



First 5 Riverside County Community Listening and Learning Report

Deepening Understanding: Insights and Strategic
Recommendations for Early Childhood Policy and Investment



February 2025

Report by the Inland Empire Community Collaborative (IECC)
as part of our IE Children's Cabinet initiative on behalf of First 5
Riverside County.



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This report provides an in-depth analysis of community perspectives and challenges related to early childhood policy and investment in Riverside County, drawing from comprehensive listening and learning sessions across the region. It offers strategic recommendations based on regional findings to inform future policy and resource allocation for improving outcomes for young children and families.

Acknowledgements

IECC extends sincere appreciation to the parents, caregivers, and family members who participated in the Community Listening and Learning Sessions and shared their experiences, priorities, and hopes for their children and communities. Your time, trust, and candor made this work possible and strengthened the collective understanding of what families with young children need to thrive.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Regional Insights at a Glance	3
Key Cross-cutting Themes	4
Economic History of Riverside County.....	5
Findings by Region.....	6
Mecca, CA.....	6
Jurupa Valley, CA.....	10
Hemet.....	13
Policy and Investment Recommendations	17
Conclusion and Next Steps	19
Methodology.....	20
Session Design and Approach	20
Session Logistics and Participation Summary	22
Marketing and Outreach Strategies	23
Barriers and Limitations.....	24
Appendix	26

Executive Summary

This report offers an analysis of the Community Listening and Learning Sessions facilitated by the Inland Empire Community Collaborative (IECC), on behalf of First 5 Riverside County, with an emphasis in the regions of Mecca, Jurupa Valley, and the Hemet/San Jacinto Valley. With participation from nearly 60 parents, guardians, and caregivers, these sessions reveal a tapestry of lived experiences and challenges ranging from limited access to basic services to deeper structural inequities shaped by economics, geography, racial equity and regional policy. The results highlight ongoing gaps in services and insufficient community resources, especially regarding access to healthcare, child care, nutritional foods access, stable housing, and safe navigation of public systems. All these services are rooted in a need for culturally appropriate solutions for families with young children ages 0-5.

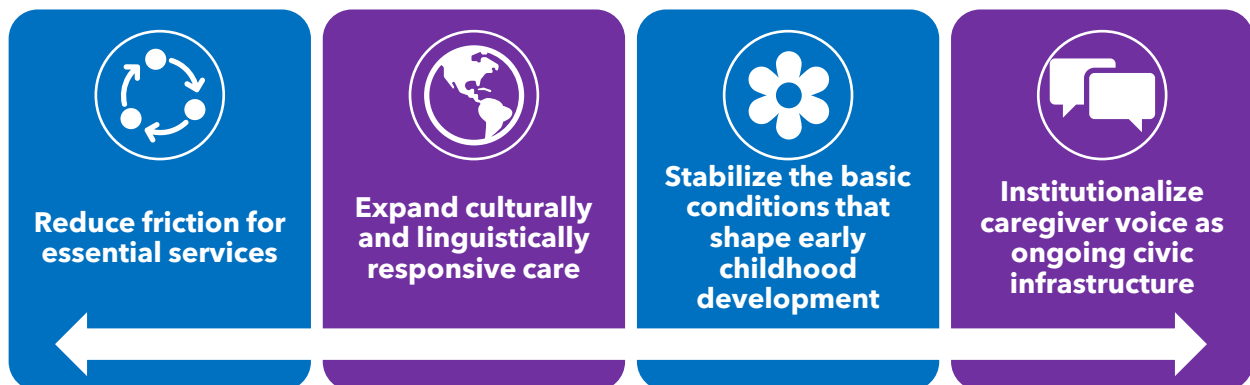
Families described how transportation, work schedules, and cost burdens compound one another, turning routine tasks (a pediatric appointment, a child care search, enrolling in benefits, securing healthy foods) into multi-step obstacles with high time and emotional costs. In several instances, caregivers noted that the cumulative effect of these frictions contributes to delayed care, missed opportunities for early support, and increased stress for both parents and children. This was particularly true for families facing language barriers, immigration-related fears, or unstable housing. Despite these constraints, participants also lifted strong community assets including informal mutual aid, trusted local organizations, and a deep commitment to children's wellbeing.

These insights are brought into sharper focus through the lens of Riverside County's unique economic history and challenges of its vast geography as an inland county in Southern California surrounded by more densely populated coastal counties, which continues to impact family well-being today. Drawing on testimonies and collective parent voice, the report closes with a robust, yet practical set of strategic policy and investment recommendations intended to serve as a blueprint for transformative action, equity, and opportunity for every young child and family in Riverside County.

- **Mecca, CA:** Community members emphasized a critical need for improved healthcare access, describing difficulties in obtaining basic medical care for families and young children. Participants also voiced deep concern about the threat of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), which has created a hostile and fearful environment while disrupting access to essential services for immigrant families with varying documented status.

- **Jurupa Valley, CA:** As the city experiences rapid growth, new and emerging needs are surfacing. Residents highlighted the strain on existing infrastructure and resources, calling attention to gaps in services that must be addressed to support the evolving population.
- **Hemet, CA:** Hemet’s recent growth has been attributed to energized affordable housing developments on the outskirts of town, which has attracted younger families from neighboring counties to the area, resulting in a heightened demand for early childhood services and support programs. Caregivers underscored the urgency of expanding resources to meet the needs of these new families.

While each community surfaced distinct priorities shaped by local context, the listening sessions also revealed a set of shared challenges that consistently affect families raising children ages 0-5 across Riverside County. The findings point to a set of cross-cutting priorities for early childhood policy and investment decisions: (1) reduce access friction for essential services, (2) expand culturally and linguistically responsive care, (3) stabilize the basic conditions that shape early development, and (4) institutionalize caregiver voice as ongoing civic infrastructure.



The voices and stories shared during these community listening sessions serve as a call to action. Although families with young children in Riverside County encounter considerable challenges, their commitment to their communities and aspirations for an improved future are evident in their ongoing dedication and engagement.

Despite facing significant challenges, families with young children in Riverside County demonstrate a strong commitment to their children’s well-being and to building a better future for their communities through active participation and engagement. By centering these lived experiences in policy and investment decisions, First 5 Riverside County and its partners have a unique opportunity to advance equity, strengthen local infrastructure, and ensure every family with young children can thrive. These intersecting challenges underscore the urgent need for coordinated community-

driven solutions that address both immediate hardships and the systemic barriers facing families with children ages 0-5. The path forward demands increased investments, collaboration, sustained commitment, and a willingness to innovate and expand on existing services and programs to ensure families with young children are supported.

Regional Insights at a Glance

While many themes were consistent across communities, families also described distinct place-based realities. The snapshots below highlight key regional insights and priorities surfaced in each location.

Community	Primary Needs Surfaced	Key Barriers	Noted Assets
Mecca	- Nearby healthcare, emergency responsiveness - Food access - Safety and stability for immigrant families	- Distance to care - Limited transportation - Language access gaps - Fear of enforcement reduces help-seeking	- Strong neighbor networks - Trusted local messengers - High willingness to engage when safety is assured
Jurupa Valley	- Affordable child care aligned to work schedules - Culturally responsive care - Housing stability	- Limited child care slots and hours - Navigation complexity - Growth-related strain on infrastructure	- Community pride and local providers attempting to help - Proximity to regional services compared to rural areas
Hemet	- Healthcare continuity (including maternal/infant care) - Affordable food - Homelessness response	- Service gaps and long travel for specialized care - Rising cost of living - Visible homelessness and safety concerns	- Community-based supports and food assistance efforts - Families actively seeking information and connection

Together, these findings elevate both urgent barriers and community strengths that shape daily life for families with young children across Riverside County. The sections that follow provide additional context, regional detail, and actionable considerations aligned with these priorities.

Key Cross-cutting Themes

The themes below reflect what families consistently raised across all sessions, regardless of community. Together, they highlight the shared conditions shaping daily life for caregivers and young children countywide.



Healthcare access is constrained by distance, long waits, limited specialty care, and inconsistent follow-up. Families described difficulty securing timely pediatric and maternal health appointments and emphasized the need for nearby, relationship-based care, clearer referral pathways, and culturally and linguistically responsive providers.



Childcare supply and schedule fit are misaligned with working families' realities. Affordability, limited openings (especially for younger children), and long waitlists—combined with hours that don't match many jobs—push families toward informal arrangements that may be flexible but unstable.



