



Board of Directors

Meeting Minutes

May 7, 2025

6:00 pm – 7:30pm

ROLL CALL

<u>Members Present</u>	<u>Members Not Present</u>	<u>Staff Present</u>	<u>Guests Present</u>
Areli Miguel	Josephine Torres	Patricia Keelean	Mike Cordero
Marina Owen	Oscar Gutierrez	Jennifer Macdonald	Karin Dominguez
Alexander Saunders		Monica Logan	
Hilda Zacarias		Grant Carmichael	
James Kyriaco		Julie Weiner	
Roy Lee		Libby Martinez	
Angela Miller-Bevan			
Miguel Avila			
Jeremy Ball			

1. WELCOME & CALL TO ORDER:

James Kyriaco, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:27pm

- a. Roll Call – James conducted roll call of members present and not present.
- b. Introduction of Guests – Pat conducted the presentation of guests, Karin Dominguez and Mike Cordero.
- c. Chair Remarks

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public comment period is reserved for comments on matters within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board of Directors. Each person may address the Board for up to three minutes at the discretion of the Chair, for a total public comment period of no more than 15 minutes.

The Board Chair asked if there were any public comments. None.

3. CLOSED SESSION

- a. Personnel Matter: None
- b. Legal Matter: None

4. APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

January 8, 2025

March 5, 2025

M/S/A Roy Lee/Gloria Flores

9 YES

0 NO

Approved

5. RECITE COMMUNIFY MISSION STATEMENT/MISSION MOMENT

We serve Santa Barbara County's most vulnerable populations through education and coordinated services so they may achieve economic stability, improve overall well-being and thrive.

Read by Pat Keelean, CEO

Mission Moment

Secure Families/Familias Seguras Program

Sara was referred to the Secure Families Program at just 14 years old after struggling with violent behavior, depression, and substance use - including a life-threatening fentanyl-related hospitalization. She has made an extraordinary transformation! Through case management, mentoring, and therapy, she built strong relationships with her support team and embraced enrichment activities that helped her grow emotionally, socially, and academically. Sara has developed healthier habits, avoided negative behaviors, and began setting and achieving personal goals. Her GPA is now over 2.5, with no new school incidents. She had just graduated from the Secure Families program and is actively involved in the Future Farmers of America (FFA) at Santa Maria High School. Sara is now a proud program graduate, her journey reflects incredible resilience, and we are confident she will continue to thrive and inspire others.



- Pat informed the board members that CommUnify will move forward with reapplying for the CalVIP program, which is planned to expand into the Lompoc area. The University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) will conduct an independent evaluation of the program. Additional data on the program's outcomes is expected later this year.

6. BOARD RECOGNITION

- Former board members Mike Cordero and Karin Dominguez were recognized for their exemplary service during their time of service at the Board of Directors.
- Karin served for fourteen years on the board, served on the planning committee, and was involved in the policy council committee and many years of service in CommUnify.

- Mike Cordero was very supportive of the senior nutrition program and supportive of 211 and served on the planning committee for 11 years. Mike helped raise awareness of the agency in the community of Santa Maria.

7. CEO UPDATE

Federal Funding Update

- CSBG and LIHEAP Funding Zeroed Out in Trump Administration “Skinny Budget”
- Head Start Funding Not Yet Identified for Cuts (Advocacy Continues)
- Head Start Funding (July – Dec) Not Yet Released
- Congress expected to begin Budget Debates Soon
- Agency Contingency Plan to Remain in Place through 6/30/25

