



Riverside County Constructing Connections

A Case Study for the ABCD Initiative



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PREPARED FOR:

LOW INCOME INVESTMENT FUND: ABCD INITIATIVE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	<i>i</i>
Acknowledgements.....	<i>i</i>
About BTW <i>informing change</i>	<i>i</i>
Introduction	1
Constructing Connections—An Overview.....	1
This Case Study	3
A Brief Overview of Riverside County	6
Riverside County Growth & Change.....	6
Early Care & Education Systems in Riverside County	7
The Context for Constructing Connections	9
A Precursor to Constructing Connections.....	9
Changing Perceptions about Child Care	10
The Arrival of Constructing Connections	13
Housing the Project at First 5 Riverside	13
Hiring a Collaborative Director.....	13
The Initial Meeting of the Collaborative	14
Early Accomplishments	15
Success Factors	18
The Value-Add of the ABCD Model	19
The Road Ahead	21
Barriers to Child Care Facility Development in Riverside County.....	21
Challenges to Expanding the Collaborative.....	22
Maintaining Momentum	23
Future Plans & Ideas	24
Concluding Remarks	26
Appendix A: List of Interview Participants	28

Preface

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to the staff and members of the Riverside County ABCD Task Force with whom we spoke for their gracious participation in the process that resulted in this case study. We especially thank Nancy Maich, Riverside County ABCD Task Force Coordinator, who organized the meetings and interviews and provided information and guidance. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the staff of the ABCD Initiative at the Low Income Investment Fund and the ABCD Evaluation Advisory Committee for their guidance, as well as the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and First 5 California for their generous support of this work.

ABOUT BTW *INFORMING CHANGE*

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Introduction

This case study is part of a larger evaluation of the Low Income Investment Fund's (LIIF) Affordable Buildings for Children's Development (ABCD) Initiative that is being conducted by BTW *informing change*, a Berkeley-based consulting firm that specializes in providing information-based strategic consulting services to nonprofits and philanthropic organizations. The ABCD Initiative employs a combination of grants, loans, technical assistance, training and advocacy to facilitate and accelerate the development of quality child care spaces for California's children.

CONSTRUCTING CONNECTIONS—AN OVERVIEW

Constructing Connections is one of the ABCD Initiative's primary program components. Through Constructing Connections, ABCD provides funds to ten lead agencies serving eleven California counties that enable each community to convene a collaborative of child care providers, community developers, civic leaders, small businesses, educators, advocates and others. Constructing Connections is predicated on two major principles:

1. "Effective child care facilities development takes place locally, making it necessary to build community capacity to do this work;" and,
2. "Collaboration between the child care and community development sectors is essential to both the health of the child care industry and the health of the local community."¹

ABCD intentionally selected sites that had already demonstrated "readiness" to engage in this work, including "evidence of efforts by the lead/partner organizations to create new child care spaces" and "existing capacity of the lead agency and its partners to implement a Constructing Connections Program site." Once sites were selected, ABCD expected sites to achieve a range of specific goals over the planned five year grant period including:

¹ These principles and other intentions for Constructing Connections sites described herein are from *Low Income Investment Fund: Constructing Connections RFP, 2004*.

Within One Year

- An assessment of the community's child care facilities needs.
- A catalog of local resources (e.g., funding, expertise, policies) that support facility financing and development.
- An inventory of local barriers to child care facilities development.

Within Two Years

- A detailed plan to overcome local barriers to child care facilities development, including policy recommendations to local and regional governments.

Within Three Years

- At least one new facility constructed and providing child care.
- A pipeline or stream of child care facilities in various stages of development.

Within Five Years

- A systematic, streamlined, institutionalized approach to assisting child care facilities development.

Program sites were also asked to:

- Appoint staff who will be available and responsible for coordinating the work and participating in Constructing Connections activities.
- Participate in quarterly Learning Community sessions (some in person, some by teleconference) of program site leads for peer learning and support.
- Participate in conferences, training sessions, etc. as needed to share knowledge/experience gained through participation in Constructing Connections.
- Participate in policy development and advocacy relating to child care facilities development and operating subsidies for child care programs.

ABCD provides a matching grant of up to \$75,000 per year to each site to support the Collaborative in meeting these program expectations. In addition, ABCD provides each site with materials and customized technical assistance and convenes a Learning Community of Constructing Connections lead agency staff to achieve peer learning and information exchange. Each site has a budget of \$10,000 to hire pre-approved professional consultants to support local capacity building activities.

Since the inception of ABCD, there have been two cohorts of Constructing Connection sites. The first cohort began in 2004 and included six lead agencies; a second cohort came online a year later and brought four additional lead agencies serving five communities into the project.

THIS CASE STUDY

Riverside County's Constructing Connections Collaborative was selected as one of two sites for a case study review. It is a member of the first cohort, and represents a community facing rapid growth and development.

The purpose of this case study is to tell the story of Riverside County as it has engaged in the Constructing Connections process. What are the important milestones of its early evolution? What are the ingredients of its early success? What have the challenges been and what does the community think will be required going forward to ensure a successful result? The evaluation design calls for conducting a follow-up case study one year from now to document changes and learn how challenges have been overcome, problems solved, new challenges undertaken and successes achieved. Over time, this story will be useful to gain an understanding of the stages of development for a Constructing Connections site, facilitate reflection and learning, and help prepare other communities to embark on this journey.

This case study provides a portrait of the Constructing Connections experience and the early care and education system in Riverside County. This portrait is based on the materials, experiences and insights shared by those who agreed to participate in this process.