Food access challenges are driven by both geography and economics. Caregivers cited limited proximity to full-service grocery options, transportation barriers, and rising costs (including delivery markups in some areas), leading to difficult tradeoffs between food and other essentials.



Housing instability and homelessness increases stress and disrupts service continuity. Families described overcrowding, rising rents, and limited affordable options, noting that instability can interrupt childcare, healthcare follow-up, and other supports.



Fear related to immigration enforcement and broader institutional distrust reduces help-seeking and participation. In immigrant and mixed-status communities, caregivers reported avoiding systems due to fear and prior experiences of inconsistent communication, referrals without resolution, and feeling heard without change.

Economic History of Riverside County

Understanding the economic context of Riverside County is crucial for interpreting the challenges and opportunities facing families today. Historically, the county's development has been rooted in agriculture. Riverside County's early economy thrived on citrus, grapes, and farming, drawing waves of immigrant and migrant laborers seeking opportunity.^{1 2} Farmworker communities, often isolated in rural pockets, have contributed immensely to the region's growth while navigating persistent economic vulnerability, wage instability, and limited legal protections.

From the late 20th century onward, Riverside County experienced significant population growth and suburbanization. New subdivisions, commercial development, and transportation corridors brought a surge of new residents. Despite these changes, the benefits of growth were unevenly distributed. Infrastructure expansion often lagged, and historically marginalized communities found themselves excluded from decision-making and investments.

The region's economic landscape remains complex. Many areas still struggle with underemployment, wage stagnation, and a lack of high-quality jobs, compounded by rising housing costs and temporary or inadequate rental options. Economic shocks, including the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, have exacerbated hardships, deepening food and housing insecurity for vulnerable families.³ Environmental challenges, including frequent drought, extreme heat, and poor air quality, further threaten low-income and farmworker communities. Access to healthcare, transportation, and economic opportunities, especially in rural and unincorporated areas, is severely lacking or emerging.

Recent efforts to improve early childhood services, healthcare, and education are commendable but have yet to close deep-seated gaps. Many families continue to navigate a patchwork system of fragmented supports, with limited access to high-quality, affordable programs that reach all areas in the county. This economic and infrastructural backdrop shapes every aspect of family life, providing essential context for the findings of the Community Listening & Learning sessions.

¹ Riverside Agricultural Commissioner's Office. *History of Agriculture in Riverside County*. Riverside Agricultural Commissioner's Office. 2026. <<https://rivcoawm.org/history>>

² Riverside Agricultural Commissioner's Office. *2024 Agriculture Production Report*. Riverside Agricultural Commissioner's Office. February 6, 2026. <<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3ab97ab29ed84eb084ec2d18ea0ee89c>>

³ Mara, Bob. *UC Riverside Economist Explains the Pandemic Recession and Outlines the Shape of Recovery*. GPS Business Insider. April 30, 2021. <<https://gpsbusinessinsider.com/uc-riverside-economist-explains-the-pandemic-recession-and-outlines-the-shape-of-recovery/>>

Findings by Region

Mecca, CA

Mecca, a predominantly rural community in Riverside County's eastern Coachella Valley, faces some of the most acute structural challenges. The community's economy remains heavily dependent on agriculture with a high dependency on seasonal labor. Because of this, Mecca's population fluctuates year-round as agricultural workers travel to the area during growing seasons. Historically, the workforce has been overwhelmingly Latiné, with high immigrant representation and limited English proficiency, reflecting broader patterns in the Coachella Valley. Mecca's economic history is rooted in its transformation from a desert settlement into an agricultural hub, with date palm farming as its signature industry⁴. Environmental factors, such as the Salton Sea's shrinkage and dust pollution, have also impacted economic activity and public health. From healthcare to family separation, Mecca displayed the most pressing need to continued investment and engagement.



Healthcare and Environmental Impacts on Health

The lack of accessible healthcare facilities means that residents must often travel significant distances to access even basic medical care. Public transportation is limited or nonexistent, leaving many families reliant on informal networks for rides. Language barriers compound these difficulties, as a significant portion of the community speaks Spanish or indigenous languages as their primary language, and interpreters are seldom available.

The severity of not having timely access to care resulted in many children and youth living with ongoing conditions for long periods of time without proper medical or specialized attention. One father expressed that after his daughter had broken her arm, he attempted to schedule an emergency appointment with her primary care physician and was unable to be seen for over a week. He said,

"My daughter broke her arm. We took her to the doctor, and the doctor told us we had to make an appointment with a pediatrician. It took them a week to give us an appointment with the pediatrician, and my daughter spent a week with a(n untreated) broken arm."

⁴ Neighborhood Data for Social Change. Community Profile: Mecca. PBS SoCal. April 4, 2019. <<https://www.pbssocal.org/neighborhood-data-for-social-change/community-profile-mecca>>

Access to quality and reliable healthcare was a resounding theme discussed among various families in Mecca:

- "If we had a hospital, we wouldn't have to go all the way to Indio to take a child who gets sick at midnight."
- "The waiting list to see a doctor is very long. Hours of waiting for something that could be taken care of quickly."
- "Doctor appointments are difficult to get quickly. Sometimes you wait a month to see a doctor."

Families with children with severe mental or behavioral health needs also find it difficult to navigate the existing healthcare system and find culturally competent and available medical professionals that specialized in the field in medicine needed to provide support for their children.

- When reaching out to providers or agencies for support, a parent felt they were saying, "I hear you, but nothing changes".
- Parent commented that providers were "Only viewing 'surface-level' diagnosis" and would only meet the child once for a check-up and no additional follow-up.



Parents also reported environmental pressures including exposure to pesticides and extreme heat resulting in detrimental impacts on children's health while limiting safe outdoor play. This is especially true during hot summer days where temperatures can consistently reach over 110 degrees. Many families are forced to ensure the summer heat as utility costs can become unaffordable.

One mother described the ongoing frustration she felt when trying to advocate for her preschooler who relied on local transportation that lacked proper coverings or air conditioning. Her son repeatedly complained of heat-induced headaches and, one summer, her son fainted at school because of the heat. She felt ignored and unheard, and found herself in constant disagreement with district officials, struggling to advocate for her child's safety and well-being. Many children, some as young as three years old, were experiencing severe asthma symptoms, with one child needing to travel more than one hour to receive care from Loma Linda University Medical Center.

Access to Affordable Healthy Foods

There is a striking irony in the daily realities faced by many families in Mecca: while they provide the essential labor that helps pick and supply the fresh food our communities rely on, they themselves struggle to access healthy and nutritious food and produce options for their own households.

Many grocery stores are neither centrally located nor affordable. Many families expressed that to obtain fresh and affordable food, they would need to travel to Indio, a nearly 20-minute drive from the city. The significant distance to these stores means residents' ability to regularly purchase healthy options are limited, increasing the likelihood of food insecurity within the community.



Concerns regarding ICE activity and the potential for family deportation have led many families to limit non-essential travel, which has contributed to food scarcity and increased susceptibility to exploitation. As a result, families have frequently depended on others for grocery shopping, and, in many instances, have been charged significantly higher prices for basic food staples. Often these costs can be two-three times the amount charged at the grocery store.

The distance to stores, combined with a pervasive fear of ICE activity, meant that simple trips for food carried with them substantial risk. As a result, some families must pay more than double the typical cost of groceries to have them safely delivered to their homes, underscoring the deep inequities and barriers these vital community members face.

Immigration, Deportation and Family Separation

In Mecca, many families live with constant anxiety due to frequent ICE activity and the threat of deportation. With a high concentration of immigrant farmworker families, parents are often afraid to do everyday tasks like going to the grocery store or picking up their children from school. This fear has created a sense of isolation and uncertainty, making it difficult for families to feel safe in their own community. Simple routines now come with the risk of being separated from loved ones, adding another layer of hardship for those already facing substantial socio-economic challenges.