- Pat informed the board members that the federal government implemented a \$1.5 trillion reduction in the federal budget last month as part of the "skinny budget." As of now, funding for the Head Start program has not been affected.
- Jennifer Macdonald appeared on KEYT today to address the recent funding cuts affecting the Head Start program. While there has been significant advocacy, the agency still faces considerable challenges. Congress is expected to debate the issue next week.
- The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is currently slated for elimination, along with an estimated \$587,000—potentially resulting in a total funding loss of approximately \$3 million. In addition, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) faces a projected \$1.5 million reduction in funding.
- The agency is actively engaged in efforts to support continued funding for LIHEAP, CDBG, and Head Start. Pat and Julie have been in discussions with Jackie Carrera of the Santa Barbara Foundation to explore options should Head Start funding be discontinued. The Foundation, a long-time supporter of affordable childcare, has also reached out to Senator Monique Limón in an attempt to secure additional funding for Head Start.
- The agency’s current contingency plan remains in effect through June 2025. It includes a freeze on hiring and a halt on all non-essential expenditures.

CEO Update

Strategic Planning – Next Steps

BWell Commissioners Onsite Visit

CalAIM PATH-CITED (Round 4)
and IPP Applications Submitted

MediCal Provider Application
Submitted

- Strategic plan – Pat will be conducting interviews with board members later this summer as part of the development of a new three-year strategic plan. A board retreat is scheduled for September 12; the location is yet to be determined.
- On April 17, Pat and Nuvia met with the BeWell Commissioners—a timely meeting given the conclusion of the Transitional Age Youth program. The Commissioners expressed interest in the ongoing challenges associated with payment reform. Pat and Nuvia shared concerns regarding low referral rates and significant financial losses, particularly over the last fiscal year.
- It was noted that two organizations reported losses ranging from \$40,000 to \$80,000 since July, with CommUnify itself incurring approximately \$180,000 in losses during that period. The agency has formally appealed to the Commission to provide funding to offset these deficits. Additional updates are expected following the Commission's meeting on May 20.
 - Marina reported that the County operates a mild-to-moderate behavioral health system. CenCal and the County have been collaborating on efforts in this area and are seeking to engage further with the agency through the County's Integrated Behavioral Care Program.
 - A key issue identified is that many clients lack access to transportation, and there is interest in exploring how CenCal's role might expand to help address this need. Additionally, Proposition 1 has introduced changes to funding structures and role responsibilities, which will likely impact future coordination and service delivery.
- CalAIM PATH CITED - Kemba and Grant have been actively working on the development of the new CalAIM PATH Cited program. The application for the program has been submitted.

- Brisa Encina Head Start Center –The Brisa Encina Head Start Center was planned as part of a 90-unit affordable housing development. CommUnify re-engaged with the developer to explore options for moving the project forward but learned that the contractor has not yet submitted the required permit application.
- The estimated cost to construct the Head Start center is \$1.3 million. Due to ongoing delays and financial uncertainties—including the inability to confidently secure the remaining \$400,000 in funding—the project is now at risk of losing its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.
- As a result, the agency is recommending stepping away from the project, as it is no longer feasible to meet the original timeline or funding requirements.
 - James reported he has been meeting weekly with Pat and expressed strong support for discontinuing the partnership with the developer. He cited a lack of transparency and shared his lack of confidence in the partner.
 - Roy and Gloria concurred with James, voicing their own concerns and stating they also have no confidence in the developer.
 - Pat informed the board that she spoke with Lucile Boss and issued an apology; however, she clarified that this interaction would not affect the agency.
 - Angela expressed frustration, noting that the partnership is resulting in more work rather than providing meaningful support to the agency.
 - Jeremy emphasized the need to uphold fiduciary responsibilities and ensure appropriate oversight of the situation.
 - Hilda proposed that the board vote on whether to formally consider the matter. She also volunteered to consult legal counsel to determine if there are any potential exposures and to report findings to the executive commission.
 - James suggested that the board can recommend terminating the relationship with the developer, but stressed the importance of confirming there are no legal or financial obligations tied to the program.
 - Alex requested a copy of the contract for review to further assess any commitments or liabilities.
 - Angela stated that she does not believe there are any legal obligations related to the developer agreement.
 - It was noted that Pat and Grant had previously signed a contract with the developer.
 - The board members asked Pat to let the state know of the board recommendations.