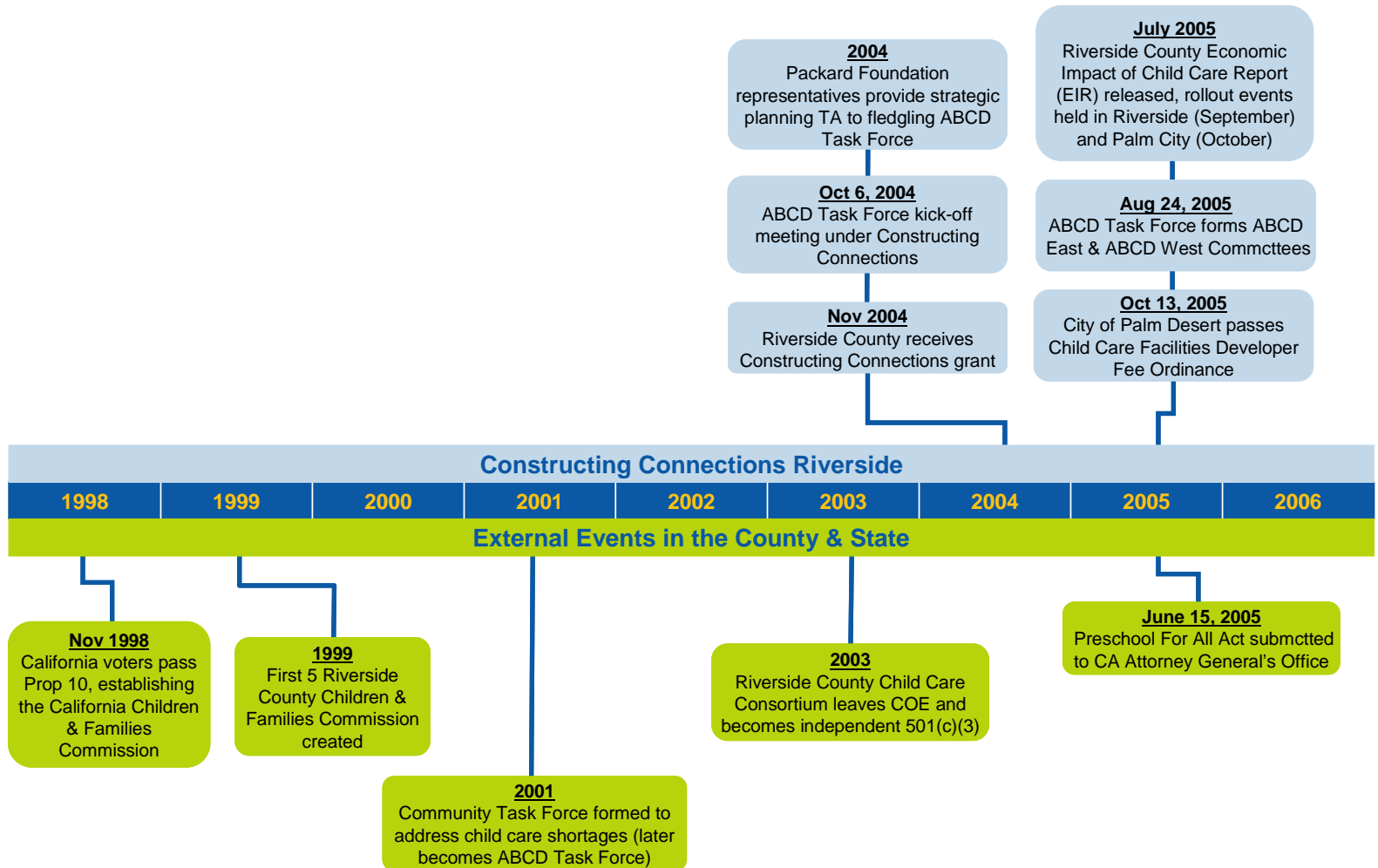
BTW collected the data for this case study through interviews and site visits and by reviewing written materials. On July 12 and 13, 2006, Alex Hildebrand, BTW *informing change* Associate, traveled to Riverside County and spent two days collecting materials and literature for review, observing a Constructing Connections Collaborative meeting, and conducting in-person interviews with key stakeholders of the Constructing Connections project.²

This case study highlights several factors influencing the development of the Riverside County Constructing Connections Collaborative, including key social and demographic circumstances in the county, the early childhood education infrastructure in the county prior to the arrival of Constructing Connections and key dynamics affecting the leadership and operations of the Collaborative. The case study presents these factors in a chronological sequence, from the 1980's to the present, as one of the intentions for this

² See Appendix A for a list of the interview participants.

case study is to prompt serious discussions around the anticipated path of the Collaborative in the coming year. The “Timeline of Major Events in the Life of Riverside County Constructing Connections” below is a graphic depiction of these factors.

Timeline for Constructing Connections Related Child Care Events in Riverside County 1998–2006



Prologue: A Rising Tide of Child Care Need

Many new residents have been lured to Riverside County because of lower housing costs, as compared to neighboring counties on Southern California's coast. A common assumption is that the overall cost of living will decrease as well, but new residents are finding that other important services—such as child care—are neither adequately available nor affordable, creating major unanticipated barriers to meeting family needs. The stories of this predicament abound, and the ultimate impact on the well-being of the County and its residents is yet to be realized.

Deborah Clark-Crews, Executive Director, Riverside County Child Care Consortium, illustrates this with her story of a new employee:

“We have a new employee at the Consortium office who moved to Hemet from San Diego with her family. They have a little girl and were unable to find adequate care in their area. After much time and effort, they found child care in another city. They moved to Hemet because of the affordable housing...there is an expectation that child care needs will be met, but it's not there when they call for it. They never thought to question the care available in Hemet because this wasn't an issue in San Diego. They may end up leaving our community if we can't solve this problem...”

“In the Diamond Valley area of Hemet there are plans for 8,000 homes in the next four years. We [child care advocates] need to be involved in those planning meetings. During city and county planning meetings decisions are made concerning land use, and as advocates we need to ensure child care facility development is part of the discussion... We can't change the past, but we sure as heck need to change the future.”

A Brief Overview of Riverside County

RIVERSIDE COUNTY GROWTH & CHANGE

Riverside County is the fastest growing county in California and the third fastest growing county in the nation.³ Fueled by a demand for affordable housing by workers in neighboring Orange, Los Angeles and San Diego counties, Riverside County's population increased 55% between 1990 and 2004.⁴ This growth is expected to continue unabated for the foreseeable future, with a projected increase from the current population of 1.85 million residents to 2.7 million by 2020.⁵

Because most of the region's jobs are located outside of Riverside County, approximately 30% of employed residents commute across county lines and consequently have the fourth longest average commute in America at 29.8 minutes. About 6.5% of employed residents commute over 90 minutes each way.⁶

Riverside County is the fourth largest county in California, stretching 200 miles from east to west and occupying 7,200 square miles of land.⁷ Within this vast geography lies an incredible assortment of cultures and languages and lifestyles—and needs. Dr. Patti Hafner, Director of the Children's Services Unit at the Riverside County Office of Education, explains how county agencies are forced to account for this in the designs of their service delivery models, "You have to adjust for different parts of the county. It's like there are mini-cultures within the county."

