

LOCAL STRATEGIES DRIVING EFFICIENT AND COMMUNITY-BASED DIAPER DISTRIBUTIONS



Diapers are critical to families' health and economic security.

Access to basic needs, including diapers, is essential for families with young children. Findings from our [2021-22 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment](#), a participatory research project that surveyed more than 3,000 parents/caregivers, early care and education professionals, and TK and Kindergarten teachers in Alameda County, show that family health and well-being and access to basic needs are associated with school readiness.

[Diapers](#) are an essential basic need for families with young children. They are necessary for maintaining a baby's health and hygiene, and they impact a parent's ability to join and stay in the workforce. Without a supply of clean diapers, families cannot leave their children with child care providers and cannot go to work. Infrequent diaper changes impact infants' and toddlers' health, leading to more doctor and emergency room visits. Diaper need is also a predictor of postpartum depression in mothers and can make it difficult for mothers and babies to form an attachment.

Diaper need in the United States is growing. [One in two families](#) struggle to afford diapers, and with recent inflation and fuel increases, diapers now cost \$100+ per month per child. According to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), most parents will go through nearly 3,000 diapers during their baby's first year alone and average six diaper changes a day for an estimated total of 8,000 over the course of a baby's diaper-wearing stage.

BY THE NUMBERS

Alameda County Family Demographics



16,864

babies were born in Alameda County



\$137,660

income required to meet a family's basic needs



3 out of 4

households struggling to meet their basic needs have a head of household that identifies as a person of color



1/3rd

of a family's income goes towards child care

SOURCE: [DATA FOR ACTION](#)

Leveraging community partnerships and placed-based strategies to efficiently increase diaper access in Alameda County

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated longstanding health, economic, and racial inequities. Since then, the need for coordinated access to essential supplies, like diapers, has only increased. That's why [SupplyBank.org \(SBO\)](#) and [First 5 Alameda County \(First 5\)](#) through its [Neighborhoods Ready for School \(NRFS\)](#) initiative partnered to identify local community-based organizations that could serve as distribution partners in SBO's Diaper Kit program, which distributes essential diapers and diaper wipes to families in need.

In 2022, NRFS partners, SBO, and First 5 staff together identified 13 neighborhood-based organizations in Alameda County with a diaper resource gap and the capacity to add diaper distribution to their existing services. The approach intentionally sought to create a centralized service delivery model by layering diaper distributions onto existing community services, while building trusting relationships with neighborhood-based organizations and community members. These distribution sites, located primarily in the 9 NRFS priority zip codes, were identified through the deep relationships that NRFS partners and First 5 staff hold with community partners.

NRFS partners work collaboratively with local organizations in their neighborhood and were able to identify organizations with high numbers of families traveling to access pre-existing NRFS diaper distributions. For example, [Union City Family Center \(UCFC\)](#) – a NRFS partner – was instrumental in identifying, referring, and providing technical assistance on implementation and expansion of family resource center offerings to school district partners with an interest in offering diapers closer to the families they serve to SBO's Diaper Kit program. As a result, San Lorenzo, Hayward, and Newark Unified School Districts became Diaper Kit distribution partners and began diaper distributions at their sites. This expanded access to diapers for families in the communities served by the three school districts.

First 5 staff also served an important role in identifying potential diaper distribution partners. [Help Me Grow](#) staff at First 5 regularly work with WIC sites on programming to promote developmental screenings and school readiness.

By leveraging the relationship with WIC, First 5 staff was able to identify WIC sites that had expressed a diaper need and had the capacity and desire to incorporate diaper distributions into their services. First 5 was also able to address frequent diaper requests from [DULCE \(Developmental Understanding and Legal Collaboration for Everyone\)](#), which resulted in an additional diaper distribution site at Highland Hospital. All the identified community-based organizations who had interest in and capacity to host diaper distributions were invited to SBO's Diaper Kit program.

