



AGENDA ITEM: 26-01
DATE OF MEETING: MARCH 11, 2026
ACTION:
INFORMATION:

REVIEW AND RECOMMEND NOMINATIONS FOR 2026 CHAMPION FOR CHILDREN AWARD RECIPIENTS

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

Review the Champion for Children nominations received and recommend one nominee in each award tier to submit to the Commission for consideration and approval as the First 5 Riverside County 2026 Champion for Children Award recipients.

BACKGROUND

First 5 Riverside County's Champion for Children Award was created to honor and bring awareness to people and organizations whose leadership and advocacy embody the vision of First 5 Riverside County, where all children in Riverside County are healthy and thrive in supportive, nurturing, and loving environments and enter school ready to learn and embrace lifelong learning.

The Commission approved the establishment of the Champion for Children Award and selection criteria, as recommended by the Advisory Committee, in September 2019. Since then, an annual process has been conducted for the Advisory Committee to receive and review nominations and select their recommendation to forward to the Commission for approval.

In 2025, the Advisory Committee formed a three-member Ad Hoc Committee to evaluate the existing Champion for Children Award Process and Form. Based on their recommendations, the 2026 Champion for Children Award includes the following changes:

- Two Award Tiers: Leading the Way and Making a Difference
- Leading the Way for a Champion in a Leadership Role
 - Must be nominated by another individual
 - \$5,000 sponsorship for a community event

- Making a Difference for a Champion who works directly with young children and families
 - May self-nominate or be nominated by another individual
 - \$1,000 sponsorship for a community event
- Nomination form reformatted and condensed
 - Available via survey format hosted on Survey Monkey instead of a fillable pdf application used in previous years

Nominations opened January 12. A call for nominations was promoted countywide with news releases, posts on social media, and email messages and presentations where applicable to First 5 funded agencies, stakeholders, county departments, and supporters. The nomination window concluded on February 20. A total of 16 nominations have been submitted during the nomination period, comprising of 7 nominations for Leading the Way and 9 nominations for Making a Difference award tiers. The slate of nominees was sent to the Advisory members for their individual review in preparation for the consideration of one nominee to recommend to the Commission for approval.

Upon approval by the Commission, the 2026 Champion for Children Award winners will be recognized at a Riverside County Children and Families Commission meeting, on the First 5 Riverside County website and social media. The recipients will receive a recognition award (costs not to exceed \$100) and a sponsorship (based on Commission policy) of up to \$5,000 or \$1,000 in their name given to support a community event of their choice based on their award tier.

2026 Champion for Children nominations received:

1. First 5 Riverside County received nominations for a total of **14 individuals**. The Advisory Committee received pdf nominee submission packets for each nominee for both award tiers. PDF packets were exported via Survey Monkey and available on a shared Google Drive link.
2. Champion for Children scoresheet rubric to help guide Advisory Committee members in making their recommendations was available on a shared Google Drive link.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

That the Advisory Committee:

1. Review and recommend one nominee from each award tier, Leading the Way and Making a Difference, to forward to the Commission for consideration and approval as the 2026 First 5 Riverside County Champion for Children Award recipients.