The west side of the county is largely suburban, with the exception of a few rural tracts and the urban presence of the city of Riverside, the eleventh

³ State of California, Department of Finance. *E-2 City/County Population Estimates*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ US Census Bureau website: www.census.gov

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

"Everyone likes to think they are a unique community, but we really are – we are so big with so many types of communities, from the economically advantaged to economically disadvantaged, from rural to urban. The growth is huge – so many younger families are moving here and then commuting long distances and long amounts of time to work."

—Harry Freedman
First 5 Riverside

largest city in California and home to University of California Riverside, California Baptist University and La Sierra University.

The center of the county is primarily agricultural but its population is growing at an epic pace as both retirement communities and affordable housing spring up on old farm land. While this area of the county is less ethnically diverse overall than its neighboring regions on either side, pockets of Hispanic, Hmong and Laotian communities dot the area and are largely isolated culturally and linguistically.

The eastern part of the county, a desert landscape known as Coachella Valley, is a diverse patchwork of affluent retirement communities, vacation facilities and poor rural communities. Most of the estimated 15,000 migrant workers who come to Riverside County each year find work in this part of the county, contributing to the fact that 78% of the total population in the area is Hispanic.⁸ These desert communities are in general isolated, and access to services is a significant problem.

The consequences of the scale and speed of the county's growth have caught many Riverside County residents and public officials by surprise. The increasing traffic congestion and land costs are creating problems in every aspect of life, but the child care sector faces particularly vexing challenges as it struggles to accommodate the increasing demand.

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY

“There are Local Planning Council members from community agencies and organizations committed to making quality child care accessible and affordable to all families.”

—Deborah Clark-Crews
Child Care Consortium

Historically, Riverside County's child care support infrastructure has been based in the County Office of Education (COE). For many years, COE housed the Riverside County Child Care Consortium, whose mission is to increase child care availability and the level of professionalism in the field. In 1992 when state legislation was passed requiring all counties to establish a Local Planning Council for child care, the Consortium was designated to serve as the Council for Riverside County.

Additionally, the Division of Children and Family Services of the COE currently houses most county-based early childhood education programs, including Child Development Services, Resource and Referral, the Alternative Payment program, Early Head Start and Head Start, State Preschool, Migrant Education, Migrant Head Start and local grant-funded projects.

First 5 Riverside, also known as the Riverside County Children and Families

⁸ Riverside County Child Care Consortium, *2005 Child Care Needs Assessment*, p. 21.

Commission, was created in 1999 by the passage of the California Children and Families Act (Proposition 10). The nine-member commission decides how to use Riverside County's share of tobacco tax revenues received through Prop 10, re-granting much of these funds in three primary program areas: child care, early education and health (including physical, mental and oral health).

According to Sharon Baskett, Early Care and Education Administrator at First 5 Riverside, the development of First 5 Riverside since its inception has been stellar. The organization has blossomed as it increased in size from nine staff in 2000 to 29 staff in 2006. The early success of First 5, in fact, provided much excitement and motivation for those working in the early childhood education field in Riverside County. Baskett herself was lured to the First 5 Commission from the County Office of Education when the Commission announced their school readiness initiative in 2003. She found First 5's approach and orientation towards investing in the early needs of children hopeful and inspiring.

In the years since the formation of the First 5 Commission, the structures of Riverside COE and the Child Care Consortium have both changed. In 2003 the Child Care Consortium left COE to become an independent organization. The consortium now has four child care councils representing all areas of Riverside County; these councils were established in response to the challenge of serving such a large and diverse county. Despite these changes, according to interviewees, there continue to be high levels of interaction among COE, First 5 Riverside and the Consortium.

The Context for Constructing Connections

A PRECURSOR TO CONSTRUCTING CONNECTIONS

Carolyn Wiley was Executive Director of First 5 Riverside in 2001 when the statewide *Preschool for All* ballot initiative was in its conceptual stages and gaining momentum. Knowing that there was already a facility shortage in Riverside County that would be further impacted by the passage of a preschool initiative, she had a vision for a working group that would help improve the County's child care facility infrastructure. After convening this group, Wiley contacted Marie Young⁹ at the David and Lucile Packard Foundation to request assistance in developing the group's strategy. The Foundation agreed to help and sent Marie Young and another staff member, Carla Dartis, to facilitate several meetings.

According to Baskett, who was part of the Task Force, this contribution proved to be extremely valuable. "It was unbelievable what Carla and Marie kept bringing us," she recalls. "They gave us encouragement and...provided the mentoring and the guidance to take this on." As she recalled the high level of commitment and the action orientation of the members of this Task Force, Baskett remarked that the county "hadn't had a task force like that for twenty years."

First 5 Riverside's Constructing Connections Coordinator Nancy Maich, then serving as a staff assistant to County Supervisor Jim Venable, was also actively involved in the group. According to Maich, "Carla Dartis had tremendous impact on our project. She clearly motivated the group and got them thinking about the whole process...and got people focused on what to do about it." One outcome of Dartis' facilitation was the formation of four working committees: an Economic Impact of Child Care Report Committee, a Zoning and Land Use Committee, a Developers Committee and a Facilities Development Committee. Dartis also encouraged the group to reach out to

⁹ Marie Young left her position at the Packard Foundation in 2003 to manage the ABCD Initiative at LIIF; she was later promoted to Managing Director of National Child Development and Education Programs at LIIF.

key individuals who were not yet involved, so the Task Force created and executed a targeted strategy to solicit involvement from the political and business communities.

The success of the group's efforts and a growing awareness about the dire need for child care facilities prompted the Task Force to stay together far beyond what they were originally asked to do. This group was still active when the Low Income Investment Fund announced the ABCD Initiative in 2003, which included Constructing Connections grants available to local collaboratives interested in addressing the child care facilities issue. In response to this opportunity, the Task Force nominated First 5 Riverside to apply for a Constructing Connections grant.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CHILD CARE

Across America, the child care sector faces a significant challenge in convincing both the public and policymakers of the need to invest public and private funds in the early care and education (ECE) system. A major barrier is the belief held by many that only parents and family members should care for children in their early years until they are ready for the public education system. This perspective is alive and well in Riverside County. Several child care advocates reported that, in the course of trying to promote support for child care, they encounter "old-fashioned values in many communities that believe the place for a woman is in the home."