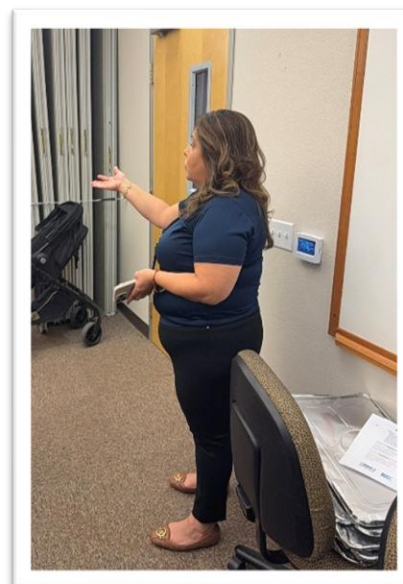


Additionally, parents shared stories of youth being directly affected by anti-immigrant sentiments in their communities. Some children with undocumented or mixed-status parents reported experiences of bullying at school, which contributed to heightened stress and negatively impacted their mental health. These incidents have intensified feelings of vulnerability and isolation among youth, underscoring the need for greater support and understanding within educational and community settings.

During a particularly tense period in Mecca, parents faced new obstacles when ICE agents blocked critical roads leading to local schools. Over a week-long period, all major routes to North Shore were shut down, making it nearly impossible for families, especially those with mixed immigration status, to safely drop off or pick up their children. In response, parents turned to trusted friends and relatives for help, coordinating rides and finding alternative paths so their children could attend class. This reliance on community support highlighted both the resourcefulness of families and the added burdens they carried simply to ensure their kids' right to an education.

The scarcity of jobs has also been an issue. Several older parents shared that finding work in local farms had become increasingly challenging, as many farmers began hiring Mexican day laborers willing to accept wages even lower than those previously offered. This shift not only reduced opportunities for established residents, many of whom were themselves undocumented, but also led to feelings of displacement and frustration within the community. For some, it felt as though a second wave of undocumented farmworkers was arriving, further undercutting the already limited job prospects and wage standards. The changing dynamics of agricultural employment have deepened economic insecurity and strained relationships among workers, highlighting the complex impacts of labor practices on community cohesion and stability.

The lack of local service providers limited recreational spaces, and the absence of specialized care (such as pediatricians or behavioral health specialists) mean that parents with young children must often navigate



a confusing and fragmented system on their own while putting their own safety and security at risk. Despite these significant barriers, Mecca families demonstrate tenacity and resourcefulness. Strong familial networks, informal child care arrangements, and deep-rooted cultural traditions help buffer the effects of adversity. However, parents express a clear need for policy action to address persistent inequities in healthcare, transportation, and legal and social support services.

Jurupa Valley, CA

Jurupa Valley, located closer to urban centers, presents a mixture of challenges and strengths. The ongoing economic transformation of the region is reflective of the ongoing transformation of growing urban cities in Southern California. While Jurupa Valley in many ways retains many rural and cultural traditions, regional economic growth has transitioned their economy to one that is more modern, diverse, and urbanized in many regions across the city.⁵ This has allowed families here to benefit from somewhat better access to healthcare and social services compared to Mecca, they still face considerable obstacles.

Child Care

Affordable, high-quality child care was consistently identified as one of the most pressing challenges for families in Jurupa Valley. While participants acknowledged the presence of caring and attentive providers in the community, access remains constrained by limited availability, long waitlists, and systemic barriers that make child care difficult to secure for working families. Parents described significant misalignment between provider hours and work schedules, particularly for those employed full-time or in jobs with non-traditional hours. As a result, many families rely heavily on informal caregiving arrangements, including grandparents and extended family members, to manage daily drop-offs and pickup needs.

Families also emphasized challenges navigating the child care system itself. Participants reported limited guidance on how to enroll children in care, particularly when accessing subsidized child care through programs such as the Child Development Agency (CDA). Even when families were ultimately successful in securing care, the process was often described as lengthy and confusing, with wait times extending several months. This lack of clear navigation support contributed to stress and instability during critical periods for both children and caregivers, reinforcing the perception that services exist but are difficult to access without additional assistance.

⁵ City of Jurupa Valley. *Jurupa Valley Economic Development Strategic Plan 2025-2028: Rooted in Community, Growing with Opportunities*. 2025.

<<https://www.jurupavalley.org/DocumentCenter/View/4202/Jurupa-Valley-EDSP--Booklet-Final>>

Despite these access barriers, families expressed strong appreciation for the quality of care once enrolled. Parents described providers as attentive, relationship driven, and deeply invested in children’s development, noting the importance of environments where children are known personally and supported in building positive habits, skills, and emotional wellbeing. Bilingual care and communication tools, such as provider applications that allow parents to receive regular updates, were highlighted as meaningful assets. At the same time, families expressed interest in expanded dual language immersion opportunities and more culturally responsive practices, particularly related to nutrition. Concerns were also raised about meals served at child care centers being heavily processed and carbohydrate dense, with limited access to culturally relevant food options.



Child care challenges were further compounded by illness policies and perceived capacity limitations. Parents shared that when children became sick, caregivers often had no alternative but to miss work, increasing financial strain and job insecurity.

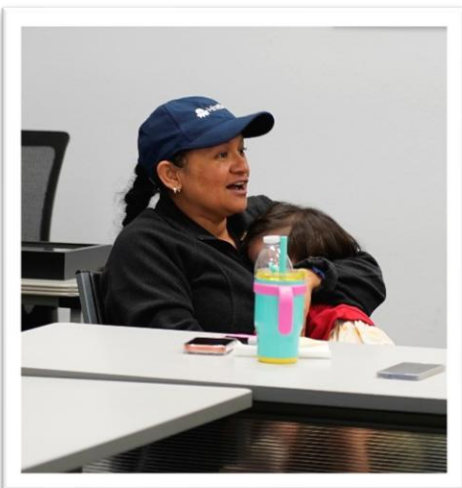
While providers were described as meeting appropriate child-to-staff ratios, some families still perceived

care environments as stretched, suggesting a need for additional capacity, flexibility, and support. Overall, child care was not only identified as a practical daily challenge, but as a foundational issue affecting employment stability, family economic security, and parents’ ability to fully engage with other community resources.

Healthcare

Families raising young children in Jurupa Valley described healthcare as one of their most urgent and emotionally complex challenges. While some participants acknowledged that there are clinics located closer to them than in previous years, access alone does not translate into meaningful care. Parents emphasized that specialized services, particularly in mental health and behavioral health, are often difficult to secure locally, forcing families to travel outside the city for appropriate support.

One parent shared a powerful example that illustrates both the access and continuity gaps. After noticing developmental and behavioral concerns, the parent began seeking help through multiple providers. They met with several health professionals,



repeating intake forms and retelling their child's story each time. In some cases, evaluations felt surface level, with limited assessment and no sustained follow up. When school-based support was offered, it often consisted of a single meeting with little ongoing engagement.

The parent described how meaningful care requires time and trust. Children may not immediately open up in one clinical visit. Parents also need more than one appointment to feel comfortable sharing sensitive concerns. However,

the system often operates in short encounters rather than relationship-based models of care. Without follow up appointments, coordinated communication between providers, or a clear long-term plan, families are left feeling that they were "heard" but not truly supported.

For many families, the challenge is not simply finding a provider. It is finding comprehensive, culturally responsive, and sustained care that treats both the child and family as whole people. The listening session made clear that improving healthcare in Jurupa Valley requires more than expanding appointments. It requires building systems that prioritize continuity, trust, and integrated support for young children and their caregivers.

Housing Stability

Even though hospitals and clinics are more accessible, community members stress the importance of culturally competent providers, namely, those who understand their linguistic backgrounds, values, and lived realities.

Jurupa Valley's infrastructure, though expanding, has not kept pace with the growth of vulnerable populations, including unhoused individuals and newly arrived immigrant families. Gaps in youth programming, behavioral supports, and transportation persist. However, the community is marked by strong mutual aid networks and proactive service providers. Local organizations and schools are recognized for their responsiveness and willingness to partner with families in addressing day-to-day challenges.

