

Healthy Children Ready for School



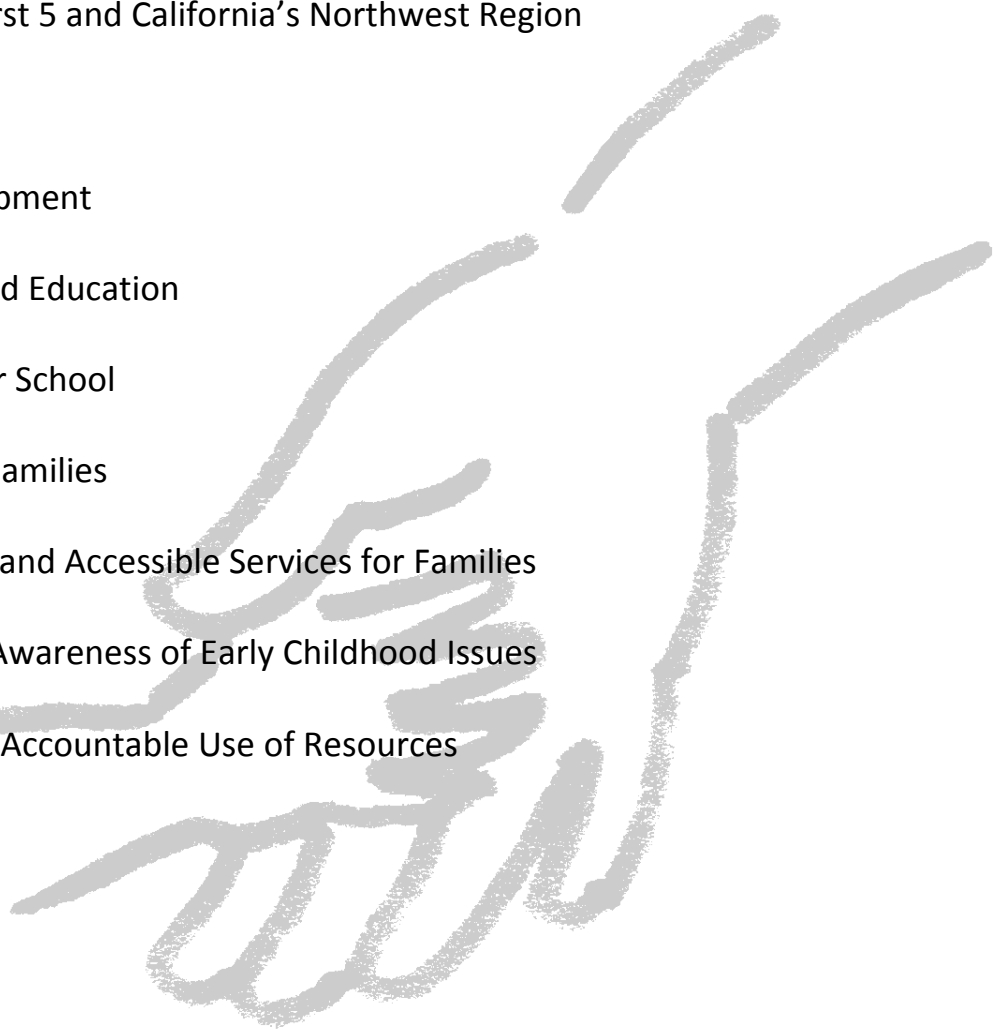
The Impact of First 5 in California's Northwest Region

April 2009



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The pictures in this report were provided by First 5 Commissions from the region and show people, services and other activities supported by First 5 in their communities.

Overview

First 5 and California's Northwest Region

In 1998, California's voters passed Proposition 10 to provide the state's first funding stream dedicated to helping children from the prenatal state to age five grow up healthy in all respects and ready to succeed in school when they enter kindergarten. In the ten years since this landmark act was enacted, First 5 Children and Families Commissions in every county in California have worked diligently to improve the health, development and well-being of young children and their families. This report examines the impact that First 5 has had specifically within the ten counties of California's Northwest Region.

What is First 5?

Eighty-five percent of children's brain growth occurs by age four. Significant development of physical coordination, emotional and social skills also occurs in these beginning years of life. Yet less than 9% of public investments in education and development are spent on children ages four and younger, despite overwhelming research showing the tremendous cost-benefit gain of investing very early as opposed to later in a child's life.¹

County Children and Families Commissions were established after the passage of Proposition 10 to create a new focus on early childhood development. Now known as "First 5" to emphasize the importance of the first five years of life, these commissions work to understand the needs of young children and their families, determine how best to use the funds from the Proposition 10 tobacco tax, and sponsor programs, services and other activities to achieve four overall strategic results:

1. Improved Child Health: Healthy Children
2. Improved Child Development: Children Learning and Ready for School
3. Improved Family Functioning: Strong Families
4. Improved Systems of Care