This view has been gradually changing, say the advocates, in part because meeting the child care needs of Riverside county families is becoming a more and more dire problem. In the last twenty years, Riverside County has dropped from a position among California's top ten counties in meeting the child care needs of its families to a position near the bottom. Deborah Clark-Crews, Executive Director of the Riverside County Child Care Consortium, notes, "We truly have a crisis. When the Local Planning Council completed the Annual Zip Code Priority report for Riverside County, we analyzed what was available and the current need for care. It was scary. Where are all of these children being cared for while their parents are working? There are not enough licensed child care spaces to provide for the children who need care."

In 2003, First 5 Riverside commissioned the National Economic Development and Law Center to research and prepare an *Economic Impact of Child Care Report* for Riverside County. This document, along with the outreach conducted with it, has been instrumental in starting to shift perceptions about child care and helping advocates marshal resources and players to address the shortage of care.

"There is a dichotomy of those who understand ECE as early care and education, and others who see it just as babysitting."

—Patti Hafner
County Office of
Education

First 5 Riverside sponsored two events to publicize the report, attracting 125 attendees in the City of Riverside and 75 attendees in Palm Desert. These events drew significant press coverage and helped convince prospective Collaborative members of the need for concrete action to address the child care shortage. The impact of these events was immediate. According to Deborah Clark-Crews, “As a result of the report, Third District Supervisor Jeff Stone held a breakfast and brought to the table the local builders, the Community Care Licensing representatives, realtors and members of the child care field to discuss ‘What can be done in this supervisory district to ensure that child care facilities will be included in new developments?’ ”

“Where are all of these children being cared for while their parents are working? There are not enough licensed child care spaces to provide for the children who need care.”

—Deborah Clark-Crews
Child Care Consortium

The success of the report is largely attributable to its focus on attaching real and sobering numbers to the child care facility shortage and connecting the shortage with a negative impact on the performance of the local economy. Gary Andary, a child care consultant to First 5 Riverside, notes that “facts and figures really support our advocacy. Now we are knocking on the doors of the supervisors and planning commissions with significant statistics, rather than saying ‘Child care is important, so please contribute.’ ”

The legitimacy afforded by external consultants helped make the case. According to Jaime Hurtado, Legislative Assistant to County Supervisor Marion Ashley, “You can go and talk to people, and they say they understand. But when they heard the findings of this report from an outside consultant, it kind of clicked [about] how serious the problem really was. That’s when the policymakers and the powers-that-be realized we needed to jump on board quickly...we need to do this now so we don’t have to build jails for delinquents later.”

The statistics provided in the report served to steel the resolve of career child care advocates as well. Deborah Clark-Crews recalled one presenter at the economic impact report event talking about the projected growth rate for the county. The presenter translated the statistics as the equivalent of one person moving in to the county every six minutes, a phrase that still reverberates in Clark-Crews’ mind.

Another significant development was the placement of the *Preschool for All* Initiative (Proposition 82) on the California statewide ballot in 2005. Child care advocates cite this as a catalyst in establishing the political will to address the early care and education infrastructure issue. Nancy Maich said, “The *Preschool for All* push helped the momentum. Suddenly people were talking about it and thinking we should be doing more.” Sharon Baskett adds, “It opened the doors to conversation among many groups. [Child care] is a common discussion item now at state meetings, K-12 programs, and superintendents’ meetings. The Governor’s alignment on Preschool issues, evidenced by the \$100 million he earmarked for facilities and new preschool spaces, shows strong support.”

Many individuals in the ECE community were caught off guard when internal conflict emerged as a result of the *Preschool for All* Initiative. One interviewee related, “I thought Prop 82 was a shoo-in. As the politics started coming out, I could not believe some of the things I was seeing and people I was hearing from—people from within the child care community! One association wanted to come out against it... It showed a lack of understanding and the territorialism of a lot of the programs.”

First 5 Riverside took the lead in building a productive conversation about addressing the need for preschool services, regardless of the Proposition 82 ballot outcome. According to Sharon Baskett, First 5 Riverside collaborated with the Riverside COE to establish a joint *Preschool for All* planning committee. The charge to this committee was to offer recommendations to First 5 Riverside and the COE as to how they should respond if the initiative passed, and if it did not. “Many of the same people [in the ABCD Task Force] were involved—mental health, health, Community Based Organizations, education and government representation.” This effort by First 5 and the COE helped child care advocates feel better prepared for this potentially momentous change in the ECE infrastructure. “Being a step ahead and knowing you have people in various areas of the county that understand what needs to happen has been encouraging,” said Baskett.

The Arrival of Constructing Connections

HOUSING THE PROJECT AT FIRST 5 RIVERSIDE

With their demonstrated commitment to early care and education facilities issues, First 5 Riverside was a clear choice to house the Constructing Connections project. First 5 Riverside Executive Director Harry Freedman notes that the work of Constructing Connections is “integrally related” to the three focus areas of the Commission—health, child care, and ECE—and appropriately focuses on addressing the “horrible baseline” that the County has in terms of child care facilities.

Freedman adds that the Commission finds the collaborative model on which Constructing Connections is based to be particularly helpful: “Having the variety of community members involved under a specific umbrella—that produces benefits all the time.”

First 5 is seen by other leaders in the ECE field as an appropriate entity for housing the Collaborative, a crucial factor in the overall legitimacy of the Constructing Connections project. Deborah Clark-Crews reflected, “First 5 is in the best position in the community to facilitate and implement the ABCD grant. They have the ability and resources to assess communities and meet their needs.” She also believes the ECE community has great confidence in the First 5 Riverside staff. “I knew when [First 5] received the ABCD grant they would do a good job because of the caliber of the people there.”

HIRING A COLLABORATIVE DIRECTOR

First 5 Riverside made a strategic move in recruiting Nancy Maich from her position assisting Riverside County Supervisor Jim Venable to run the Constructing Connections project. Maich’s commitment to early childhood issues was well established due to her record as an advocate at the Board of Supervisors and reinforced by her leadership within the ABCD Task Force.

“Both knowledge and relationships are valuable, but especially the relationships.”

—Nancy Maich
Constructing Connections
Coordinator

Maich herself was thrilled with the opportunity to use her background in early childhood education. She had ten years experience as a special needs teacher for infants and toddlers and as an administrator at an infant/toddler center. Maich was aware that her connections to key community leaders would help facilitate the success of Constructing Connections. “I am well connected with all the supervisors. I know how it works—how to ask for things and how to get things done. That is a real advantage. Both knowledge and relationships are valuable, but especially the relationships.”

