

Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development Meeting Minutes

February 11, 2026

1. Welcome and Introductions of Commissioners, Alternates, and Guests

Chair Justin Blakely opened the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development Commission (Policy Roundtable) meeting at 10:01 a.m. by welcoming Commissioners and guests.

2. Comments from the Chair

Chair Blakely reflected on the First 5 LA Commission agenda item at the Policy Roundtable's February 2026 meeting. He noted that the spirited discussion was noticeably different than the previous time the Policy Roundtable approved its appointment to the First LA Commission. Chair Blakely shared that as the Policy Roundtable's appointee to the First 5 LA Commission he will provide the Policy Roundtable information regarding First 5 LA and will look for opportunities for the Policy Roundtable to coordinate with First 5 LA. Chair Blakely also acknowledged that February is Black History Month.

3. Approval of Minutes – January 14, 2026

Chair Blakely presented the minutes for the January 14, 2026 Policy Roundtable meeting and asked for a motion to approve the January 14, 2026 minutes. Commissioner Andrea Fernandez Mendoza made the motion to approve the January 14, 2026 minutes; Commissioner Steve Sturm seconded the motion. The motion to approve the January 14, 2026 minutes was approved unanimously.

4. Presentation on Child Care Planning Committee Activities for FY 25-26 Update

Commissioner Fernandez Mendoza, Child Care Planning Committee (Planning Committee) Vice Chair, provided updates regarding some of the Planning Committee's activities. Commissioner Fernandez Mendoza shared that the Planning Committee approved the creation of a Second Vice Chair position and launched its recruitment for FY 2026-2027 Planning Committee members. Commissioner Fernandez Mendoza also provided an update on the Strategic Plan Ad Hoc (Ad Hoc) and that their discussion included a focus on workforce challenges and lessons from the past five years, funding instability, and workforce shortages.

5. Presentation on Service Coordination Strategy: Utilization of Child and Adult Care Food Program Overview

Vice Chair Mercedes Santoro highlighted some of the Department of Parks and Recreation's experiences with implementing its Snack and Supper Program which is funded by Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Commissioner Jacquelyn McCroskey then provided an overview of CACFP and its connection to LA County's Families First Prevention Services Act Community Pathways initiative. Anna Potere, LA County Office of Child Protection Project Director, and Gina Rodriguez, First 5 LA Program Officer, presented information about the opportunities and challenges of implementing CACFP. Rodriguez shared that CACFP is a federal program that reimburses child care centers, family child care homes (FCCH), Head Start, afterschool programs, adult care centers, and homeless shelters for meals and snacks. Potere highlighted how food insecurity remains significant among families with young children in LA County and nearly half of FCCH providers report difficulty affording food to provide to children in their programs. She also noted that more than half of FCCH providers in LA County do not participate in CACFP resulting in the program being underutilized in LA County. Rodriguez shared that one of the benefits of CACFP includes partial reimbursement for meals and some of the challenges include reimbursement rates are too low, extensive

reporting requirements, and limited number of sponsors for early care and education (ECE) programs. The presentation also highlighted potential policy and program strategies to increase participation. Further details are available in the PowerPoint presentation. Vice Chair Santoro opened the floor for Commissioner discussion and the following highlights some of the discussion:

- Nutrition is fundamental to supporting child development
- Some of the challenges implementing CACFP include maintaining detailed documentation, managing the required paperwork, and receiving approval to be a Sponsor can take up to a year. Some strategies used to address these challenges include hiring administrative staff to manage the documentation and paperwork and provide additional training to staff on meal preparation.
- It would be helpful if CACFP applications were electronic
- There was interested in reviewing more data regarding underutilization rates in LA County and how to connect programs to Sponsors

Vice Chair Santoro opened the floor for public comment and the following highlights some of the points raised:

- Some ECE programs do not have enough children who qualify for CACFP meal reimbursement which makes it difficult to implement CACFP with financial viability
- California Department of Social Services is working with programs to identify what changes are needed to reduce challenges to implementing CACFP and increase CACFP utilization

6. Presentation on Status of Local, State and Federal Public Policies and Joint Committee on Legislation

Alternate Commissioner Colin Legerton provided updates on the state budget process and noted the deadline for introducing new bills is February 20, 2026. Alternate Commissioner Legerton shared that Trailer Bills related to ECE have been posted on the California's Department of Finance website.

