



INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD IS SOUND ECONOMIC POLICY

First 5 Contra Costa makes a difference in the lives of children from the prenatal stage through age 5, the time when a child's brain development is most critical. Since 2000, First 5 Contra Costa has invested over \$64 million in Proposition 10 tobacco tax funds to support local and proven programs that provide children with health care, developmental screening, child safety programs, obesity prevention, quality child care, preschool, and support for families.

As public funding dissipates and family support systems fall apart, First 5 funds emerge as among the last discretionary funds left to support families with young children locally and statewide.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE:

At-Risk Newborns, Children and Families Are Receiving More Support:

- To ensure that no child will lose access to health care because of a family's lost employment or increased health care premiums, First 5 Contra Costa, First 5 California, and 57 other First 5 commissions have allocated a total of \$16.7 million to guarantee that no child 0–5 ends up on a Healthy Families waiting list.
- Home visitors have served nearly 12,000 families, including first-time parents, families with medically vulnerable infants, and incarcerated and other high-risk expectant mothers. Services have improved parent-child bonding and ensured most children were up-to-date on immunizations and had health insurance.
- Nearly 5,700 parents and children have completed classes on parenting, child development, and raising children in smoke-free environments at the five First 5 Centers. Last year, attendance increased 26% from the previous year.
- 131 mothers with substance abuse issues and at-risk of losing their children participated in residential substance abuse treatment, while their children received mental health services. Participating mothers have made improvements with addiction and parenting practices and most program graduates retained custody of their children.

Children with Special Needs and their Caregivers Are Receiving Help Sooner:

- Mental health specialists have observed over 1,500 children with emotional, developmental or behavioral problems. Children in need were referred to services to improve their long-term development.
- Over 100 parents and 220 child care providers received support for caring for children with special needs. Parents and providers both reported that services provided taught them new skills to address social, emotional, behavioral, or developmental delays and other disabilities displayed by young children.

Children Are Receiving Higher Quality Child Care:

- Over 3,700 child care providers have participated in a program designed to increase their education and training, both significant indicators of program quality. Half of the providers served last year did not have a two-year college degree, and over 90% reported that the program helped them provide higher quality care.
- Nearly 50 child care sites, mostly located in low-income communities, have participated in a program that provides grants and coaching to help child care programs meet national accreditation standards, the country's highest mark of quality. The number of accredited child care programs in Contra Costa County has doubled in just four years because of this service.

At-Risk Children Are Entering Kindergarten Better Prepared:

- School readiness preschools have helped 1,450 low-income children significantly boost their social, communication, and problem-solving skills. 60-67% of children who attended for two years almost or fully mastered developmental skills needed for kindergarten. In comparison, only 15% of children in Contra Costa County's low-performing schools were rated by their kindergarten teachers as having almost or fully mastered the same range of skills.
- First 5 Contra Costa brought early childhood and K-12 educators together to develop a universal preschool strategic plan designed to provide high-quality preschool for all three-and four-year-olds in Contra Costa County once funding is available. First 5 will launch a pilot scholarship preschool program in Pittsburg this summer.

More Parents are Learning About the Importance of the Early Years:

- 65,000 Kits for New Parents – a “how to” resource including parenting DVDs and information on child health and development – have been distributed to help parents care for their newborns.
- First 5 Contra Costa is a co-sponsor of 211, a cutting edge information system that is helping the growing number of families in crisis find the critical help they need. County First 5 commissions are the single largest funder in the state of 211.
- Weekly English and Spanish parent education radio programs reach over 50,000 Bay Area listeners each week.

First 5 is Improving Service Systems in Contra Costa County

- A new partnership with California State University East Bay Concord Campus and the three Contra Costa community colleges has significantly increased the number of child care providers earning college units and degrees.
- School districts participating in our School Readiness program are now reaching out to families well before children enter kindergarten. Thirty-two low-performing elementary schools developed and implemented plans designed to ease children's transition into kindergarten. Children who attended schools that utilized a high number of kindergarten transition activities showed greater child development skills.