Nancy Maich’s first assignment as Constructing Connections coordinator was to establish the membership for the Collaborative and launch the grant work with an initial meeting. Maich brought her political savvy to the process. “I knew there were other people to pull in,” she recounts. “It was a matter of calling them up or making a personal visit.”

THE INITIAL MEETING OF THE COLLABORATIVE

The ABCD Task Force sponsored the kick-off meeting for the Constructing Connections Collaborative¹⁰ on October 6, 2004. The meeting was attended by a wide variety of people representing everything from city and county government, public schools, providers and child care advocates to the Small Business Development Center. Nancy Maich attributes the tangible sense of excitement in the room to the fact that “it was the first time in a long time when, aside from knowing that we had a shortage, they were thinking ‘wow, maybe there is something we can do.’ The Collaborative was offering hope.”

Reports from people at the meeting indicate that attendees were impressed both by the representation in the room and the scope of the work ahead. Jaime Hurtado, Legislative Assistant to County Supervisor Marion Ashley, remarked, “I was overwhelmed. I knew [the child care need] was growing rapidly, but even I didn’t realize the shortage that we had in our specific district. I was surprised and delighted to see that so many people were willing to come to the table to talk about it.”

Dr. Patti Hafner, Director of the Children’s Services Unit at the County Office of Education, noted that Constructing Connections “brought together the key people and asked the right questions. How do we influence the zoning, the Board of Supervisors? Nancy and First 5 have done a great job of identifying the various stakeholders that should be in the conversations.”

However, the meeting was also a wake-up call to experts in the field. Judy Wood, Director of the University of California Riverside Child Development

¹⁰ In Riverside County, the ABCD Task Force is serving as the Constructing Connections Collaborative.

Center, said, “I was surprised that so many people at the table had no idea of how to begin to expand their capacity—who to see, what the process was. The Task Force has done a good job addressing that.”

Nancy Maich also worked to establish a sense of common purpose at the first meeting, which has proved an essential ingredient for Task Force progress as the group continues to evolve in all its diversity. Maich reports, “We have been very open to exploring any and all opportunities. We have all blended well—school districts, faith-based groups, nonprofits, the YMCA. There doesn’t seem to be any bias at all and that’s a good thing.”

EARLY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Because its activities were underway prior to receiving the Constructing Connections grant, the ABCD Task Force hit the ground running once the grant funds arrived. By the end of their first grant reporting period, about nine months after the kickoff meeting, the ABCD Task Force had over 1,400 spaces in their facilities development pipeline. The entire Task Force met as a whole five times during that period and sponsored 32 subcommittee meetings. It had also completed all other year one objectives for Constructing Connections projects, including an inventory of local barriers to child care facility development and a functional website offering a variety of resources to support facility financing and development.

In the next twelve months, the Task Force accomplished year two objectives of generating a plan to overcome local barriers to child care facility development and making policy recommendations to local and regional government. Already having developed a substantial pipeline of child care facility projects, it was also well on its way to the year three objective of completing one new facility development project.

New Developer Fee Policy

Perhaps the most heralded accomplishment supported by the Task Force to date is the passage of a child care facilities impact mitigation fee in the city of Palm Desert. (See sidebar on next page.) This success is an example of the effectiveness of a collaborative model in aligning the necessary players and forces to support a breakthrough in policy.

According to Deborah Clark-Crews, the Child Care Consortium’s full-time child care coordinator for Coachella Valley, Susan Shepherdson, set the stage for the passage of the Palm Desert fee ordinance through the relationships she developed in her seven years in that role. But it was First 5 Commission Chairwoman Jean Benson, also a Palm Desert City Council member, who played perhaps the most influential role in getting the measure through the process and the vote.

ABCD Task Force Success Story: Developer Fees for Child Care

On October 13, 2005, the City Council of the City of Palm Desert unanimously passed an ordinance assessing a fee on all new nonresidential development. The fees are placed in a City fund for “capital improvements to create new child care facilities or new spaces or improvements to existing child care facilities in the City.” The ordinance directs the City’s Community Development Director to calculate the appropriate fee amount and make decisions regarding the child care facilities to be supported by the fee.

The intent of the ordinance is to require new development to “pay its reasonable share of the increased need for child care facilities generated by such development,” and is predicated on a provision of the City’s General Plan that encourages “the availability of adequate, convenient, affordable child care that is accessible to all economic segments of the community.”

When the nexus study report¹¹ for the measure was presented at a City Council meeting, the ABCD Task Force encouraged people to attend the meeting and speak out in favor of the ordinance. Without question, child care advocates and their connections contributed to the successful passage of the measure, and the ABCD Task Force was a critical catalyst in building community momentum in favor of it.

After the measure passed, the City of Palm Desert sent a letter to the other cities in the county explaining the ordinance and encouraging them to consider doing the same. This letter included a quote by Nancy Maich about the importance of child care and suggested that any municipality interested in formulating such an ordinance contact the ABCD Task Force for assistance.

Harry Freedman refers to this ordinance as a model when he approaches other County Supervisors and city government representatives about establishing similar policies. Freedman and other ABCD Task Force representatives have held nearly a dozen meetings with local government officials and elected representatives to lay groundwork for incorporating child care considerations into local planning and development policies. One such policy currently in the works is the creation of a “template design” for child care centers that can be used by the County Planning Department to fast-track approval of permits for facilities that conform to that design.

Freedman is confident that efforts to work with the County Supervisors to change county-level policies will have long-term pay offs. “If a developer increment passed, if we could get child care considerations in local planning and development policies it would make a big difference,” he believes.

¹¹ The purpose of a nexus study is to establish the links between projected development in an area, the necessary public facilities that need be funded by development impact fees and the fees to be levied.

Facility Development Support

In addition to helping to create policies that support child care facility development, the ABCD Task Force is also providing critical support to child care providers that are trying to develop facilities. The Task Force has created a website¹² that contains a wealth of resources, information and checklists for child care providers planning on embarking on a facility project, including a map of child care facilities and needs in Riverside County. In the summer of 2006, the Task Force received 255 registrations for its workshop for family child care providers interested in opening a child care center.

Perhaps most critical is the one-on-one support available from the ABCD Task Force for providers that encounter specific obstacles in trying to complete a facility project. One example is the support that the Task Force provided to VIP-TOTS, a local nonprofit child care center that has been serving children and families in the community for 27 years.

