Williams and Samudra Leitan — Sean Pravica, Senior Public Information Specialist

Mr. Pravica provided background on the awards and introduced the first Champion for Children, Ms. Leitan, as the recipient of the award in the Making a Difference category. Ms. Widby presented the award to Ms. Leitan.

Ms. Leitan provided an overview of her work supporting children who are deaf and/or hard of hearing. She emphasized the importance of patience, compassion, and careful observation in supporting children to achieve their goals.

Mr. Pravica introduced the Leading the Way category and invited Mr. Slagter to introduce Ms. Williams. He highlighted her work and presented her with the Leading the Way Award.

Ms. Williams provided an overview of her work, highlighted the importance of supporting Black youth in foster care, and recognized the community partnerships that helped establish the Healthy Crownz initiative. She shared how the program provides hair care education, empowerment, and support to foster youth and caregivers, serving more than 100 youth annually since 2023. She expressed appreciation for community partners, the Racial Disproportionality and Disparity Workgroup, and individuals dedicated to improving outcomes for Black children in care.

2. Countywide Early Childhood Indicators: Trends Informing the Strategic Plan — Elle Law, Epidemiologist, Riverside University Health System — Public Health

(Commissioner Romero left the meeting at 2:45 p.m.)

Ms. Law presented countywide early childhood indicators related to healthcare access, prenatal and birth outcomes, infant mortality, and drowning, including geographic trends and changes in Medi-Cal enrollment and drowning-related 911 calls.

Commissioner Wada asked whether the decline in Medi-Cal enrollment was related to changes in Medi-Cal eligibility or other factors impacting enrollment. Vice Chair Campos requested data showing how many families later reenrolled after being disenrolled from Medi-Cal and whether similar data was available regarding SNAP benefits. Ms. Law noted that dashboards are available showing aggregate enrollment data; however, the information is not available by specific age groups or demographics. Chair Washington asked about the use of census tract versus ZIP code data. Ms. Law explained that more granular data are available for some analyses, but privacy protections limit the level of detail that can be publicly reported. Chair Washington emphasized the importance of using the most detailed available data for planning purposes.

Commissioner Ginder also discussed infant mortality and potential considerations for prevention priorities. Ms. Law noted that 2025 infant mortality data are preliminary and undergoing additional analysis. Mr. Slagter highlighted sleep-related infant deaths and ongoing work with RUHS-Public Health and DPSS using this data to inform future investments.

Ms. Widby noted that the data analysis has helped identify service gaps, changing community needs, and underserved areas throughout the county. The information is being used to guide future procurement strategies, strengthen existing partnerships, and inform strategic plan investments by targeting resources where they are most needed.

- E. **Consent Items – Supervisor Chuck Washington, Chair** (A copy of all Consent Items and attachments can be viewed at www.First5Riverside.org and at the Commission Business Office)

Ms. Bell-Valdez noted that Chair Washington had a conflict on Consent Item 26-24. That item was pulled from the consent block and considered separately.

1. Approve First 5 Riverside County Draft Commission May 13, 2026 Meeting Minutes
2. **26-21:** Approve and Ratify Third Amendment with Sidekick Solutions LLC for Technical Assistance from July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2027 (**CONTRACT NO. CF25129**) [**\$381,621 - PROP 10 FUNDS**]

3. **26-22:** Approve Contract with Loma Linda University Children's Hospital for Help Me Grow Inland Empire from July 8, 2026 – June 30, 2027 (**CONTRACT NO. CF26150**) [**\$275,000 - PROP 10 FUNDS**]
4. **26-23:** Approve Second Amendment to Memorandum of Understanding with Facilities Management - Real Estate for the Mead Valley Family Resource Center from October 1, 2026 - September 30, 2029 (**MOU NO. FM30.419**) [**AMOUNT NOT-TO-EXCEED \$475,000 - DPSS FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER FUNDS**]
5. **26-24:** Approve Acceptance of Riverside County Third District Unincorporated Communities Initiative (UCI) Funds for Drowning Prevention Services [**AMOUNT NOT-TO-EXCEED \$80,000 - UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE FUNDS**]
6. **26-25:** Approve and Ratify Third Amendment with Inland Southern California United Way, Inc. for Guaranteed Income Pilot Program from October 25, 2023 - September 30, 2026 (**CONTRACT NO. CF24136**) [**\$2,563,871.12 - PROP 10 FUNDS**]
7. **26-26:** Approve First Amendment with Imagine Los Angeles Inc. for Benefit Navigator Platform Licenses from July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027 (**CONTRACT NO. CF25145**) [**\$67,500 - PROP 10 FUNDS**]
8. **26-27:** Approve FY 2026/2027 First 5 Riverside County Updated Vendor List for Vendors Over \$50,000

Commissioner Saruwatari moved to approve Consent Items 1 through 4 and 6 through 8 as presented. Commissioner Campos seconded the motion.