M/S/A Alex Saunders /Marina Owen

9 YES

0 NO

Approved

- Pat also shared with the board the New Promotoras team that just graduated from the six-week program.
 - Alex asked what were Promotoras.
 - Pat let the board members know that Promotoras are community health workers who perform outreach on a multitude of levels including making house calls, hosting events and classes and creating gathering spaces that build community beyond health questions.

Congratulations to CommUnify's New Promotoras!



Evelyn, Patty, Martha, Ana

8. **CFO Update**

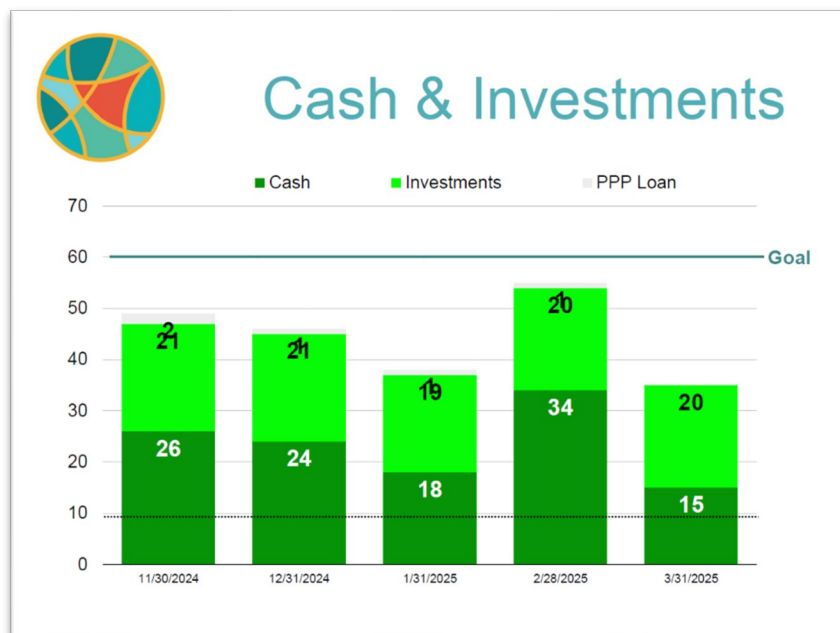
- **Cash & Investments:**
Some state payments were recently received after delays. It was discovered that earlier payments had been sent to the wrong address; the issue has been identified and is being addressed.
- **Balance Sheet:**
The balance sheet remains stable, with no significant fluctuations or issues. All previously delayed payments have now been resolved.
- **Income Statement:**
The agency is currently operating approximately 10% below projected revenues, primarily due to shortfalls in state and federal funding.
- **LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program):**
Funding levels have returned to typical historical amounts following recent changes.
- **TAY (Transitional Age Youth) Program:**
The program is being phased out. The agency is exploring alternative funding sources, including Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG) funds. However, there are concerns

about potential substantial losses, particularly in relation to the contract with the county. Staff are actively identifying risk areas while ensuring no undue financial exposure is taken on.

- **Head Start Program:**

The program is currently operating as planned, though future funding remains uncertain:

- There is a potential gap in funding for the second program year.
- The second funding installment is anticipated in September.
- The third installment, typically received in March, has not yet been disbursed.
- Less than \$2 million in available funds remain, which is expected to carry out operations through July.
- Staff may need to proactively advocate for continued funding support.



- **Spending and Funding Use:**

The agency is on track to fully spend all available funding within the designated timelines.

- **Fiscal Department Update:**

- The annual Single Audit is in progress and is expected to receive approval by July.
- Employment Practices Liability Insurance (EPLI) coverage has been increased from \$1 million to \$2 million to better align with organizational needs and risk exposure.

- **Forecast and Budget Planning:**

A mid-year reforecast is underway. The agency anticipates ending the current fiscal year in a stable position and has begun initial planning for the 2026 fiscal year, with projected expenditures totaling approximately \$15.5 million.