Alternate Commissioner Legerton also provided an update regarding public policy actions at the federal level. For example, a preliminary injunction was granted which blocked the freezing of Child Care Development Funds, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and Social Services Block Grant funding. The presentation also included a review of funding levels for Child Care and Development Block Grant, Head Start, Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five and Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools. The President's budget is due the first Monday in February; however, it is anticipated that the budget will be provided in March 2026. Additional details are available in the PowerPoint presentation. Chair Blakely opened the floor for Commissioner discussion and the following highlights some of the points raised:

- The Governor's May Revise Budget is anticipated to be very different than the January Proposed Budget. For example, it is expected that the COLA included in the January Budget will not be included in the May Revise Budget.

Chair Blakely opened the floor for public comment. No comments were provided.

7. Presentation on Joint Committee on Legislation Recommended Public Policy Priorities

Chair Blakely provided an overview of the process and roles of the Policy Roundtable, Planning Committee, and Joint Committee on Legislation (JCL) to develop a Pursuit of Position. Chair Blakely shared the requirements of a Pursuit of Position and that the Policy Roundtable will vote on a Pursuit of Position at its March 2026 meeting. JCL Committee Member Rachel Bocarsly presented the JCL's recommended public policy priorities for the Policy Roundtable to consider for a Pursuit of Position. The following are JCL's recommended policy priorities: 1) support implementation of the alternative reimbursement rate methodology, 2) strengthen measures that protect immigrant children, families, and staff, and 3) support wildfire recovery and rebuild. Additional details are available in the PowerPoint presentation. Chair

Blakely opened the floor for Commissioner discussion and the following highlights some of the points raised:

- There were questions regarding if CACFP and Universal PreKindergarten can be added to the priority list or fit into any of JCL's recommended policy priorities
- The Board of Supervisors recently passed a Motion focused on increasing CACFP utilization by ECE programs in LA County
- It was noted that the Pursuit of Position policy priorities need to be specific and not broad
- It is important for LA County to advocate for wildfire funding particularly because many ECE facilities are not being rebuilt in areas affected by the wildfires
- Several Commissioners stated that JCL's recommended policy priorities should be the focus of the Pursuit of Position
- Policy issues not included in a Pursuit of Position can be pursued in other ways

Chair Blakely opened the floor for public comment. The following highlights some of the comments provided.

- It is critical to support funding for wildfire recovery and rebuild
- A listening session regarding AB 495 is being organized

8. Announcements and General Public Comment

Vice Chair Santoro opened the floor for announcements and public comment.

- Vice Chair Santoro announced that over 200 LA County Parks and Recreation staff will participate in the Office for Advancement of Early Care and Education (OAECE) Child Care Choices training in February 2026
- Debra Colman, OAECE Director, shared that applications to apply to serve on the Planning Committee are available and people are invited to apply

9. Meeting Review and Call to Adjourn

Commissioner Blakely made the motion to adjourn the February 11, 2026 meeting; Commissioner Sturm seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn the meeting passed with no objections. The Policy Roundtable meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

Attendance

Commissioners Attendance

1. Jessica Perea, *First Supervisorial District*
2. Justin Blakely, *Second Supervisorial District*
3. Gloria Davis, *Second Supervisorial District*
4. Jennifer Cowan, *Third Supervisorial District*
5. Amber Rivas, *Third Supervisorial District*
6. Kanchana Tate, *Department of Mental Health*
7. Mercedes Santoro, *Department of Parks and Recreation*
8. Robert Gilchick, *Department of Public Health*
9. Andrea Fernandez Mendoza, *Child Care Planning Committee*
10. Jacquelyn McCroskey, *Commission for Children and Families*
11. Ofelia Medina, *First 5 LA*

Alternate Commissioners Attendance

1. Steve Sturm, *Department of Children and Family Services*



2. Colin Legerton, *Los Angeles County Office of Education*
3. Ranae Amezquita, *Los Angeles Unified School District*

Guests Attendance

1. Eva Rivera, *City of Pasadena*
2. Sam Marshall, *CACFP Roundtable*
3. Gina Rodriguez, *First 5 LA*
4. Vanessa Macias, *Low Income Investment Fund*
5. Mirel Herrera, *Early Edge California*
6. Carolyne Crolotte, *Early Edge California*
7. Lisa Wilkin, *Child Development Consortium Los Angeles*
8. Katie Leon, *Low Income Investment Fund*
9. Rachel Bocarsly, *City of Los Angeles*
10. Jessica Guerra, *Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles*
11. Samuel Lujan, *Department of Public Social Services*
12. Nicole Jain, *Department of Economic Opportunity*

Staff Attendance

1. Diana Alvarado, *Policy and Program Specialist*
2. Debra Colman, *Director*
3. Leanne Drogin, *Deputy Director*
4. Sheronda Helton, *UPK Research Specialist*