Testimonies underscore both unmet needs and the importance of local assets:

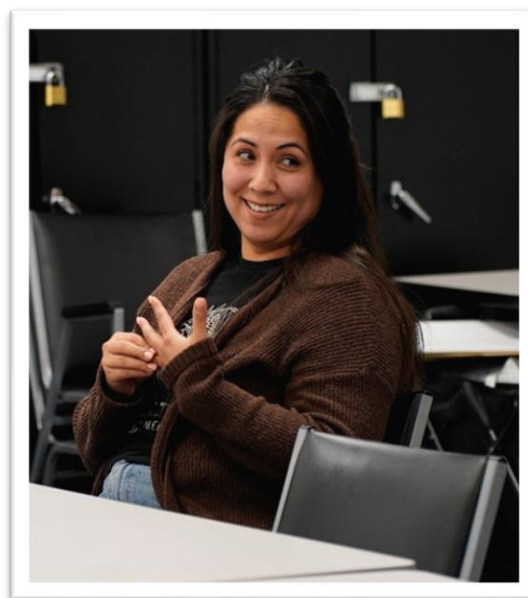
- *"Local providers really try to help, even though the resources aren't always enough."*

- *"We're closer to hospitals, but finding a doctor who understands our culture is still hard."*

While in Mecca, concerns were shaped by geographic isolation, underinvestment, and structural inequities, Jurupa Valley concerns did not focus on distance or basic infrastructure and instead emphasized quality, cultural relevance, and system coordination. Jurupa Valley's experience highlights the potential of targeted investments to amplify community strengths such as parental engagement, youth programs, and collaboration between schools and nonprofits while addressing persistent shortfalls in child care, housing stability, and culturally relevant health services.

Hemet

Hemet's recent history reflects a landscape in transition. For decades, the Hemet and San Jacinto Valley region developed as an agricultural powerhouse resulting in large-scale farming of fruits, vegetables, and other crops, making the San Jacinto Valley one of California's most productive agricultural regions. The combination of a low cost of living, tranquil surroundings, and abundant recreational amenities contributed to the city's emergence as a preferred destination for retirees, resulting in the valley originally being founded as primarily a senior retirement community.⁶



This shift also attracted numerous healthcare providers specializing in adult and geriatric care. However, renewed investments in the region, including new affordable housing developments, have recently attracted younger families with children to the region who commute to jobs in neighboring San Diego, Orange and Los Angeles counties where housing is unaffordable and unattainable.

While residents say they value Hemet's small-town atmosphere, they also express a strong sense of neighborliness and diversity. Families consistently described gaps in services and supports that make raising children increasingly difficult. Participants emphasized that although some basic needs are being met, access to family centered

⁶ City of Hemet. *History of Hemet*. 2026. <<https://www.hemetca.gov/120/History-of-Hemet>>

resources remains limited, particularly for parents of young children and those navigating complex health, housing, or economic circumstances.

Participants also expressed that although some basic needs are being met, access to family centered resources remains limited, particularly for parents of young children and those navigating complex health, housing, or economic circumstances. The small-town atmosphere and strong sense of neighborliness, along with the area's diversity, were touted as strengths; however, families consistently described gaps in services and supports that make raising children increasingly difficult.

A couple with a one-year-old daughter that attended the session said they recently moved from San Diego County to Hemet and said they came to learn about First 5 services in their new community. The mother of the young girl spoke Spanish and said she also has a 19-year-old son who she took to First 5 sponsored activities and events in San Diego County when he was her daughter's age. She was looking for activities where she could connect with other moms, and her daughter could play and interact with children her age. She was struggling to find and connect to similar services here.

Healthcare and Family Support Services

A dominant concern among caregivers was healthcare access, especially following the closure of the local hospital's labor and delivery services in 2023. Families reported having to travel up to 40 minutes to hospitals in Moreno Valley, Riverside, or Rancho Springs for maternity care and pediatric services. Participants noted a general lack of specialized pediatric providers in the region, including occupational therapists, speech pathologists, pediatric dentists, and behavioral health professionals. These gaps were especially challenging for families seeking early intervention services, lactation support, and care for children with developmental or behavioral needs.

In addition to many critical healthcare services, participants consistently identified gaps in supportive and preventive programming, especially for families with young children. One of the attendees, a doula (one of only two known to be serving the region), expressed a strong desire for more parenting classes, prenatal education, home visitation, lactation courses, and other parenting services to support new parents and families moving to the region. The significant shortage of such programs has exceeded the capacity of local doulas, highlighting the necessity for a more comprehensive system to address regional demands.

Food Affordability and Economic Strain

The cost of living with an emphasis on food affordability also emerged as a significant barrier. Access to healthy, affordable food is a daily concern as many neighborhoods were identified as "food deserts" with few grocery stores offering fresh produce. Many

families described limited access to affordable, healthy food options, with dollar stores often serving as the primary source for groceries. Dollar stores, while convenient, provide limited options for nutritious meals. Rising food costs, coupled with the need to travel outside of Hemet or San Jacinto for better options, placed additional pressure on household budgets. While community food drives and local efforts were acknowledged as helpful, families expressed the need for more permanent grocery options, economic development, and job opportunities to support long-term stability.

Many cited the local Mount San Jacinto Community College as a strong community resource but noted that the lack of economic opportunity regionally. There was notable excitement around the opening of a Villarta Supermarket that provided improved access to healthy and nutritious groceries while also providing local job opportunities for the community. However, it was noted that the location was not ideal for residents in more rural areas of the city that have not been developed.

Housing Stability and Homelessness

Participants also raised concerns about housing instability and homelessness, noting visible encampments throughout the region and the impact of housing insecurity on children and families. Parents and caregivers shared that many individuals experiencing homelessness face intersecting challenges, including unemployment, prior incarceration, addiction, and barriers to accessing Medi-Cal and other services.

While county led outreach teams, rapid rehousing vouchers, and employment programs were recognized as important resources, families emphasized the ongoing need for expanded housing solutions and supportive services. Employment programs were recognized as important resources. A representative from Riverside County Supervisor Yxstian Gutierrez's office was also in attendance and was able to highlight initiatives and programs directly relating to participant concerns. He noted that while county led outreach teams, rapid rehousing vouchers, and employment programs were important resources, the families' unanimous emphasis on the ongoing need for expanded housing solutions and supportive services were meaningful feedback for him to bring back to the Supervisor.

The San Jacinto Valley region, often referred to as the Hemacinto Valley by locals, retains a small-town atmosphere, with strong neighborhood connections and outdoor assets like parks and open space. Despite the gaps in services identified, participants noted that informal networks, neighborhood connections, and community-based initiatives help families stay connected and support one another.

The demand for services for families with young children continues to grow, especially as the region experiences a baby boom and shortly after the only maternity services in

the valley closed. Participants expressed alarm about having to travel outside the valley to give birth. They also noted that there is a need for CPR and child safety training, along with drop-in child care options. Working parents described significant strain related to limited child care availability, noting reliance on informal caregiving arrangements and weekend-only support. Families expressed a strong need for flexible, drop-in child care options to better balance employment, caregiving, and personal wellbeing.

Overall, Hemet families conveyed both pride in their community and concern about the lack of infrastructure needed to support a growing population of young families. Their experiences underscore the need for targeted investments in healthcare access, early childhood services, food access, housing stability, and family centered programming to ensure Hemet can meet the evolving needs of its residents as the valley continues to attract families with young children.



Policy and Investment Recommendations

Grounded in the lived experiences of families who participated in the Riverside County Community Listening and Learning Sessions, these recommendations are intended to guide First 5 Riverside County, policymakers, and public and private funders toward investments that are equitable, place-based, and responsive to the realities of families with young children ages 0–5. Together, they emphasize strengthening local infrastructure, expanding access to essential services, and centering parent and caregiver voice as a core component of effective policy and systems change.

1. Expand Accessible, Community-Based Healthcare Infrastructure

Invest in healthcare solutions that bring services closer to families, particularly in rural, agricultural, and fast-growing regions. This includes supporting the development of satellite clinics, mobile health units, and community-based service hubs that provide pediatric, prenatal, behavioral, and mental health care. Investments should prioritize culturally and linguistically responsive providers and support workforce recruitment, retention, and training in high-need areas. Reducing wait times, travel distances, and system fragmentation is essential to ensure timely and continuous care for young children and their caregivers.

2. Strengthen and Diversify Child Care Systems to Meet Family Needs

Increase investment in a mixed delivery child care system that reflects the varied schedules, cultural preferences, and economic realities of Riverside County families. This includes supporting family child care homes, center-based providers, and flexible or drop-in child care models that accommodate non-traditional work hours. Policymakers and funders should expand technical assistance, startup funding, and professional development for providers, while simplifying navigation and enrollment processes for families seeking subsidized care. Child care should be treated as foundational infrastructure that supports workforce participation, family stability, and early child development.

3. Invest in Family-Centered Preventive and Early Childhood Supports

Significantly expand access to preventive services that support families early and holistically. This includes prenatal education, home visiting, parenting classes, lactation support, developmental screenings, and early intervention services. Investments should ensure that these supports are available regardless of geography, language, or immigration status, and are delivered through trusted community-based organizations. Strengthening early childhood systems upstream can reduce later crises while improving long-term outcomes for children and families.

