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**FIRST 5 CONTRA COSTA ALLOCATES \$70 MILLION
FOR COUNTY'S YOUNG CHILDREN**
*First 5 Adopts New Strategic Plan to Fund
Programs Benefiting Children Ages 0 to 5*

(Concord, CA) – The First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission has adopted a new five-year strategic plan to invest more than \$70 million in programs that serve children ages 0 to 5 and their families. This investment commitment guarantees consistent, stable funding for local children's programs at a time when county and state budget cuts have greatly reduced services for children. The Commission's approval of the plan titled, "Investing in Early Childhood," marked the culmination of an 18-month, public planning process that engaged community stakeholders, grantees, commissioners, and staff.

"First 5 Contra Costa's new plan builds on the successful services we have funded over the past nine years to improve the lives of children and families," said Sean Casey, First 5 Contra Costa Executive Director. "While we will continue to fund many of our effective services, the new plan outlines a more focused set of priorities to ensure our funded programs have the greatest impact possible."

First 5 Contra Costa's strategic plan will fund initiatives focused in the following core areas:

- 1. Early Childhood Education:** Provide children with high-quality child care and preschool
- 2. Family Support:** Help at-risk children birth to age three form healthy attachments with parents, which research shows is critical to healthy brain development
- 3. Early Intervention Services:** Support children affected by abuse, neglect, trauma, development delays, special needs, social/emotional, or health problems
- 4. Community Information and Engagement:** Ensure parents, providers, policymakers and the public understand the importance of the first five years and how they can best support children

Some of the programs funded under these initiatives will include improved treatment for children who have suffered child abuse, neglect or ongoing trauma; preschool scholarships for low-income children; support for children with serious disabilities or other special needs, including improved screening to identify delays in children earlier in their life; advanced training for child care teachers; nurse visits for new parents; and free parent education programs at family resource centers.

Prudent fiscal planning has made it possible for First 5 to make its \$70 million five-year funding commitment despite the fact that Proposition 10 revenues are declining. To avoid program funding reductions, First 5 will use the majority of its reserve funds account, which was established eight years ago to ensure stability in funding as Proposition 10 revenues decreased.

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“Today, with budget cuts and massive reductions to children’s services, First 5 funding is still among the most consistent, stable public funding sources available to support young children,” said Casey. “Fortunately we planned ahead and will use our resources to support local children at a time when they need it most.”

The Strategic Plan can be obtained online at www.firstfivecc.org.

About First 5 Contra Costa

Research shows that a child’s brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child’s growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. Since its inception, First 5 Contra Costa has distributed nearly \$75 million in Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.

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