2026



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL

5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Santa Barbara County Education Office
Susan C. Salcido, Superintendent

Santa Barbara County Child Care Planning Council
quality care

STRATEGIC PURPOSE AND DIRECTION

The aim of the 2026 5-Year Strategic Plan is to advance a more coordinated, accessible, and responsive early care and education system that strengthens collaboration among partners, reduces barriers for families and providers, and improves equitable access to high-quality, developmentally rich care and learning opportunities that set the foundation for life-long success. The following guide the Strategic Plan:

Problem Statement	Families experience difficulty finding affordable, high quality early care and education that meets their needs, particularly for infants and toddlers in various regions within Santa Barbara County; providers juggle workforce shortages, rising operational costs, and changing educational and funding landscapes that impact the stability, sustainability, and availability of quality early care and education; and the early care and education system is fragmented and in need of alignment.
Strategic Approach	Through collaboration, advocacy, and innovation, Santa Barbara County Child Care Planning Council (SBCCPC) will work with partners to assess and plan for expanded, equitable access to early care and education, strengthen the workforce, align with education systems, and elevate the voices of children, families, and providers.

Key Definitions

The term ***early care and education*** is used interchangeably with ***child care*** throughout this Plan, and refers to all of the types of licensed care, including home-based family child care (FCC) and center-based programs, as well as license-exempt care. Some offer part-time, part-year care, while others offer full-day, full-year care. Some are run privately (non-profit or for-profit), and some are operated by a local school district, or managed by a state-funded program or a federally-funded program like Head Start.

High quality programs are defined as early learning environments that are welcoming, inclusive, and supportive of children of all abilities, cultures, races, languages, and backgrounds. This includes programs that:

- Meet and/or exceed state requirements and provide developmentally appropriate care and education through joyful, play-based learning in a safe, nurturing setting.
- Are staffed by a qualified and stable workforce that maintains a supportive work environment with fair compensation, comprehensive benefits, ongoing professional learning, adequate staffing, and paid planning and collaboration time.
- Foster strong relationships among children, staff, and families, and encourage meaningful family engagement and partnerships.
- Provide children with foundational support and skills to succeed in school and thrive in life.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY: CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL

Every county in California has a state-mandated Local Planning Council (LPC) funded by the California Department of Social Services. The Santa Barbara County Child Care Planning Council (SBCCPC) operates under the authority of the County Board of Supervisors and the County Superintendent of Schools. The Council is responsible for planning and coordinating early care and education services for children ages 0 to 12 years old throughout Santa Barbara County. This includes preparing a comprehensive county-wide child care plan, also known as a Strategic Plan, designed to mobilize public and private resources to address identified needs. The following are the three primary roles of LPCs:

Assess and Plan

Identify community needs, analyze data, conduct needs assessments, set priorities, and inform local planning.

Convene and Coordinate

Bring together partners, facilitate collaboration, align efforts, and strengthen cross-sector coordination.

Communicate and Advocate

Elevate community needs, build awareness, inform policy and funding decisions, and advocate for system improvements.

SBCCPC MISSION

We lead and collaborate in planning, coordinating and advocating for high quality, affordable and accessible early care and education for all children and families in Santa Barbara County.

SBCCPC VISION

We envision a community that values all children and families.

The SBCCPC aims to improve conditions for children, parents, early care and education providers, and the local community by convening partners, assessing community needs, strengthening collaborations, elevating family and provider voices, and informing planning and advocacy efforts that support a more equitable, coordinated, and sustainable early care and education system throughout Santa Barbara County.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY: CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL

The SBCCPC endorses Uplift Child Care Coalition's Shared Vision for the Central Coast.

A SHARED VISION FOR THE CENTRAL COAST

Child care is essential to the wellbeing, prosperity, and future of California's Central Coast; and must be high quality, accessible, and affordable for all families. Together, we commit to advancing a child care system that uplifts every child, every family, and every community across our six counties.

Collectively we recognize that...

- Child Care is a Foundation for lifelong learning and development.
- Child Care is a Critical Element of community infrastructure.
- Child Care is Crucial for economic vitality and workforce participation.
- Child Care is Strengthened by skilled, valued, and well-supported educators.
- Child Care is an Investment in our collective future.
- Child Care is a Shared responsibility and a shared opportunity.



FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIES

The Strategic Plan is organized around two interconnected and overlapping focus areas: Workforce and Access. Each focus area includes strategies that are aligned with the LPC's three primary roles: Assess and Plan, Convene and Coordinate, and Communicate and Advocate.