4. Improve Access to Healthy Food

Support coordinated, place-based solutions to food insecurity that reflect the realities of families living in food deserts and rural communities. This includes incentivizing grocery stores and farmers' markets in under-resourced areas, supporting culturally relevant nutrition programs, and subsidizing food delivery for families facing transportation or safety barriers. Integrating nutrition education and food access into early childhood and family-serving programs can further support child health and household stability.

5. Protect and Support Immigrant and Mixed-Status Families

Increase investments in legal assistance, trauma-informed social services, and community outreach for immigrant and mixed-status families experiencing fear, discrimination, or heightened enforcement activity. Policies and programs should ensure access to safe and trusted spaces for families to receive information, services, and support without fear. Culturally affirming communication, multilingual outreach, and partnerships with trusted messengers are critical to reducing isolation and ensuring families can safely access essential resources.

6. Strengthen Housing Stability and Family Economic Security

Support policies and investments that address housing instability, homelessness, and economic strain among families with young children. This includes expanding access to affordable housing, rental assistance, rapid rehousing programs, and wraparound supports that connect families to employment, child care, and healthcare. Family economic stability should be treated as a core determinant of child wellbeing, with coordinated strategies that address both immediate needs and long-term opportunities.

7. Center Parent and Caregiver Voice as Civic Infrastructure

Institutionalize family engagement as an ongoing component of policy and investment decisions. Build on the Community Listening and Learning Sessions by supporting Community Tables, parent advisory councils, and leadership development opportunities that compensate families for their time and expertise. Embedding their voices and lived experiences into the ongoing work of the IE Children's Cabinet and First 5 Riverside County will strengthen accountability, improve program design, and ensure investments reflect what communities truly need.

8. Commit to Continuous Community Engagement and Learning

Establish regular, recurring opportunities for community listening, feedback, and shared learning across Riverside County. Use data and qualitative insights from families to inform continuous improvement, track progress, and adapt strategies over time. Sustained engagement—rather than one-time consultation—is essential to building trust, strengthening systems, and achieving equitable outcomes for families with young children.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The experiences and insights shared by Riverside County families underscore the resilience, resourcefulness, and determination present across the region. Yet, they also highlight systemic gaps and longstanding barriers that cannot be overcome without intentional, equity-driven policy and investment. By centering the voices of parents and caregivers, First 5 Riverside County can lead a transformation and build a future where every child and family, regardless of zip code or background, has the support and opportunity to thrive. The work ahead calls for persistent engagement, collaborative leadership, and an unwavering commitment to justice and inclusion.

The IE Children’s Cabinet seeks to continue to engage families after these Community Listening and Learning Sessions by inviting them to participate in regional Community Tables to collectively engage with other parents, youth and community to better advocate for health and racial equity. Parents will earn a stipend for their participation while learning how to engage with local and regional elected bodies to advocate on behalf of their community. A high percentage of families who participated in the listening sessions expressed interest in continuing their involvement through the Community Table. We are encouraged and energized by this response and look forward to deepening our collaboration with these families. Their willingness to stay engaged reaffirms the importance of building ongoing relationships, listening actively, and ensuring that community voices remain central to our collective work moving forward.

In building this community table we ensure that families are not just recipients of services but are valued experts in their lived experience and are welcomed as essential partners in shaping policies that directly affect their communities. Ensuring that parents have meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making, strengthens democracy, and leads to more responsive and equitable outcomes. Protecting and expanding spaces for authentic family voice helps build long-term civic infrastructure. It strengthens community power, improves policy implementation, and fosters accountability. When families are meaningfully engaged, place-based initiatives become more sustainable, culturally responsive, and impactful.

Methodology

Session Design and Approach

To ensure authenticity and depth of engagement, the community listening sessions were carefully designed with a participatory, inclusive approach. Facilitators, trained in trauma-informed and culturally responsive facilitation, followed a structured guide that emphasized psychological safety, confidentiality, and respect for all voices. Instructions for facilitators, including sample probing and follow-up questions in both English and Spanish were provided in addition to a Facilitator Feedback Form to identify challenges and opportunities for better facilitation on the future.

The structure of the community listening sessions was intentionally crafted to foster active participation and authentic dialogue, ensuring that every voice was heard and respected. We determined that the session should follow a structured yet flexible format to foster engagement and meaningful dialogue.

- **Dinner:** As sessions were held in the evening, a hot meal and refreshments are provided to all families in attendance.
- **Welcome and Introductions:** Setting the tone, building rapport, and explaining session purposes and ground rules.
- **Issue Identification:** Using color-coded sticky notes, participants identified major needs, assets, barriers, and gaps. Patterns emerged visually as notes were clustered by theme.
- **Small Group Exploration:** Focused discussions explore specifics around service access, child and family needs, helpful programs, and lived experiences, while encouraging narrative testimony.
- **Large Group Reflection and Synthesis:** Reporting, synthesizing, and collectively prioritizing top issues for policy action.
- **Closing and Next Steps:** Summarizing main takeaways, identifying community champions, and outlining plans for ongoing engagement.
- **Documentation:** Facilitators submitted detailed notes including demographics, direct quotes, observed assets, barriers, and recommendations for process improvement.

Before the Community Listening and Learning Sessions formally began, hot meals and refreshments were provided to families and engaged by facilitators in a casual and welcoming environment. This allowed families to be more comfortable with facilitators and other families in attendance while allowing a moment of community and socializing at the end of the day.

Facilitators played an essential part in making sure that all participants felt included, respected, and heard. Sessions began with introductions to the IECC staff, partners, and host organizations. Ground rules were collaboratively established, reinforcing the importance of active listening, non-judgment, and honoring diverse perspectives.

The methodology integrated both qualitative and consensus-building techniques. Issues were surfaced through a color-coded Sticky-Note activity, allowing participants to highlight their biggest needs, challenges, and community strengths.

- On a pink Sticky-Note, participants were asked to write or communicate with a facilitator about what they loved most about raising children in their respective community.
- On a yellow Sticky-Note, participants were asked to write or communicate to a facilitator about what challenges made raising children in their community difficult.

These Sticky-Notes were then read out loud and clustered into major themes. This visual clustering technique ensured that no voice was lost and helped identify collective themes and unique regional priorities. This process facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the concerns and needs expressed by families, while systematically analyzing broader themes specific to the community.

After larger community themes were identified, families were broken into small groups of no more than 7 people to discuss in more detail what families were experiencing to better identify tangible needs. In these small groups, facilitators were instructed to use open-ended prompts to draw out stories, encourage reflection on both positive and negative experiences, and probe into the root causes of challenges that were surfaced during the Sticky-Note activity. These areas of exploration included:

- **Biggest Needs:** What is your family's greatest need right now when it comes to raising your child(ren) in [Mecca, Jurupa Valley, Hemet]?
- **Challenges and Barriers:** Can you share a time when it was hard to get something your family needed here in [Mecca, Jurupa Valley, Hemet]? What did you need and what happened?"
- **Helpful Services:** What services or programs in [Mecca, Jurupa Valley, Hemet] have been most helpful for you and your children?
- **Gaps and Unmet Needs:** you tell us about a service or program you wanted or tried to get in [Mecca, Jurupa Valley, Hemet] but couldn't?
- **Lived Experiences:** Can you share a personal story about a time when a service or program either really helped your family, or when you needed help and couldn't get it?

Following this, attendees joined small group discussions, each facilitated to encourage deeper exploration of specific challenges, service experiences, and unmet needs. These small groups provided a safe space for sharing personal narratives and reflecting both positive and negative aspects of raising children locally.

After small-group discussions, participants reconvened for large-group reflections, where key insights were reported and prioritized. The sessions concluded with a summary of takeaways, next steps for community action and policy advocacy, and completion of facilitator assessments to improve future engagement.

Where needed, bilingual facilitators and materials ensured full participation for Spanish-speaking community members, and sessions were held in trusted, accessible community spaces. This is especially true in the city of Mecca, where the session was conducted completely in Spanish.

This format, informed by earlier planning and feedback by First 5 Riverside County staff and leadership, ensures that each participant can contribute, reflect, and collaborate. The session culminates in a group synthesis, where key insights are shared, priorities are set, and actionable next steps are outlined, paving the way for continued community involvement and policy development.