In an effort to expand its services for children in the community, including children with special needs, the organization received a \$10,000 planning grant from LIIF to begin the development process for a second facility. There was no room to expand on their existing site, and they had a waiting list of over 55 children. Executive Director Joann Hameister submitted applications to both the City of Hemet and the County of Riverside for federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. After being turned down by the City of Hemet on the first proposal, she called on Constructing Connections to assist her with the application that was pending at Riverside County.

When a project of this scope and size is being planned, it is difficult for one agency alone to pull all of the pieces of the puzzle together. Maich responded to Hameister's request by helping her convene all the public entities involved in the proposed project, including the Board of Supervisors office, the Economic Development Agency for the County of Riverside, and the Valley-Wide Park and Recreation District which was considering an in-kind donation of site preparation for this much-needed project. As a result of these efforts, each of the entities agreed to support the project and the Board of Supervisors approved CDBG funding of \$250,000 for the VIP-TOTS facility.

Hameister declared that the support from the ABCD Task Force was critical. "Nancy's connections and her history with the agencies have been so helpful. She understands how to do the negotiations and helps us focus on the decisions we need to make." Hameister's facilities assistant added, "It's almost like having someone to lobby for you."

¹² www.bccriverside.org.

Network Value

The ABCD Task Force network is a valued resource. Yolanda Carillo, Executive Director of the Corona-Norco YMCA and First 5 Commissioner, explained, “The [Task Force’s] network is county-wide, so people know there is help out there and use it to educate themselves.” Patti Hafner believes the network helps those in the child care sector, especially individual providers, tap a larger number of and more comprehensive sources of support and information. “When you are out there on your own, you don’t know what other potential is there. You don’t really get the bigger picture,” she said.

Gary Andary, child care consultant to First 5 Riverside, echoed the value attributed to the network formed by the Task Force. In his words, there are now “avenues of outreach” that have already been developed by the Task Force and they are sustainable and replicable. “We have strategies that have been successful with government and developers. That’s technical assistance for potential providers. We have a framework for strategies that can continue, regardless of the players.”

SUCCESS FACTORS

What has contributed to these early successes? Sometimes the path to success is difficult to trace. Andary, a veteran in the child care field, notes that even he is surprised sometimes to observe how success in this arena manifests. “You work and work and talk and meet and then, boom, something happens. It’s like you are pushing against a wall and all of a sudden your hand goes through somewhere, and you ask yourself, ‘How did that happen?’ ”

The Task Force doubtlessly benefits from being housed in First 5 Riverside, which has built up a significant degree of credibility during its existence as an effective agent of positive change in the field of children’s health and education, as well as in the broader community.

The Task Force has also been effective in focusing on high-leverage activities that lead to concrete results. Jaime Hurtado feels that the ABCD Task Force has developed “a strategy about who to approach and what to ask them for,” and he praises the work on finding ways to tax new development. “That is conducive to developing private-public partnerships, and making people aware that child care impacts both the child and a good workforce.”

In addition, Nancy Maich has employed ideal collaborative-building tactics that are based on an understanding of the importance of building personal relationships and ensuring that people feel they are a valued part of an

important movement. Robin Ried, ABCD Task Force member and Legislative Assistant to County Supervisor Jeff Stone, notes that Maich calls her once a month for a general check in and to brief her on the progress of the Task Force. She adds that the linkages that Maich makes between the different groups in the Collaborative, “moves us farther and faster than a typical large group.”

THE VALUE-ADD OF THE ABCD MODEL

Several specific elements of the design of Constructing Connections—the Collaborative approach, the Constructing Connections Learning Community and ABCD technical assistance—have been of critical importance to efforts in Riverside County. Task Force members place particular value on the collaborative model: gathering all stakeholders around one table to generate collective solutions to problems and establish ownership for implementing those solutions. Speaking about this issue, Nancy Maich notes, “We had people who individually understood subsidized care, or preschool or nonprofits, but now we are all at the same table and talking. It has diffused some of the mystery and competition and fears...We all have one common goal, and that’s to increase our overall capacity.” Without ABCD’s collaborative approach, Task Force members believe that they would not have been able to make the progress that they have thus far.

As the staff representative from the lead agency, Maich has been thrilled to have the Constructing Connections Learning Community as a resource and a place to advance her own thinking about and understanding of child care facilities development issues. “I have fully enjoyed the Learning Community process. I feel like every time we come away with so much more than we went in with, and the connection that we have made with the trainers is good. I have especially appreciated that [ABCD] has been so diligent to ask us what we need and what would be helpful to us.” A byproduct of attending trainings at the Learning Communities is relationships with experts in the field. Maich relates an example: “If I have burning questions for the Child Care Law Center, I can call Ed Boland and ask him to help us out, and likewise I can refer city attorneys to them. They didn’t know before who to ask about child care. It’s those connections that we’ve made that have helped make my job a lot easier.”

In addition, Maich appreciates the availability of ABCD staff to provide ongoing technical assistance. These staff and the support they provide make the job of a Constructing Connections site lead much easier, Maich reports; she is able to call them about any issue and knows she will get a fast response. Before ABCD, she would make cold calls to potential information sources and hope they would find the time to call her back.

Constructing Connections in Action: ABCD Task Force Meeting—July 12, 2006

After hearing about the work and accomplishments of the ABCD Task Force, I eagerly anticipated this opportunity to witness the Constructing Connections Collaborative meeting in action. Several people were already waiting in the almost-empty meeting room when I strolled by at 9:45 a.m., and by 10:00 the room was buzzing with conversation as colleagues caught up with each other.

Just a few minutes behind schedule, Nancy Maich called the meeting to order. There were 25 people seated around a large board room table, with paper cups filled with raisins, nuts, and M&M's placed at each chair. Stella Smith, Deputy Director of First 5 Riverside, gave a gracious welcome to the group that included an appreciation of their commitment, praise for the good work of the committee whose meeting she had just attended and an expression of the close alignment between the work of the Collaborative and the First 5 Commission.

During introductions, members expressed enthusiasm for the group's efforts and accomplishments. Jaime Hurtado, legislative staff to county supervisor Marion Ashley, said "I know [our county is] at the bottom in terms of delivery but we are working step by step. It's impressive [to see] what you can do when people come together, like the preschool that we just built and is now so successful."

The first order of business was to hear updates on various facility development projects sponsored by Collaborative members and now underway. As the report-givers identified barriers facing their projects, other members launched into robust exchanges about how to deal with these. The spirit of collaboration was rampant. Many meeting participants offered to serve as resources or to connect other members with contacts that might be helpful to them in executing their project.