Promoting scale through an adaptive and flexible diaper distribution model

SBO's Diaper Kit program is an effective and cost-efficient model with adaptive features that provides community partners with the flexibility to inform the contents of each distribution and how they are delivered to best meet the needs of the families being served. Through centralized procurement, SBO provides its network of community partners with diapers and baby wipes at approximately 1/3 of the in-store cost. Through their model they also offer community partners the flexibility to customize their diaper distributions by selecting the number of diapers delivered, diaper sizes, preferred diaper brands, and delivery accommodations, which is a critical component when storage space is not available. SBO's adaptive model makes it administratively feasible for a variety of community partners, including small, grassroots, neighborhood-based organizations, to successfully partner with SBO and bring highly needed diaper kits into their communities.

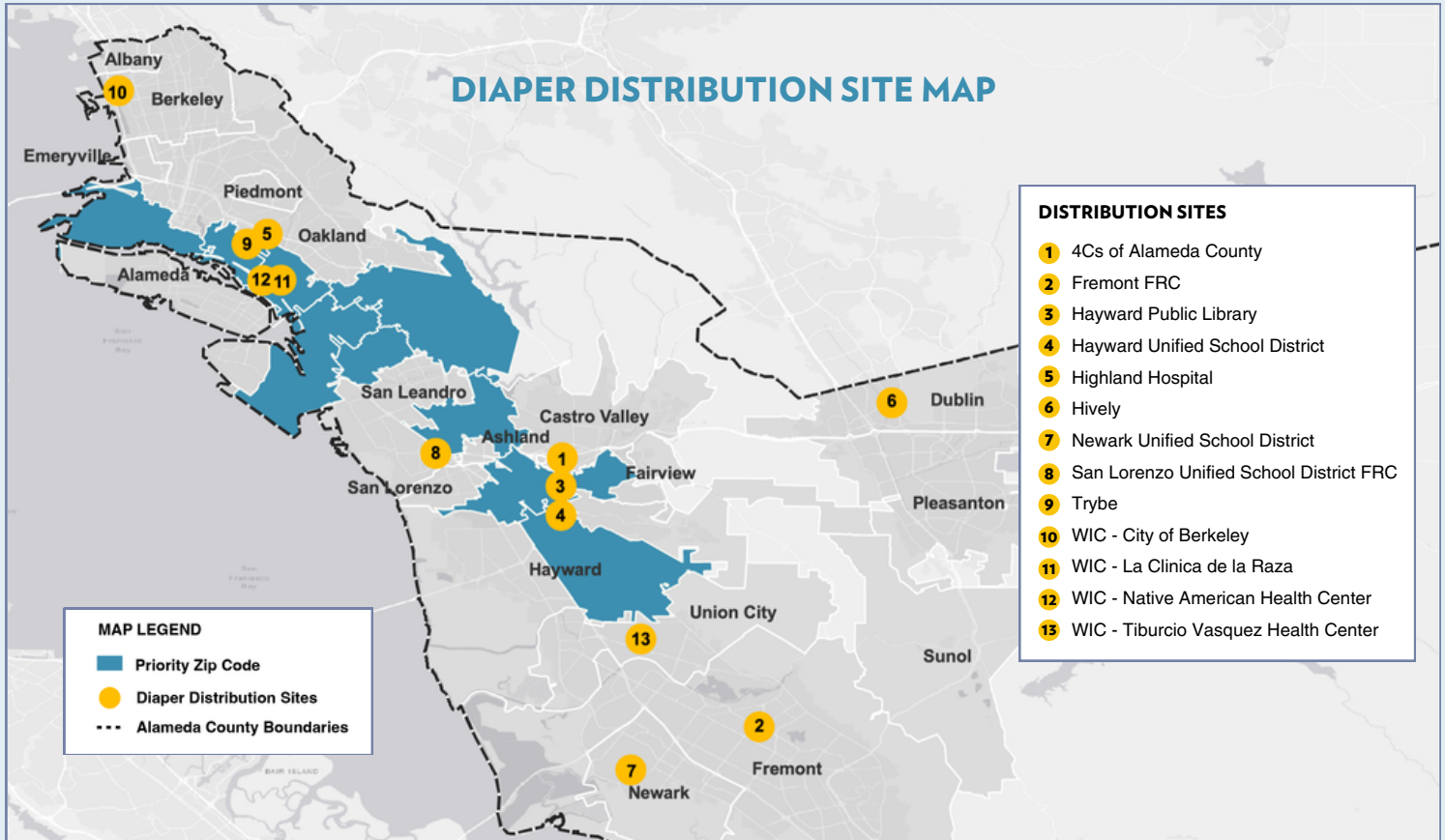
Layering diaper distributions onto existing community services to create early childhood service hubs