This multi-layered methodology ensured that data collection was both systematic and deeply human-centered, resulting in findings that reflect the complexity of Riverside County's communities.

Session Logistics and Participation Summary

IECC held three in-person listening sessions across Riverside County in the cities of Mecca, Jurupa Valley, and Hemet.

Mecca Session Details

- Session conducted primarily in Spanish with English translation available
- Date and Time: October 2, 2025, from 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM
- Location: Mecca Family & Farmworkers Service Center, 91275 66th Ave, Mecca, CA 92254
- Target Region: Coachella Valley Region (Coachella, Indio, Palm Springs, and surrounding areas)
- Number of initial registrants: 13 people registered.
- Number of parents/caregivers present at the session: 40 attendees.
- Key demographics collected from session: Participants were primarily parents and family members from eastern Riverside County communities such as Mecca,

Indio, North Shore, Thermal, and Coachella, with most identifying as Hispanic/Latiné and reported Spanish as the primary language spoken at home.

Jurupa Valley Session Details

- Session conducted primarily in English with Spanish translation
- Date and Time: October 16, 2025, from 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM
- Location: Reach Out Resource Center, Suite G. 8300 Limonite Ave, Jurupa Valley, CA 92509
- Target Region: Riverside County West End (Moreno Valley, Perris, Riverside, Jurupa Valley, Temecula, Corona, and surrounding areas).
- Number of initial registrants: 7 people registered.
- Number of parents/caregivers present at session: 14 attendees.
- Key demographics collected: Participants were primarily parents and family members from Jurupa Valley and nearby Riverside communities, with most identifying as Hispanic/Latiné and reported English and/or Spanish as the primary languages spoken at home.

Hemet Session Details

- Session conducted primarily in English with Spanish translation
- Time: January 29, 2026, from 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
- Location: AMR Hemet - 208 E Devonshire Ave #2985, Hemet, CA 92543
- Target Region: Riverside County San Jacinto Valley and surrounding areas.
- Number of initial registrants: 3 registrants.
- Number of parents/caregivers present at session: 6 attendees.
- Key demographics collected: 3 participants were primarily parents from Hemet, one was a representative from Supervisor Yxstian Gutierrez's Office, one was a child care provider, and one was a doula supporting birthing people in the region. Most identified as Hispanic/Latiné and reported English and Spanish as the primary languages spoken at home.

Marketing and Outreach Strategies

IECC implemented a marketing and outreach strategy that relied on close partners with existing community trust to engage with parents to notify them of the Community Listening and Learning Session opportunity. Social media posts were created and distributed across multiple platforms, reaching both broad audiences and targeted groups. These posts were further amplified by sharing them via email among nearly 3,000 contacts, including all Inland Empire (IE) Children's Cabinet members and their extensive networks to inform and invite families across Riverside County. Recruitment efforts relied heavily on the active engagement of Children's Cabinet members and

First 5 Riverside County grantees to conduct parent outreach and encourage families and caregivers to attend.

Barriers and Limitations

Marketing and Outreach

IECC continues to grow and maintain a large network of trusted partners across Riverside and San Bernardino counties, providing essential capacity building and advocacy support to ensure community needs are being met while ensuring nonprofit sustainability. Because of the nature of our core services and programs, IECC provides direct services to nonprofit leaders and staff rather than directly to the community-at-large. This means that IECC is highly dependent on the reputations and connections third party partners have with the community, as direct service providers, to ensure community is appropriately informed and engaged to participate in the Community Listening and Learning Sessions.

The outreach process for the Community Listening and Learning Sessions offered important lessons for future engagement efforts. While IECC appreciated the support and partnership of community organizations in sharing session information, IECC did not have direct oversight of when or how that information reached parents and caregivers. In some instances, information was shared close to the session dates, which may have limited families' ability to plan for participation. IECC also encouraged broader dissemination through First 5 Riverside County's grantee network; however, outreach primarily occurred through First 5 Riverside County's social media channels. Reflecting on this experience underscores the value of earlier, more coordinated communication strategies and multiple outreach pathways to ensure families have sufficient notice and equitable access to opportunities for engagement.

Looking ahead, IECC is committed to strengthening outreach efforts by working more directly and intentionally with trusted community partners to codesign outreach materials and public communications. This includes the purposeful incorporation of partner logos and organizational identities into flyer design and messaging that centers organizations that hold deep and longstanding relationships with families and are widely recognized as trusted messengers within their communities. By elevating these partners more visibly in outreach efforts, IECC aims to reinforce credibility, improve reach, and reduce barriers to participation. This approach reflects a commitment to equity driven engagement and honors the community rooted relationships that are essential to ensuring families receive information through sources they know and trust.

Digital Access and Communication Limitations

Reliance on digital outreach channels, including social media, did not consistently reach all families, particularly those with limited broadband access, device availability, or digital literacy. This digital divide constrained awareness of session opportunities and reinforced the need for diversified, community-based communication pathways. We learned that direct in-person parent engagement by trusted partners allowed for the greatest participatory engagement.

Geographic and Transportation Constraints

In rural and unincorporated areas, families face significant transportation barriers that limit their ability to participate in community engagement activities. Limited or nonexistent public transportation, long travel distances to meeting locations or services, and reliance on informal ride networks constrained both attendance and consistency of participation. These geographic realities disproportionately impacted families in areas such as Mecca and shaped who was able to engage and when.

IECC attempted to mediate these challenges by meeting in trusted centralized locations in various cities across Riverside County. This strategy aimed to make sessions more accessible for families by reducing travel times and leveraging venues familiar to community members, thereby fostering greater participation and comfort.

Language Access and Linguistic Diversity

While bilingual (English and Spanish) facilitation and materials were incorporated, language access remained a structural challenge. Many families speak Spanish or Indigenous languages as their primary language, and limited availability of interpretation across systems created barriers to full participation and understanding. This required additional facilitation support and underscored the need for expanded multilingual capacity in future engagement efforts.

First 5 was able to provide a handful of Spanish-speaking staff for support in Mecca, which dramatically helped ensure that more people who spoke Spanish were heard. This additional linguistic capacity facilitated deeper engagement, resulting in more inclusive participation and feedback from Spanish-speaking families.

Fear and Distrust Related to Immigration Enforcement

In some communities, particularly Mecca, fear associated with Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE) created an additional barrier to participation. Ongoing concerns about safety, visibility, and surveillance influenced families' willingness to attend public gatherings or share lived experiences openly. This context required trauma-informed facilitation and limited the reach of traditional outreach methods.

As detailed in our findings, this represented a substantial barrier, particularly for communities in Mecca where the significant presence of ICE impeded access to essential services and generated notable safety concerns.

Timing and Competing Family Responsibilities

Sessions were intentionally held in the evening and included meals to reduce participation barriers; however, many families still faced competing responsibilities related to work schedules, caregiving, and household demands. For agricultural and working families with nontraditional hours, even well-designed accommodations could not fully offset these constraints, affecting attendance and duration of participation.

Scope and Sample Size Limitations

Participation reflected the voices of nearly 45 parents and caregivers across three regions, providing rich qualitative insight but not a comprehensive representation of all Riverside County communities. Findings are illustrative rather than exhaustive and highlight the importance of continued, ongoing engagement to broaden representation over time.

Although Jurupa Valley and Hemet accounted for less than 25% of overall participation, the smaller size of these sessions fostered more personal and engaging conversations, allowing for deeper insight into the day-to-day issues families regularly experience.

Appendix

Appendix A. Session Facilitation Guide (English and Spanish)

Appendix B. Outreach Materials

APPENDIX

A

Session Facilitation Guide (English and Spanish)



Facilitator Guide for Community Listening and Learning Sessions

Instructions and Best Practices for Effective Session Facilitation

With Spanish Translation

Session Overview

Facilitators play a key role in ensuring that every participant feels welcomed, valued, and heard. These sessions will help inform First 5 San Bernardino County and the IE Children's Cabinet about community needs, barriers, and solutions, laying the groundwork for ongoing engagement and systemic change.