- **Compliance Inquiry (Hilda):**

Hilda inquired whether the agency had received any notices to comply or limiting

directives from any oversight agency, particularly regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. She also asked whether there had been any correspondence from the Department of Homeland Security.

- Pat and Grant stated that no such notices or correspondence have been received to date.



Fiscal Department Update

- 2024 Single audit fieldwork starts May 5th with targeted BOD approval by July
- General insurance policy renewals in progress
- New 2025 financial forecast targeted for June finance committee meeting

9. Consent Agenda

- All matters listed hereunder constitute a consent agenda and will be acted upon by a single roll call vote of the Board. Matters listed on the agenda will be read only on the request of a member of the Board or the Public, in which event the matter shall be removed from the consent agenda and considered as a separate item.

8a. Approval of Minutes:

9a – 1 Executive/Finance Committees: Joint Meeting Minutes – February 5, 2025.

9a – 2 Executive Committee Minutes: March 27, 2025.

9a – 3 Executive Committee Minutes: April 11, 2025.

9a – 4 Finance Committee: March 28, 2025.

9a – 5 Planning Committee Minutes – February 7, 2025.

9a – 6 Planning Committee Minutes – March 7, 2025.

9a – 7 Ambassador Committee

January 30, 2025.

February 26, 2025.

March 24, 2025.

April 21, 2025.

April 30, 2025.

9a – 8 Personnel Committee – February 25, 2025.

8b. Approval of Grants \$10,000 and Under/Renewal Contracts, MOUs, etc.:

9b – 1 Right to Refuse Services Policy.

9b – 2 Crisis Communication Policy.

M/S/A Hilda Zacarias /Alexander Saunders 9 YES 0 NO Approved

10-Action Items

10-A Approval of new Board Member: Supervisor Roy Lee.

10-B Approval of new Board Member: City Councilmember Gloria Flores.

10-C Approval of and authorization to apply for up to \$500,000 for the CalPREP and Information & Education (I&E) programs that were previously operated by CommUnify until 2022.

10-D In accordance with Organizational Standard 3.5, which states that “the organization’s governing board formally accepts the completed community needs assessment,” staff recommends that the Board formally approve CommUnify’s Community Needs Assessment for Fiscal Year 2025.

M/S/A Marina Owen/Alex Saunders 9 YES 0 NO Approved

10-E In alignment with the Community Action Organizational Standard 4.3, which requires the governing board to review and approve the agency’s Community Action Plan, staff recommends that the Board formally approve CommUnify’s Community Action Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2027.

M/S/A Alex Saunders /Gloria Flores 9 YES 0 NO Approved

11. Presentation trainings:

11a. Presentation: Community Needs Assessment (2025) and Community Action Plan (CAP) FY 2026-27; Monica Logan, Chief Operating Officer

Community Needs Assessment (Phase 1)

- **Purpose:**
 - Assessment required every 3 years (OS 3.1)
 - Strategic Plan required every 5 years (OS 6.1)
 - Build services *for* the community!
- **Methodology:**
 - 1:1 Interviews - 12
 - Surveys - 413
 - Focus Groups – 86
 - Staff
 - Leadership Team
 - Board of Directors
 - Community & Clients