- **Ayes:** (6) Washington, Campos, Douglas, Ginder, Saruwatari, and Wada
 - **Nays:** (0)
 - **Recused:** (0)
 - **Absent:** (3) Gomez, Hansberger, and Romero
- Quorum maintained. Motion carried.**

Chair Washington recused himself from Consent Item 26-24 due to a conflict of interest, and left the meeting room at 3:20 p.m. before the discussion and vote on the item.

26-24: Approve Acceptance of Riverside County Third District Unincorporated Communities Initiative (UCI) Funds for Drowning Prevention Services [**AMOUNT NOT-TO-EXCEED \$80,000 - UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE FUNDS**]

Commissioner Ginder moved to approve Consent Item 26-24 as presented. Commissioner Douglas seconded the motion.

- **Ayes:** (5) Campos, Douglas, Ginder, Saruwatari, and Wada
 - **Nays:** (0)
 - **Recused:** (1) Washington
 - **Absent:** (3) Gomez, Hansberger, and Romero
- Quorum maintained. Motion carried.**

Chair Washington returned to the meeting room at 3:21 p.m.

F. Presentation/Public Hearing/Action Item(s) – Supervisor Chuck Washington, Chair (A copy of all Presentation/Public Hearing/Action Item(s) and attachments can be viewed at www.First5Riverside.org and at the Commission Business Office)

1. Conduct a Public Hearing and Adopt First 5 Riverside County Children and Families Commission Strategic Plan Refinement for 2027 through 2030, Pursuant to the California Children and Families Act, Health and Safety Code Section 130140 and Riverside County Ordinance 784 — Charna Widby, Executive Director

Ms. Widby and Mr. Slagter presented the 2027–2030 Strategic Plan refinement, including the four goal areas and the data and implementation experience informing the refinement. Staff recommended that the Commission conduct the public hearing, consider any proposed changes, and take action on adoption.

- a. **Public Hearing:** First 5 Riverside County Children and Families Commission Strategic Plan Refinement for 2027 through 2030 – Supervisor Chuck Washington, Chair

Chair Washington opened the public hearing at 3:25 p.m. Hearing no public comments, Chair Washington closed the public hearing at 3:26 p.m.

Commissioners expressed support for the Strategic Plan refinement and discussed community and public-agency partnerships, foundational infrastructure, upstream prevention, and the plan’s actionable approach.

- b. **26-28:** Adopt First 5 Riverside County Children and Families Commission Strategic Plan Refinement for 2027 through 2030 – Supervisor Chuck Washington, Chair

*Commissioner Saruwatari moved to adopt Action Item 26-28 as presented.
Commissioner Douglas seconded the motion.*

- **Ayes:** (6) Washington, Campos, Douglas, Ginder, Saruwatari, and Wada
 - **Nays:** (0)
 - **Recused:** (0)
 - **Absent:** (3) Gomez, Hansberger, and Romero
- Quorum maintained. Motion carried.**

Ms. Widby shared upcoming agenda items, including procurement requests to begin implementing the new Strategic Plan, the annual audit, the annual report, and policy recommendations. Chair Washington inquired about the RivCoONE presentation, and Ms. Widby responded that Tammi Graham would present to the Commission. Chair Washington noted the connection between the Strategic Plan and RivCoONE and discussed the importance of data sharing, collaboration, and partnerships across County departments and with external agencies.

Commissioner Douglas thanked Ms. Widby and staff for their leadership and ongoing efforts, noting appreciation for the Commission’s focus on prevention and the visible impact of its work.

G. Future Agenda Items:

1. HealthySteps Presentation
2. First 5 Riverside County Communications Plan
3. Riverside County Office of Education Presentation
4. RivCoONE Presentation
5. First 5 Riverside County Annual Report Presentation and Public Hearing
6. First 5 Riverside County Annual Audit Presentation and Public Hearing
7. First 5 Riverside County Capital Assets Policy

- H. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 3:33 p.m. to the next Regular Meeting of the Riverside County Children and Families Commission to be held on September 9, 2026, beginning at 2:00 p.m. at:
First 5 Riverside County Children and Families Commission Office
585 Technology Court — Conference Room A
Riverside, CA 92507

Meeting Minutes Recorded by Lynn M. Stephens, Executive Assistant IV.