The rest of the meeting consisted of report-outs from the various subcommittees to bring the full Collaborative up-to-date on the activities and accomplishments of the Collaborative. About halfway through the reports, Maich introduced an activity designed to keep the energy up and highlight the project's success in creating child care spaces in Riverside County. She asked each participant to guess the number of child care spaces Constructing Connections had in its pipeline, write the number down and hand it in. It was a contest, and later in the meeting Maich would announce the correct number and the contest winner. Gary Andary, who had helped organize the contest, served as an enthusiastic cheerleader for the antics. There was a spirit of fun and anticipation in the room, and the group whooped heartily as the actual number—3268 spaces—was announced. The winner received a bouquet of flowers.

As the meeting started to run over its time and members were still raising issues of concern, Maich collected all remaining issues and graciously told people she would address their concerns through one-on-one conversations after the meeting. As meeting participants said their good-byes and left the room, there was a satisfying sense of time well spent on important work.

—Alex Hildebrand

The Road Ahead

BARRIERS TO CHILD CARE FACILITY DEVELOPMENT IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY

The high cost of real estate in Riverside County combined with the low profit margin of child care as a business presents a particularly vexing problem for the development of child care facilities. As Judy Wood of the UC Riverside Child Development Center relates, “One problem you come up against is first the cost of building a facility plus the operation costs. In order to operate a facility and break even, you first have to be large enough—100 kids is just the break-even point. And then the fees will still be too high for the average family that wants to access care. If you can’t get funding from the state for low income kids, the only people who will access your child care will have to be upper income.”

Nancy Maich seconds this point. “The cost of land has increased phenomenally. The lease and market rates have gone up to almost make it impossible,” she said. “We need to find strategies that make it possible [to be a child care provider], especially in the first three years of startup as a business. That’s where we need to put on our armor and go into battle.”

Sharon Baskett adds that this dynamic is not only hampering the addition of new facilities, it is reducing existing supply. “We are losing programs that are licensed at a faster rate than we used to,” she laments. Deborah Clark-Crews used the metaphor of a bucket with holes to describe efforts to increase the capacity of the child care sector. As the ABCD Task Force works to support the addition of new facilities, the county is losing operators and still more children needing care are moving into local communities.

Some Task Force members are concerned that strong family child care provider recruitment campaigns will result in having people enter the field who see this as a business opportunity but who have no real interest in child development or compassion for children. Others counter that a well-designed outreach program can help increase the supply while maintaining the quality

of care. To do this, Gary Andary suggests that the Task Force needs “to tap outside resources for competent facility operators. People who have a child development background are moving into the county. Also, we haven’t gone outside of the county—which in some places is just five or ten miles away—to market the potential to develop new centers here.”

CHALLENGES TO EXPANDING THE COLLABORATIVE

“You can’t just go into communities and say ‘you have to do this.’ Lois Carson, a founding member of the Riverside County Child Care Consortium and the Executive Director of Community Action Partnership, encouraged me to remain a member of the Greater Riverside Chamber of Commerce when I questioned the Consortium’s alliance with the organization and their involvement with child care. Lois encouraged me to become more involved by providing information to the Chamber about the impact of child care on the workforce and business. According to Lois, ‘You don’t run away, you dig in and start enlightening the membership because they probably don’t understand the need for child care and the impact on productivity.’ ”

—Deborah Clark-Crews
Child Care Consortium

While the Riverside County ABCD Task Force is remarkably well-developed and has an impressive array of representation, the road ahead holds challenges.

The ability to conceive and implement solutions to the worsening child care supply will depend in part on how effective advocates can be in building relationships with the many cities and communities that make up Riverside County. Deborah Clark-Crews noted that the large number of communities in the county and the distances between them means that child care advocates have more work to do to build trust and develop the relationships they need. “You have to invest both the staff and time to build lasting relationships and bridge gaps in the community. People want to be sure that your interest is in their community and not elsewhere.”

Sharon Baskett notes the particular importance of getting local government buy-in for expanding access to child care. “Without the monetary support and support from City Council to get permits, it doesn’t work,” Baskett explains. Nancy Maich adds that the ABCD Task Force may need to develop some specialized outreach strategies to stimulate the engagement of local municipalities.

The ABCD Task Force has instituted a structural mechanism to address the fact that the county is so large and diverse, splitting the Collaborative group into East County and West County task forces that meet semi-annually. This will help the Collaborative leverage the relationships they are cultivating across the county to build a common agenda for improving the child care infrastructure.

In addition to the many challenges presented by the geography and culture of Riverside County, the Task Force is faced with the challenge of convincing high level leaders and public officials of the urgency of the crisis, and that participation in the Collaborative is their best chance for having an impact. Joann Hameister of VIP-TOTS comments that child care lags behind public schools on the priority list of public officials, citing, “We had eight new schools open in Hemet over the last two years and only one expanded child care center.”

The ABCD Task Force has successfully recruited a wide range of high-caliber individuals to the Task Force, and yet there are many who still are not at the table. Gary Andary noted that the child care facility shortage is “not on the radar of folks who aren’t already involved or who don’t have it as an issue.” Yolanda Carillo elaborated, “I think that maybe the non-traditional leaders, such as department heads in different agencies and business leaders, don’t understand the huge need. Not many of those people are at the table. If you’re not there, you don’t understand the need to be there.” Several others pointed out the absence of developers from the Task Force. Participation by representatives from some of these key entities that have a stake in the child care facility infrastructure will be important to advancing the ABCD Task Force agenda.

MAINTAINING MOMENTUM

Several Riverside leaders are already expressing concern about how to maintain the Collaborative’s momentum as it moves beyond the exciting stages of early growth. In addition to typical organizational development issues, stakeholders noted some concerns specific to the field and to this Collaborative.

Judy Wood of the UC Riverside Child Development Center notes that, like any large collaborative, the ABCD Task Force’s work can be an “agonizingly slow process, and a long road to get to where we need to be.” There is still much work needed to line up the resources for the Collaborative’s goals. Despite the influence and access to resources on the part of those already in the Collaborative, she worries about making visible progress.

The recent confusion within the early care and education sector regarding the *Preschool For All* initiative may have had a damaging effect on the movement. In comparing how the sector is working together now and prior to the initiative, Sharon Baskett wonders about any lingering impact. “We did a very good job five years ago, but it seems we have lost momentum. We may still have a split within child care.”