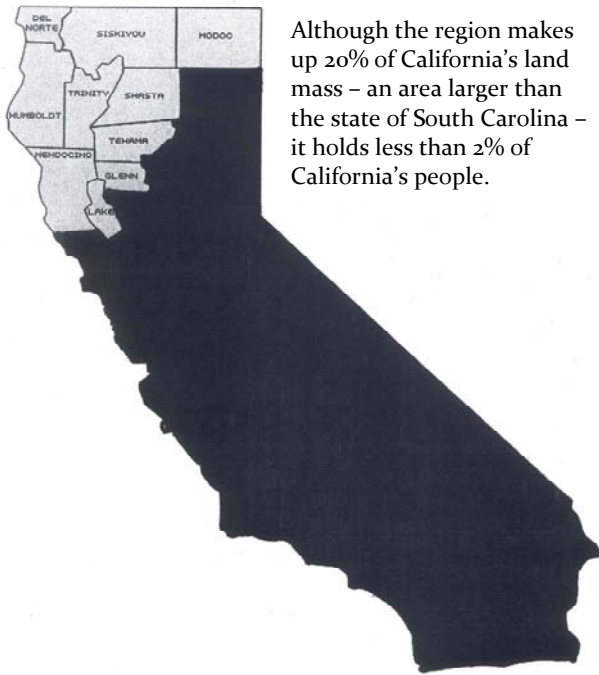
What is First 5? First and foremost, it is a **movement** – a statewide commitment to making sure our youngest children and their families are healthy and thriving. First 5 is also:

- A reliable funding stream that has the flexibility to fund whatever will have the greatest impact for children and families;
- Local leadership to guide the First 5 movement and tailor the use of funds to the unique circumstances in each county;
- A dedication to getting real results, with the means to demonstrate results through partnership, evaluation of programs to see what works and accountability over the use of funds; and
- A support system consisting of First 5 staff, technical assistance for local service providers and other ways to strengthen the community resources that children and families rely upon.

The Northwest Region

The Northwest Region is comprised of ten counties: Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, Modoc, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama and Trinity. This is a vast and often rugged territory of mountains, forests, rivers and lakes, yet with a substantial amount of farmland.





Although the region makes up 20% of California's land mass – an area larger than the state of South Carolina – it holds less than 2% of California's people.

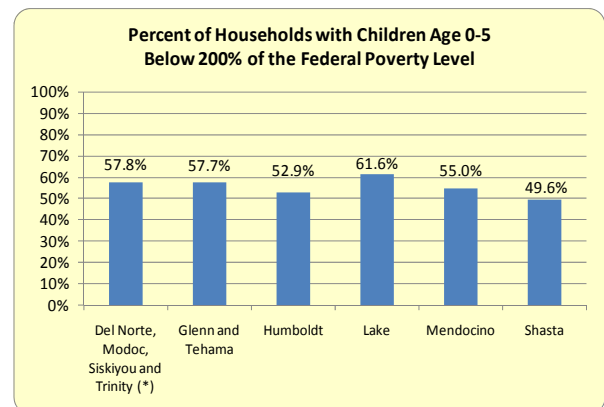
■ **Geographic barriers.** Much of the region is geographically isolated, with few roads going in or out of many of these counties. Services tend to be concentrated in a few larger population centers, leaving many communities far away from services with drive times of one to three hours in order to access services. Closure of secondary roads during inclement weather, especially during the winter months in this mountainous region, and few or no public transportation options present additional challenges.

■ **Poverty.** An average of 23% of the children in the region are living in households below the federal poverty level, ranging from a low of 20.5% in Humboldt County to high of 30.9% in Del Norte County.⁴ While poverty status provides some measure of extreme financial need, families earning incomes far above the poverty income level can also experience hardships in keeping up with the cost of living. For example, the federal poverty line does not take into account the cost of child care in determining what constitutes a family's basic needs. The California Budget Project estimates that a two parent family with two children in the Northwest Region actually needs \$48,236 of income a year – more than twice the federal poverty level – to meet their basic needs.⁵ By this standard, in every county in the region, half or more of all families with children age 0-5 are struggling to make ends meet as shown in the following graph.⁶

The region is home to over 47,000 children age 0-5. Roughly 8,000 babies are born each year to parents living in the region. The chart below shows the distribution of these children and births by county.

County	Children 0-5	Births
Del Norte	2,113	364
Glenn	2,641	455
Humboldt	8,702	1,643
Lake	4,422	695
Mendocino	6,907	1,106
Modoc	575	80
Shasta	13,012	2,191
Siskiyou	3,090	493
Tehama	4,903	818
Trinity	767	122
Region Total	47,132	7,967

The number of children 0-5 is based on 2008 population estimates from the California Department of Finance.² Births are from 2006 as reported by the California Department of Public Health.³



(*) Lassen, Plumas and Sierra Counties are also included in this figure

Families face unique challenges with raising children in this region. The most pressing challenges include:

- **Social isolation.** With a population density of only 0.1 to 3.4 children age 0-5 per square mile, social isolation can negatively affect child development and family functioning throughout the region.