Purpose	Ground Rules
The purpose of the session is to learn about parents' experiences, needs and barriers. We are also inviting families to stay engaged through the establishment of an IE Children's Cabinet Community Table.	• Respect • Confidentiality • Every voice matters • Speak from your experience, and • Limit time, allow everyone to share
El objetivo de la sesión es conocer las experiencias, necesidades y barreras de los padres. Además, invitamos a las familias a seguir participando mediante la creación de una Mesa Comunitaria del Gabinete Infantil del IE.	• Respeto • Confidencialidad • Todas las voces cuentan • Habla desde tu propia experiencia • Limita el tiempo, permite que todos compartan

Preparation and Materials

- ☐ Sticky notes (multiple colors on table)
- ☐ Markers for facilitators
- ☐ Flip chart or wall space for clustering sticky notes
- ☐ Facilitator Guide with session questions

Session Flow and Facilitator Instructions

1. Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)

- Greet participants warmly and thank them for joining.
- Introduce yourself, co-facilitators, and note-takers.
- Share a brief reminder of the session's purpose (see above).
- Reiterate the ground rules (see above).

2. Sticky Note Issue Identification (10 minutes)

Ask each participant to share issues or topics related to raising children in their community (High Desert/San Bernardino County).

- Use color-coded sticky notes for different prompts:
 - PINK: "What is one thing you love most about raising children here?"
 - ROSA: "¿Cuál es una cosa que más te gusta de criar niños aquí?"
 - YELLOW: "What is one thing that makes raising children hard here?"
 - AMARILLO: "¿Cuál es una cosa que hace difícil criar niños aquí?"
- Invite each participant to write their own issues or topics related to raising children in their community directly onto sticky notes.
- Let participants know that the facilitator is happy to write on their behalf if they feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts verbally.
- Collect all sticky notes and cluster them on a wall or flip chart to visually display issue areas.
- Allow participants time to read others' notes and reflect.

3. Small Group Discussions (45-60 minutes)

- Begin with the clustered sticky note topics. Ask participants which issues are most important to them.
- Select 3 topics to explore in depth (you may do more topics if time permits).
- Use the session questions listed at the end of this document titled "Community Listening and Learning Session: Small Group Discussion Questions", covering the following areas:
 - Biggest Needs/Helpful Services
 - Challenges, Barriers, or Gaps
 - Lived Experiences and Stories

Extra Guidance:

- Encourage probing questions to gain deeper insight, such as:
 - "What made it hard?" or "How did it affect your family?"
 - "¿Qué lo hizo difícil?" o "¿Cómo afectó a tu familia?"

- Frequently ask the group if others agree with statements or have similar experiences to build consensus and keep the discussion focused. For example:
 - “Does anyone else relate to what was just shared?” or “Is this concern something others have faced?”
 - ¿Alguien más se identifica con lo que se acaba de compartir? o ¿Es esta preocupación algo que otros también han enfrentado?
- Facilitators should jot down top points, notable quotes, and consensus items, clustering similar themes for later presentation.

4. Large Group Reflection and Reporting (20 minutes)

Each group’s facilitator, alongside a parent participant, presents 1-2 key insights or stories from their table (2 minutes each).

- After all groups have shared, prompt the room with the relevant closing question:
 - Mecca: “If you could fix one local condition tomorrow, what’s first and why?”
 - Jurupa Valley: “What local partners or places do you trust for help—and what would make support easier to get?”
 - Virtual: “What did you try to find online or by phone that didn’t work—and what would a friction-free experience look like?”
- Document emerging themes and consensus.

Después de que todos los grupos hayan compartido, plantea a la sala la pregunta de cierre correspondiente:

- Mecca: “Si pudieras cambiar una condición local mañana, ¿cuál sería la primera y por qué?”
- Jurupa Valley: “¿Qué socios locales o lugares de la zona te inspiran confianza para pedir ayuda—y qué haría que fuera más fácil acceder a ese apoyo?”
- Virtual: “¿Qué intentaste buscar por Internet o por teléfono que no funcionó—y cómo sería una experiencia sin obstáculos?”

5. Closing Activity and Next Steps (10 minutes)

- Thank participants for their time, honesty, and insights.
- Share how their input will be used:
 - Information collected from this as well as two other listening and learning sessions will be summarized and offered to First 5 San Bernardino County for consideration as they help to create a better future for families with young children.
 - Information will also be used to help shape the IE Children’s Cabinet Community Table, which will launch in the Spring of 2026.

Invite participants to stay connected and let them know about future outreach (e.g., Community Table participation).

- Thank you to all participants, staff, and First 5 San Bernardino County.
- Distribute \$25 gift cards to participants.

Facilitation Tips and Best Practices

- Be inclusive and attentive to all voices, especially those who may be less comfortable speaking in groups.
- Use open-ended and probing questions to encourage deeper sharing.
- Summarize and restate what's heard to confirm understanding and capture consensus.
- Manage time to ensure all key areas are covered and everyone has participated.
- Maintain confidentiality and respect at all times.
- Encourage storytelling, as personal experiences are powerful for illustrating issues and solutions.
- Support parents with translation, note-taking, and other needs as applicable.

If a participant is sharing at length and time becomes a concern, facilitators can gently interject by expressing appreciation for the input and letting the group know you want to ensure everyone has a chance to speak. For example, say:

"Thank you so much for sharing your experience. In the interest of time and making sure we hear from everyone, I'd like to open the floor to others."

"Muchas gracias por compartir tu experiencia. En aras de aprovechar el tiempo y asegurarnos de que todos puedan participar, me gustaría dar la palabra a otras personas."

If there is anything else they would like to add, please encourage them to write it down on a sticky note or stay after the session to talk.

Session Documentation Outline

See the Community Listening and Learning cover page to fill in the following information:

- **Session Overview:** Date, time, and location.
- **Group Profile:** Total number of participants and brief demographic summary data.
- **Assets and Challenges:** Summarize the top three strengths and challenges identified.
- **Area of Exploration Summaries:** Top issues, stories, & quotes for each discussion area.
- **Parent Priorities:** Three key requests for change or improvement.
- **Conclusion:** What stood out, plus recommendations for future exploration.

Thank you for supporting meaningful community dialogue and helping amplify the voices of families throughout San Bernardino County!

Small Group Discussion Questions

Riverside County Community Listening & Learning Sessions

#1 Area of Exploration: Biggest Needs

Question: "What is your family's greatest need right now when it comes to raising your child(ren) in the High Desert/San Bernardino County?"

- Facilitator Probes: (if needed):
 - "Why is this the most important need for your family?"
 - "How would getting what you need change your child's life or your family's life?"

Área de Exploración #1: Mayores Necesidades

Pregunta: "¿Cuál es la mayor necesidad de su familia en este momento en relación con la crianza de sus hijos en el Desierto alto/Condado de San Bernardino?"

Preguntas de Apoyo del Facilitador (si es necesario):

- "¿Por qué esta es la necesidad más importante para su familia?"
- "¿Cómo cambiaría la vida de su hijo(a) o de su familia si recibieran lo que necesitan?"

#2 Area of Exploration: Challenges and Barriers

Question: "Can you share a time when it was really hard to get something your family needed here in the High Desert/San Bernardino County? What did you need and what happened?"

- Facilitator Probes: (if needed):
 - "What did you try to do to get what you needed?"
 - "Were there specific barriers that got in the way (like transportation, cost, or language)?"
 - "How did not getting what you needed impact your family?"
 - "What would have made it easier for you?"

Área de Exploración #2: Retos y Barreras

Pregunta: “¿Puede compartir una ocasión en la que fue muy difícil obtener algo que su familia necesitaba aquí en el Desierto Alto/Condado de San Bernardino? ¿Qué necesitaban y qué ocurrió?”

Preguntas de Apoyo del Facilitador (si es necesario):

- “¿Qué intentó hacer para obtener lo que necesitaba?”
- “¿Hubo barreras específicas que se interpusieron (como transporte, costo o idioma)?”
- “¿Cómo afectó a su familia no haber recibido lo que necesitaban?”
- “¿Qué le habría facilitado obtener lo que necesitaba?”

#3 Area of Exploration: Helpful Services

Question: “What services or programs in High Desert/San Bernardino County have been most helpful for you and your children?”

- Facilitator Probes and Follow-up:
 - “How did you hear or learn about the program or service you found helpful?”
 - “How did this program or service help your family?”
 - “What makes it work well for you?”
 - “What difference have you noticed in your child or family because of it?”

Área de Exploración #3: Servicios Útiles

Pregunta: “¿Qué servicios o programas en el Desierto Alto/Condado de San Bernardino han sido los más útiles para usted y sus hijos?”