- **Community Action Plan (CAP) Assessment**
- Presented by: Monica Logan

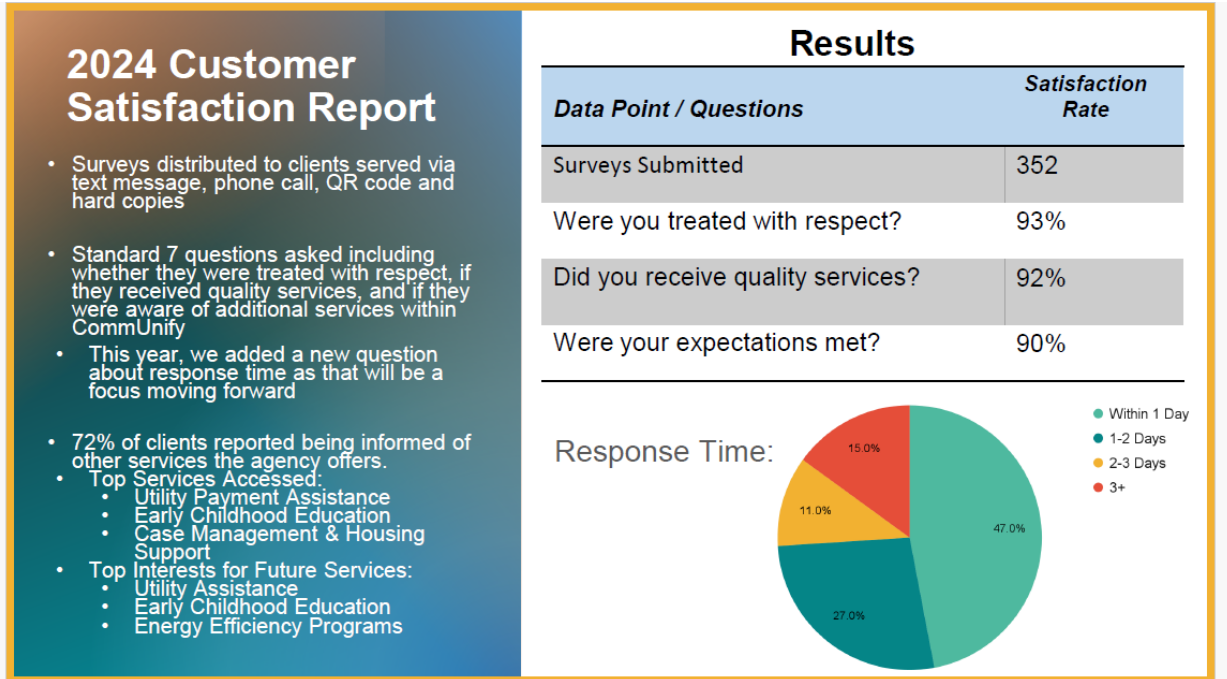
Monica Logan presented the Community Action Plan (CAP) Assessment, which is a required evaluation conducted every three years to assess local community needs and guide agency priorities.
- Key Findings:
 - Food Insecurity: A significant finding was the growing concern over food insecurity in the community, largely driven by rising grocery prices.
 - Additional findings and data trends are being analyzed and will inform strategic planning and program development moving forward.

Findings & Next Steps

- **Top 5 Needs:**
 - **Economic Stability** is the Foundation
 - Access to **Healthcare** is Critical
 - Affordable **Housing** is a Major Concern
 - **Food Insecurity** Emerges as a Priority
 - **Child Care** Access is Crucial for Family Stability
- **Next Steps:**
 - Needs → **Community Action Plan** due 6/25 (**Phase 2**)
 - Renewed every 2 years (OS 4.2)
 - Needs & Client Satisfaction Data → **Strategic Plan** (**Phase 3**)
 - Aspire on-site September 2025
 - Report finalized by November 2025



- Next Steps:
 - Phase 2 – CAP Plan Development: The agency will develop and submit the full CAP Plan by **June**, as required.
 - Phase 3 – Client Satisfaction Data Plan: The finalization of the Client Satisfaction Data Plan is scheduled for November, completing the third phase of the CAP process.



Board Acknowledgment:

- Marina complimented Monica Logan on her thorough presentation and commended the work completed in developing the CAP Plan.

Approve both documents

M/S/A Alex Saunders /Gloria Flores

9 YES

0 NO

Approved

11b. **Discussion: Advocacy/Fundraising Strategies** (Pat Keelean/Julie Weiner)

- **Fundraising and Advocacy Strategy Discussion**
Julie shared comments from Jeremy and invited input from the board on potential fundraising strategies, including broader community engagement and targeted donor outreach.
- **Head Starters Group:**
The board discussed the role of the Head Starters group in supporting fundraising efforts, particularly for the Head Start program. The group is focused on strategic advocacy and visibility to address upcoming funding gaps.

