

Child & Youth Impact Assessments: Case Study

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Overview

Santa Clara County, California, provides a [good example](#) of how a county elected official championed the creation of child impact statements and built support to pass a resolution instructing county agencies to use them. Established by the County Board of Supervisors in 2011 after conversations between child advocates and a committed county supervisor, child impact statements are still in use today. Other child-focused elements already in place—including a county child bill of rights, an annual data report on children, a children’s policy agenda, and independent child advocacy organizations—helped pave the way for the focus on child impacts. The child impact statements, in turn, helped spur the creation of an additional tool: a children’s budget.

County of Santa Clara
Board of Supervisors

Date: June 21, 2011

Recommended Action:

*Approve the recommendation . . .
to include a Child Impact
Assessment in all Board
transmittals . . .*



Highlights

- 2005: First Santa Clara Children’s Agenda was developed and was [updated regularly](#). Led by [Kids in Common](#), an advocacy organization, and involving hundreds of community partners, the agenda was accompanied by 13 data indicators of progress.
- 2010/2022: In 2010, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors endorsed a Bill of Rights for Children and Youth. In 2022, a group of youth, working with Kids in Common and several stakeholders, developed an updated version of the [Bill of Rights](#). It then was approved by the Board of Supervisors. The new Bill of Rights includes young people’s rights to love and emotional connections, life skills, support for their families, and having a voice on issues that impact them, as well as rights to basic provisions, such as health care, green space, and technology.
- 2011: Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors approved then-President Dave Cortese’s proposal to implement child impact statements. These assessments accompanied documents sent from county agencies to the County Board that require action—including issues that relate to children specifically as well as many others that don’t focus on children but affect them.
- Guidance for these child impact statements said, “describe the direct impacts to children as a whole, not to child services only . . . (and) describe direct impacts to children in terms of positive, negative, or neutral and include . . . (when known) future direct impacts.”
- Agency staff were expected to align these impact statements with the Bill of Rights. The Children’s Agenda with its indicators provided another important reference point for completing these analyses.
- 2019: Santa Clara County released its first [Children’s Budget](#).



In Action

Impact Assessments Result in Culture Shift to Elevate Consideration of Kids

Leaders in Santa Clara County found it’s often hard to claim a direct causal effect from a child impact statement on a policy because so many factors influence policy decisions. However, everyone interviewed said using child impact statements resulted in greater attention to the needs of children and a shift in the culture of decision-making.

From county supervisor staff -

“Ten years ago, kids’ issues were sidelined. Now, children come up on every issue our (county) board considers. Since using impact assessments, what’s good for children has become part of our culture.”

From child advocate -

“Child impact statements till the ground for other child-centric thinking. This year the county released its first children’s budget, and I don’t think this would have happened had the child impact statement not been in place.”

Sources: Interviews with Laura Brunetto, Dana Bunnett, Amy Carta, Enrique Flores, Evelyn Ho, Rocio Luna, and Grace Merejillano, along with published resources at www.kidsimpact.org.