In addition, the Task Force is already questioning how to expand resources to get its work done. Gary Andary is concerned that the project is under-funded. “For the scope of it, we should have a whole unit of people to do this. For example we should have one person working with local government on zoning and ordinances; we should have someone connecting with developers and out there on-site. There is so much to do, and in volunteer committees there is a limited amount of time people can commit.”

The Task Force will have real challenges raising the financial resources necessary to sustain the personnel already in place, much less to expand the

team to where many feel it needs to be. Maich notes that Riverside County does not have a strong base of private philanthropy. “It’s not like Los Angeles where you can tap into other resources or large corporations. So we have to get really creative around strategies to deal with these issues.”

FUTURE PLANS & IDEAS

When it comes to strategizing about the future, ABCD Task Force members are bursting with both excitement and ideas.

One concept under discussion and creating excitement is a child care summit to target many of the key decision-makers whose involvement in the Collaborative has not yet been secured, such as judges, faith-based organizations, clerics, law enforcement, deans and presidents of higher education. The ABCD Task Force would like to engage these power players, because, as Sharon Baskett is quick to point out, “Until the powers that be say ‘we need to go in this direction,’ it won’t happen.”

Nancy Maich is excited about a new tool the Task Force will have for marketing itself to important stakeholders that are not yet at the table. “We are putting together a macromedia ‘flash’ presentation—a three-minute or under production that we can take to City Council or Chamber of Commerce meetings or community organizations like Rotary Clubs to get our message out. I think we are making progress, and I am hoping we can continue to build on that and make great allies and advocates and get more partners.”

The Task Force also plans on continuing to offer workshops to family child care providers on what it takes to open a child care center, fulfilling one of the core functions of a Constructing Connections site: to provide training and Technical Assistance directly to providers interested in creating or expanding capacity.

There is also more work to be done to integrate the public school system as an important partner in Task Force efforts. Sharon Baskett would like to see the Task Force explore whether and how to use Title One money for preschool facilities. “It could be a shared process,” she comments, “Where we are leveraging the resources of public schools to meet both of our needs.”

Baskett also sees high potential for improving ECE program’s success rate in accessing other existing sources of public funding, noting that recently more child care programs have received funding from Community Development Block Grants.

Jaime Hurtado is enthused about prospects for engaging legislators to change the playing field for child care infrastructure. “They can be more informed to create or bring forth the laws that would change the code and laws and the allocations. We need to change the mindset, to convince them ‘you need to carry this bill for us.’ We need to empower our legislators to get on the ABCD bus.” Harry Freedman also believes the Collaborative can effectively work with policy makers, although he points out that child care advocates need to tailor data on need and supply to specific jurisdictions in order to get the support of government and elected officials.

When asked about the sustainability of the Constructing Connections efforts, ABCD Task Force members made it evident that they have already put thought into this important matter. One idea forwarded by Gary Andary involves public agencies investing in permanent positions to support the work. “A variety of local agencies could contribute to positions or fund positions to support the project,” Andary believes. “It could be economic development, county planning, social services, or there could be private grant resources that could be researched, including the business community.”

Jaime Hurtado suggests that First 5 Riverside could take the lead in institutionalizing this work. “We should reorganize at First 5, saying we need a component having to do with facilities. The money is there; it’s a matter of how you spend it. We could go back to the allocation rule and say ‘we need to set aside 10% of monies for child care centers.’”

In fact, the First 5 Riverside Commission, as part of its five year allocation process, has dedicated \$500,000 annually for the Commission’s efforts to expand capacity for quality child care. These funds will be used for planning, coordination, consultation, advocacy and direct support of facility and program creation and expansion. Harry Freedman pointed out that this is an indication of the Commission’s long-term commitment to increasing child care capacity, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, throughout the County.

Concluding Remarks

The Riverside County ABCD Task Force has provided a valuable springboard from which to continue the work of increasing child care availability in Riverside County. The ABCD Task Force is, in the words of one stakeholder, “all the players in child care center development in the county convened in a way that has never been done before.”

This statement represents an output success of one of the major premises of ABCD—that advancing the development of child care facilities requires physically assembling all who have a role in the process in order to identify the necessary partnerships and solutions. The rapid advancement of the ABCD Task Force in Riverside County also suggests that ABCD’s prerogative to leverage the capacity of groups with prior experience with facility development advocacy resulted in a higher return on its investment.

This case study also illustrates the wisdom of structuring the ABCD grant such that local matching funding is required; the commitment to the program by First 5 Riverside is doubtlessly strengthened by their financial investment, and they are in a stronger position to continue support for the program once ABCD funding is phased out.

The value of ABCD Technical Assistance and the Learning Community is also reflected in the experience of the Riverside County ABCD Task Force; its leader, Nancy Maich, clearly has relied on both the personalized advice and referrals from ABCD staff as well as the opportunity to gather with other ABCD sites to reflect on their experiences and share strategies and ideas about overcoming barriers to child care facility development. The ABCD Consultant Pool has not played a significant role in Riverside County’s success thus far, but may simply be a reflection of this being a relatively new resource for Constructing Connections sites.

With two years experience under its belt as a Constructing Connections site, First 5 Riverside’s ABCD Task Force has matured and is playing a major role in improving the landscape of child care facilities development in Riverside

County. Accomplishments to date, including policy improvements and 3,268 child care spaces in the pipeline for development, seem to indicate that this Collaborative may be hitting its stride.

What will it take to maintain a stride wide enough and strong enough to keep up with the pace of growth and change within the county? The months ahead will tell the next chapter in this story—how the Task Force will apply its impressive membership base and reputation to achieve its next level of success in expanding child care facilities in Riverside County.

Appendix A: List of Interview Participants

- Gary Andary
Consultant to First 5 Riverside and State Community Care Licensing
- Sharon Baskett
Early Care and Education Administrator, First 5 Riverside
- Yolanda Carillo
CEO, Corono-Norco Family YMCA
- Deborah Clark-Crews
Executive Director, Riverside County Child Care Consortium
- Harry Freedman
Executive Director, First 5 Riverside
- Dr. Patti Hafner
Director, Children's Services Unit, Riverside County Office of Education
- Joann Hameister
Executive Director, VIP TOTS
- Jaime Hurtado
Legislative Assistant to Supervisor Marion Ashley
- Nancy Maich
ABCD Task Force Coordinator, First 5 Riverside
- Robin Reid
Legislative Assistant to Riverside County Supervisor Jeff Stone
- Judy Wood
Director, University of California Riverside Child Development Center