- Comments from Julie:

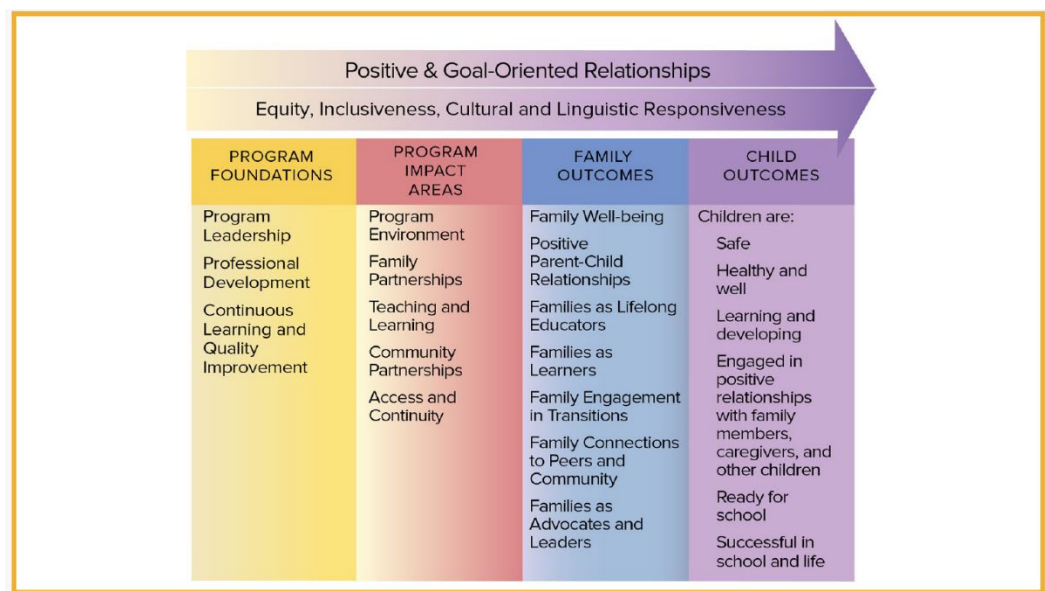
Julie emphasized the importance of continued advocacy and public visibility. She shared that:

 - She has been leading efforts to increase awareness, including drafting an op-ed to support Head Start.
 - Initiatives include encouraging petition signatures at SaveHeadStartSB.com and SaveHeadStart.org.
 - Preparations are underway for the potential loss of substantial funding.
 - While print ads have run in the Santa Maria Sun and Montecito Journal, social media visibility has been limited due to ads being flagged as political.
 - Outreach to larger funders, such as the Santa Barbara Foundation, is ongoing.
- Julie asked board members to share “warm hand-off” connections to help access deeper philanthropic networks.
- She highlighted the urgency of time and advised focusing outreach efforts on individuals who are already familiar with the agency or its mission.
- She advised against public appeals at this stage but emphasized the importance of raising the flag of advocacy.
- **Champions Dinner – June 6:**
 - The upcoming Champions Dinner will highlight Head Start, including updated statistics and a revised promotional video.
 - The event aims to enhance understanding of the program and deepen community ties.
 - Ticket sales have reached \$99,000, with sponsorships totaling nearly \$100,000, almost matching CenCal Health’s contributions.
 - Thanks were extended to James and Jeremy for their efforts; four tickets remain available.
- **Friend-Raiser Events:**
 - Pat announced plans for several friend-raisers to build awareness and relationships:
 - Events are planned for both North and South County, in informal or non-traditional settings.
 - James suggested hosting one event at the Faulkner Gallery.
 - The format will include guest speakers and focus on storytelling about CommUnify’s impact.
 - Pat asked each board member to submit at least one contact who may support or engage with the agency.
- **Board Member Comments & Support:**