Alameda County's Diaper Program also allows local community-based organizations to [repurpose funding](#) that is typically used for directly purchasing diapers and operational costs related to storage and staffing, and instead apply it to other community serving needs. The diaper distribution model also supports community driven wraparound service delivery that enables families to access individualized programming, referrals to essential services, and basic needs where they live. Community partners participating in the Diaper Kit program have paired diaper distributions with community resources including food distributions, educational parenting classes, and free summer camp services.

Supporting relationship-building and service delivery coordination through adequate staffing

To bolster early childhood hubs as places for accessing services and programming beyond basic needs, First 5 has funded key staff at SBO to support

community relationship-building and the coordination of diaper distributions across partners and sites. The SBO Program Manager plays an important role that includes working with each community partner to submit monthly request forms and coordinating the delivery of tailored Diaper Kits. This partnership allows community partners to plan convenient, safe, and efficient diaper distribution at their sites.



Learning from the field

Now more than ever, policies and programs must ensure that families have what they need every step of the way on the **“Road to Kindergarten Readiness”** and that systems are prepared to meet the concrete needs of children, families, and communities. This includes investments, approaches, and partnerships that promote increased access, flexibility, and support for families to meet their basic needs for diapers, housing, food, utilities, and resources required to create a safe, healthy, and enriching home environment. Through a community directed distribution model that centers trusted networks,

First 5’s and SBO’s partnerships have facilitated quick and effective distribution of diaper resources that match the needs of families living in each community. SBO’s Diaper Kit program shows that diaper distributions are effective when they are:

- Delivered through community partnerships and placed-based strategies**
- Adaptive and flexible to accommodate the capacity of the hosting community partner**
- Paired with additional programs and services to ensure that families are getting connected to resources and services through a one-stop shop**

BEYOND DIAPERS

Meeting Families' Basic Needs

The collaboration with nonprofits, hospitals, school districts, family resource centers and WIC agencies supported the distribution of **10,097 diaper kits** between Nov 2022 and Jun 2023 in Alameda County.



“Another partnership that came to fruition is our new partnership directly with Supply Bank.

This partnership has allowed Trybe to reach even more families and supply them with diapers and wipes. We have established many relationships with new families and many of them have received food assistance through our Resource Navigator as well as priority registration to Trybe programming and Summer Camp. We believe that our relationships should be long-term and not just transactional.”

-Lucia Perez, former Trybe staff member



Hayward Public Library reported the highest ease of access in their diaper program.

Parents and grandparents have created schedules to pick up resources, ensuring a smooth and efficient distribution process.



In partnership with First 5 Alameda County, SupplyBank, Baby2Baby and generous donors, 4Cs of Alameda County offers a monthly diaper cohort program for families with young children.

Each year, 100 low-income families residing in Southern Alameda County and Oakland received a box of diapers and two packs of baby wipes per child for 10 months, from September to June. Families are also connected with food assistance.

About Neighborhoods Ready for School

Thriving neighborhoods are an essential component of an early childhood system. First 5's [Neighborhoods Ready for School \(NRFS\) initiative](#) is a place-based investment, asset building, and policy response to the relationship and interplay between neighborhood conditions, family and child well-being, and the structural factors that contribute to overall health, development, and kindergarten readiness. The NRFS initiative funds trusted community-based organizations using an equity index to prioritize neighborhoods with young children that have been historically marginalized due to racist, classist systems and policies.

The NRFS initiative consists of community partners in three neighborhoods in the City of Oakland and one Union City partner, including [San Antonio Family Resource Center](#), [Lincoln Family's Mandela Family Resource Center](#), [Roots Community Health Center- Stay Ready for School](#), and [Union City Family Center](#). The NRFS sites partner with [Help A Mother Out](#) and [SupplyBank.org](#) for diaper distributions in their communities.

About First 5 Alameda County

First 5 Alameda County helps young children grow up healthy and ready to learn during the most important time in their development. We have more than two decades of experience funding innovative programs and advocating for policies that produce better futures for our children.

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