Preguntas de Apoyo y Seguimiento del Facilitador:

- “¿Cómo se enteró o conoció el programa o servicio que le resultó útil?”
- “¿Cómo ayudó este programa o servicio a su familia?”
- “¿Qué hace que funcione bien para usted?”
- “¿Qué cambios ha notado en su hijo(a) o familia gracias a este servicio?”

#4 Area of Exploration: Gaps and Unmet Needs

Question: “Can you tell us about a service or program you wanted or tried to get in High Desert/San Bernardino County but couldn’t?”

- Facilitator Probes and Follow-up: Ask participants to share specific **examples**, not just general needs, to help uncover **system barriers** (e.g., transportation, waitlists, cost, language).
 - “What made it hard to get the help you needed?”
 - “What did you do instead?”
 - “What would have made it easier for your family to get that support?”

Área de Exploración #4: Vacíos y Necesidades No Atendidas

Pregunta: “¿Puede contarnos sobre algún servicio o programa que quiso obtener o intentó acceder en el Desierto alto/Condado de San Bernardino pero no pudo?”

Preguntas de Apoyo y Seguimiento del Facilitador:

- Anime a los participantes a compartir ejemplos específicos, no solo necesidades generales, para ayudar a identificar barreras del sistema (por ejemplo, transporte, listas de espera, costo, idioma).
 - “¿Qué dificultó obtener la ayuda que necesitaba?”
 - “¿Qué hizo en lugar de eso?”
 - “¿Qué habría facilitado que su familia recibiera ese apoyo?”

#5 Area of Exploration: Lived Experience

Question: “Can you share a personal story about a time when a service or program either really helped your family – or when you needed help and couldn’t get it?”

- Facilitator Probes: Encourage storytelling – remind participants their voices will be shared (anonymously) with decision-makers to help shape better services.
 - “What happened, and how did it affect your family?”
 - “How did you feel before and after that experience?”
 - “What would you want decision-makers to understand from your story?”

Área de Exploración #5: Experiencia Vivida

Pregunta: “¿Puede compartir una historia personal sobre una ocasión en la que un servicio o programa realmente ayudó a su familia – o cuando necesitó ayuda y no pudo obtenerla?”

Preguntas de Apoyo del Facilitador:

- Fomente la narración – recuerde a los participantes que sus voces serán compartidas (de forma anónima) con quienes toman decisiones para mejorar los servicios.
 - “¿Qué pasó y cómo afectó a su familia?”
 - “¿Cómo se sintió antes y después de esa experiencia?”
 - “¿Qué le gustaría que los responsables de tomar decisiones comprendieran a partir de su historia?”

Session Cover Sheet

Riverside County Community Listening & Learning Sessions

Date: January 29, 2026 | **Time:** 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Location: AMR Hemet. 208 E Devonshire Ave #2985, Hemet, CA 92543

Facilitator: _____ **Notetaker:** _____

Table Language	Total Participants at Table	Total Male	Total Female
English Spanish			

Top 3 Assets <i>Pink Sticky Notes</i>	Top 3 Barriers <i>Yellow Sticky Notes</i>
• • •	• • •

Parent Priorities: Top three key requests for change or improvement.

1

2

3

Conclusion: What stood out, plus recommendations for future exploration.

Facilitator Feedback Form

Community Listening and Learning Session

Thank you for facilitating a Small Group Discussion as part of our Community Listening and Learning Session. Your feedback is invaluable in helping us improve future sessions.

What Worked Well

What aspects of the session (e.g., discussion questions, group size, facilitation guide) were most effective?

Were there any moments that felt especially meaningful or productive?

Participant Engagement

What, if anything, made it difficult to facilitate the conversation or engage with participants?

Were there questions or topics that participants found confusing or challenging?

How would you describe participant engagement (e.g., willingness to share, openness, participation)?

What strategies helped encourage quieter participants to share their perspectives?

Support and Resources

Did you have the support you needed during the session (e.g., co-facilitators, note takers, tech support, supplies)?

What additional support or resources would be helpful next time?

Suggestions for Improvement

What changes would make the facilitation process smoother in the future?

Are there any topics or questions you would add or revise?

Additional Comments

Is there anything else you'd like us to know about your experience as a facilitator?

APPENDIX

B

Outreach Materials



CHILDREN'S
CABINET

FREE food for attendees!

(Make sure to register)



Inland Empire Community

Listening & Learning Sessions

Join listening sessions for parents
and families in **Riverside County!**

Why participate?

Have a space to share what matters most to you and your family, what challenges you face, what support you wish existed, and how services like child care have (or haven't) worked for you. Your voice will help guide how programs and services are provided across the Inland Empire.

Who is encouraged to attend?

- **Parents/families** of children ages between **0-5** years old.

**Parents of children of 6+ are also welcome to attend and provide more insights that can help shape the work organizations do.*

**Scan QR Code to register for any session
that fits your schedule!**

**Available sessions from August 2025 through
December 2025**

If you have questions or are in need of special accommodations, please email us at
info@ieccnonprofit.org

Gift Cards
& Stipends
available for
participating
in sessions
held in person!



bit.ly/riversidelisting25

Supported by:





**Listening & Learning
Session Dates**

Riverside County Sessions

October 2, 2025

***Spanish Session with English translation available**

- **Time:** 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
- **Location:** Mecca Family & Farmworkers Service Center, 91275 66th Ave, Mecca, CA 92254
- **Target Region:** Coachella Valley Region (Coachella, Indio, Palm Springs, and surrounding areas).

October 16, 2025

Session available in English only.

- **Time:** 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
- **Location:** Reach Out Resource Center, Suite G, Jurupa Valley, 8300 Limonite Ave, Jurupa Valley, CA 92509
- **Target Region:** Riverside County West End (Moreno Valley, Perris, Riverside, Jurupa Valley, Temecula, Corona, and surrounding areas).

December 9, 2025

***Spanish translation available**

- **Time:** 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM
- **Location:** Virtual, Zoom
- **Target Region:** All Riverside County



**Scan QR Code or visit the link below to register
for any session that fits your schedule!**

bit.ly/riversidelisting25

Supported by:





CHILDREN'S
CABINET

¡Comida incluida como parte del evento!
(Asegúrese de registrarse)



Inland Empire Comunidad

Sesiones de diálogo y aprendizaje

¡Únase a las sesiones de diálogo para padres y familias en el condado de Riverside!

¿Por qué participar?

Este encuentro es una oportunidad para compartir lo que más le importa a usted y a su familia, los desafíos que enfrentan, el apoyo que desearían que existiera y cómo servicios como el cuidado infantil les han funcionado (o no). Su opinión ayudará a orientar la prestación de programas y servicios en todo el Inland Empire.

¿Quién está invitado a participar?

- **Padres/familias** de niños de **0 a 5 años**.

**Los padres de niños de 6 años o más también pueden asistir y compartir más información que pueda ayudar la forma de trabajar de organizaciones que les brindan servicios.*

¡Escanee el código QR para registrarse en cualquier sesión que se ajuste a su horario!

Sesiones disponibles desde agosto de 2025 hasta diciembre de 2025

Si tiene preguntas o necesita algún tipo de atención especial, envíenos un correo electrónico a info@ieccnonprofit.org

¡Tarjetas de regalo y bonos disponibles al participar en sesiones en persona!



bit.ly/riversidelisting25

Con el apoyo de:





Dialogar y aprender
Fechas de las sesiones

Sesiones del condado de Riverside

2 de Octubre de 2025

***Sesión en español. Traducción al inglés disponible.**

- **Hora:** 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
- **Ubicación:** Mecca Family & Farmworkers Service Center, 91275 66th Ave, Mecca, CA 92254
- **Áreas de enfoque:** Coachella Valley Region (Coachella, Indio, Palm Springs, and surrounding areas).

16 de octubre de 2025

***Sesión solamente en inglés.**

- **Hora:** 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
- **Ubicación:** Reach Out Resource Center, Suite G, Jurupa Valley, 8300 Limonite Ave, Jurupa Valley, CA 92509
- **Áreas de enfoque:** Riverside County West End (Moreno Valley, Perris, Riverside, Jurupa Valley, Temecula, Corona, and surrounding areas).

9 de diciembre de 2025

***Traducción al español disponible.**

- **Hora:** 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM
- **Ubicación:** Virtual, Zoom
- **Áreas de enfoque:** Todo el condado de Riverside



¡Escanee el código QR o visite el link de abajo para registrarse en cualquier sesión que se ajuste a su horario!

bit.ly/riversidelisting25

Con el apoyo de: