



First 5 Fresno County

Policy on Funding Faith-based Organizations

First 5 Fresno County envisions a future where all Fresno County children will thrive in healthy supported environments with loving and nurturing caregivers in the home and throughout the community. This future embraces the value of an active partnership between families, service providers, civic leaders, the faith-based community, local business and the community at-large, honors and respects the diversity of our community and prioritizes the need to ensure optimal health and development for young children and their families.

First 5 Fresno County acknowledges the right of individuals to choose to participate in First 5 Fresno County funded programs without coercion or unsolicited exposure to faith. Therefore, the Commission has embraced a policy of neither providing funding/support for religious activities nor appearing to promote a particular religious belief over others by way of its funding practices.

In addition to the explicit understanding that Prop 10 funds are to be used exclusively for the benefit of children birth to five years old in accordance with California Law, Fresno County Ordinance and Commission's approved Strategic Plan, the following guidelines are meant to further clarify the relationship between Prop 10 objectives and Faith-based partners.

Funding Guidelines for Faith-based Organizations

First 5 Fresno County (the "Commission") thoughtfully establishes the following safeguards to protect religious freedom and maximize inclusiveness. Those safeguards are as follows:

1. The Commission shall not discriminate against an organization which is or applies to be a contractor based upon its status as a "faith-based" organization so long as it is willing to adhere to the guidelines, policies and procedures that the Commission has established for all organizations receiving Prop 10 support.
2. The Commission shall not attempt to regulate or abridge the rights of a "faith-based" organization to retain independence over the definition, development, practice and expression of its religious beliefs.
3. The Commission expects that no eligible program beneficiary would be denied access to services due to their race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, citizenship or known disability.
4. The Commission expects all Prop 10 funds to be used for non-religious activities and expects that no eligible program beneficiary will be subjected (before, during or after the program activity) to religious messages when he or she participates

in Prop 10-funded services. Program activity is defined as all verbal, written and visual information provided directly or indirectly (decorations, background music, etc.) to the participant in the course of their participation in Prop 10-funded activities.

To this end, the Commission will work with funded service providers to ensure that appropriate space is available for service delivery, including the use of alternative service delivery sites if the service provider is housed in a faith-based organization.

5. The Commission, through its funding practices, will not support religious or other forms of discrimination (race, color, ancestry, national origin, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, citizenship or known disability) in the personnel practices of organizations receiving Prop 10 funding.
6. The Commission anticipates the ability to conduct fiscal and programmatic audits of all organizations who receive Prop 10 support. Minimally, each funded organization must have proper accounting practices such that the funds are not co-mingled and an accurate delineation between Prop 10 related expenses and non-Prop 10 related expenses can be traced.

Because religious organizations have different legal requirements concerning the disclosure of financial information, the Commission minimally requires that appropriate firewalls (e.g. separate bank accounts) between Prop 10-funded services and the core religious activities of a faith-based organization be developed. While the exact nature of this firewall is the prerogative of the organization it must minimally be able to define structures that will ensure that Prop 10 dollars can not be channeled into other religious activities of "Faith-based" organizations.

7. The Commission expects Prop 10 funded service providers and program recipients to comply with all the legal requirements and restrictions imposed upon government-funded activities as articulated in the California Constitution and the Religion Clauses of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.