Workforce Focus Area

GOAL	A stronger and more stable workforce that expands access to high quality early care and education opportunities for children and families.

Strategies What will be done in order to achieve the goal?	Outputs What activities or products will be completed?
Assess and Plan • Identify workforce gaps, needs, and priorities through cross-sector planning and collaboration.	• Completed Needs Assessment in 2030. • Annual community progress report of emerging needs and system level outcomes. • Cross-sector systems map of workforce initiative(s) distributed to stakeholders at summits or meetings (e.g., of community stakeholders: chambers, employers, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), school-age providers, early care and education providers and workforce, families, government officials, policy makers, institutes of higher education, etc.). • Compilation of best practice strategies and resources for directors to share with teachers. • Workforce communication campaign and communication materials developed and launched. • Prioritized policy agenda that guides and tracks LPC advocacy efforts aligned to a timeline.
Convene and Coordinate • Convene cross-sector partners and track efforts to strengthen early care and education career pathways, and advance coordinated strategies that support recruitment, retention, compensation, professional development, and sustainability. • Coordinate partners to create a compendium of resources for child care programs to improve retention, recruitment, and sustainability of the early care and education workforce.	
Communicate and Advocate • Support coordinated communication and outreach efforts that increase awareness of early care and education workforce needs, challenges, resources, and opportunities. • Advocate for policies, practices, and funding that value early care and education workers as essential and strengthen equitable compensation, workforce sustainability and retention, and career advancement opportunities within the field at the local, state, and federal level.	

FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIES

Access Focus Area

GOAL	Families access equitable, affordable, high quality early care and education that supports optimal whole child development.

Strategies What will be done in order to achieve the goal?	Outputs What activities or products will be completed?
Assess and Plan • Identify early care and education supply and unmet need, as well as barriers impacting equitable access, affordability, and quality.	• Completed Needs Assessment in 2030 • Annual community progress report of emerging needs and system level outcomes. • Cross-sector systems map of access initiative(s) distributed to stakeholders at summits or meetings (e.g., of community stakeholders: chambers, employers, LEAs, school-age providers, early care and education providers and workforce, families, government officials, policy makers, institutes of higher education, etc.). • Access communication campaign and communication materials developed and launched. • Prioritized policy agenda that guides and tracks LPC advocacy efforts aligned to a timeline.
Convene and Coordinate • Support and track system-level solutions that expand equitable access to affordable, high quality early care and education where it is most needed within the county. • Convene community partners to address barriers related to facilities, land use, and start-up challenges in order to expand early care and education supply, particularly for infants and toddlers.	
Communicate and Advocate • Support unified communication, outreach, and advocacy efforts in partnership with community stakeholders that build awareness about needs, options, and the value of high quality early care and education. • Advocate for and track policies, practices, and funding that support equitable, inclusive access to affordable, high quality early care and education at the local, state, and federal level.	

SHARED OUTPUTS AND IMPLEMENTATION

The outputs represent the primary activities and products that SBCCPC will complete in order to advance the Workforce and Access focus areas. The outputs are shared markers of implementation across the Council's three primary roles.

WORKFORCE AND ACCESS OUTPUTS

What activities or products will be completed?



Assess and Plan

- Completed Needs Assessment in 2030.
- Annual community workforce and access progress report on emerging needs and system-level outcomes.



Convene and Coordinate

- Cross-sector workforce and access systems maps of related initiatives distributed to community stakeholders at summits or meetings (e.g., chambers, employers, LEAs, school-age providers, early care and education providers and workforce, families, government officials, policy makers, institutes of higher education, etc.).



Communicate and Advocate

- Compilation of workforce best practice strategies and resources for directors to share with teachers.
- Workforce and access communication campaigns developed and launched. Workforce and access education and public awareness efforts launched and disseminated.
- Prioritized policy agenda that guides and tracks LPC advocacy efforts aligned to a timeline.

Accountability and Continuous Improvement

The Strategic Plan will be supported by an internal action plan that guides implementation, helps SBCCPC committees coordinate work, and provides structure for reviewing progress and priorities over time.



Holly Goldberg, PhD, facilitated this strategic planning process and created this report.

Santa Barbara County Child Care Planning Council

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Santa Barbara County Child Care Planning Council
Hope Education Center
3970 La Colina Road, Room 2
Santa Barbara, California 93110
(805) 964-4710 ext. 4473
sbcccpc@sbceo.org

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