- Angela praised current efforts and encouraged members to use their networks. She noted that many Unity Shoppe clients are Head Start families.
- Angela also offered to assist with connections in Lompoc and with local wineries.
- Angela, a current member of the Head Starters group, encouraged more board members to join and support its mission.
- Marina raised concerns about long-term sustainability, suggesting the board explore alternatives if major funding is lost.
- Julie inquired whether a local tax or bond measure could support such programs.
 - It was clarified that, as a 501(c)(3), the agency is not eligible to initiate such measures.
 - James noted San Antonio's model for early learning funding, which succeeded with broad political support.
 - The group discussed potentially applying for the City of Goleta Learning Initiative as another funding avenue.
- **Call to Action:**

Board members were encouraged to offer contacts, join Head Starters, and help expand visibility for the agency's programs, especially in light of possible fiscal challenges.

11c. Training: Family & Community Engagement, Jennifer Macdonald, Children's Services Director



Jennifer shared insights into how Head Start actively works with families to connect them to broader community services. Key points included:

- Family Service Advocates work directly with families to develop Family Services Agreements, which help identify needs and support goals.
- The program is actively engaged in community partnership agreements, including collaboration with the Santa Barbara Child Care Planning Council and other local service providers.
- Informing families of their school choices is already a standard part of engagement, but Jennifer noted that this activity needs to be more thoroughly documented to meet compliance and reporting standards.

Defining Family Engagement

- Family engagement is an interactive process through which program staff and families, family members, and their children build positive and goal-oriented relationships.
- It is a shared responsibility of families and professionals that requires mutual respect for the roles and strengths each has to offer.
- Family engagement means doing with—not doing to or for—families.
- At the program level, family engagement involves parents' engagement with their children and with staff as they work together toward the goals that families choose for themselves and their children.
- Head Start and Early Head Start staff work together with families, other professionals, and community partners in ways that promote equity, inclusiveness, and cultural and linguistic responsiveness.

Head Start Family Support and Parent Engagement

- Family Service Advocates (FSAs):
The FSAs work with parents as partners, recognizing that the well-being of the family is directly connected to the well-being of the child. This holistic approach supports family stability and empowers parents to be active participants in their child's development and education.
- Parent Leadership – Comments from Areli (Parent Council Chair):
Areli, Chair of the Parent Council, shared her perspective on the program's impact, stating that it helps families access resources and provides them with the tools to advocate for their children. She emphasized the value of knowing there is support available and that Head Start actively guides parents through the process of becoming advocates.

12. Informational Items: Upcoming Meetings/Events

- SCYSP Strategy Team Meeting:** May 8th @ 12-1:30pm; Location: CommUnify Central Offices, 602 Anacapa St., Santa Barbara
- Planning Committee Meeting:** May 9th @ 9am (Zoom)

- c. **Children's Services Health & Disability Advisory Committee Meeting:** May 9th @ 12:30 – 2pm. Location: 201 W. Chapel, Santa Maria.
- d. **Team CommUnify Meeting:** May 12th @ 3pm (Zoom)
- e. **Head Starters Monthly Meeting:** May 19th @ 3-4pm (Zoom)
- f. **18th Annual Champions Dinner:** June 6th @ 5pm (Location: The Corque – Craft House Ballroom, Solvang)
- g. **Juneteenth (OFFICES CLOSED):** Thursday, June 19th
- h. **Executive Committee Meeting:** June 20th @ 12pm (Zoom)
- i. **Board of Directors Meeting:** July 2nd @ 6pm; Location: CommUnify Central Offices, 602 Anacapa St., Santa Barbara
- j. **July 4th Holiday (OFFICES CLOSED):** Friday, July 4th
- k. **Board of Directors Meeting:** September 3rd @ 6pm; Location: 200 N H Street, Lompoc Connection Center
- l. **Board Retreat:** Strategic Planning: September 12th @ 11:30 – 4pm (Location: TBD).

13. Meeting Adjourned at 7:58pm