- **Workforce issues.** Workforce challenges impact young children due to a lack of pediatricians, dentists, child mental health specialists and other clinical specialists, along with insufficient child care capacity.
- **Community infrastructure.** Large sections of the region are without infrastructure taken for granted elsewhere, such as high-speed Internet service. In Trinity County, over 25% of the county has no telecommunications.

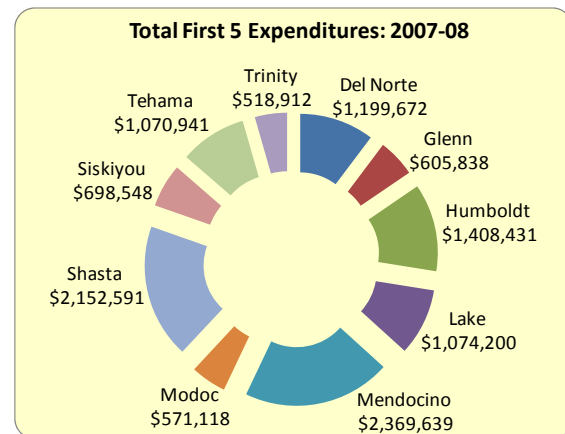
With these challenges also come many benefits for families with children. The area is rich in scenic beauty and recreation opportunities. Communities, while small, are often close knit. Some issues impacting urban areas like air pollution, a major cause of childhood asthma, do not affect the region.

The Impact of First 5 in the Region

As a social movement, First 5 is still quite new. After the passage of Proposition 10 in November 1998, each county had to establish its County Children and Families Commission, do a thorough study of the needs of children and families as well as gaps in existing services, and develop a countywide strategic plan showing the goals and objectives to be addressed with First 5 resources and how those goals would be achieved. In most counties, this was a two year process. Each county then had to create the infrastructure to implement its strategic plan. This required up to a year to hire staff, set up program evaluation and fiscal accountability systems to ensure that funds were being used wisely, and work with community partners to design and launch services to implement the First 5 strategic plan. Hence, through 2008, First 5 has


really only had seven years to make substantive investments in early childhood development.

First 5 has made remarkable progress in the Northwest Region during those seven years. By the 2007-08 program year, programs had grown to the point of being able to serve over 22,000 children age 0-5 throughout the region as well as over 31,000 parents, other family members and service providers like early care and education providers and medical professionals. **An estimated 45% of all children age 0-5 in the region were served last year by at least one First 5 funded program** – at their child care site, school, doctor’s office, library, community-based organization or in some other way. First 5 invested a total of \$11,669,890 across the region in 2007-08 to benefit children and families.



The Del Norte County total includes a special one-time expenditure of \$524,590 for a capital project

First 5 supports children and their families in all settings – in the home, at child care sites and in the community. First 5 also takes a holistic and coordinated approach to addressing the full range of issues affecting the health and development of children from the prenatal state to age 5. One way to understand the impact of First 5 is to look at what existed in 2008 to support early childhood development as a direct result of First 5 investments, compared to what existed in 2001 when First 5 programs were being launched. The following chart highlights many ways that children and families are better off now because of First 5.

Issue	Conditions in 2001 When First 5 Programs Started	Conditions in 2008 After First 5 Investments	First 5 Impact on the Northwest Region
<p>ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE: Ensure that children have health insurance and a medical home to get the preventive care and other health care services they need</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited outreach meant many children eligible for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families insurance did not receive coverage No insurance options existed for children 0-5 not covered by private insurance and not eligible for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families can get help with health insurance enrollment at over 60 more locations across the region Health insurance is now available to <u>all</u> children in Del Norte, Humboldt and Mendocino Counties; children in these counties can now receive California Kids coverage if they are not eligible for other insurance programs First 5 programs in every county are linking families to a medical home and are following up to ensure that children receive care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 600 children 0-5 were enrolled in Medi-Cal or Healthy Families last year that likely would not have been reached before 500 more children received California Kids coverage; these were previously uninsured children not eligible for other coverage In Mendocino County alone, the Healthy Kids initiative has saved local hospitals more than \$330,000 by reducing the number of hospital visits by uninsured children
<p>ORAL HEALTH: Prevent and treat tooth decay, the most common preventable disease affecting California's children, during the early years of life</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No oral health education programs for children 0-5 existed in most counties Virtually no oral health screening for children 0-5 occurred outside of Head Start, a few other public programs and services obtained privately by families with dental insurance or ability to pay Few treatment options were available; North Coast children had to travel to the San Francisco Bay Area for affordable dental surgery 15-20% of children were entering kindergarten with untreated tooth decay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First 5 oral health services exist in every county Oral health screening and education is widespread at preschools, family resource centers and other community sites Mobile dental units operate in four counties to reach many more kids A new dental surgery center funded by First 5 serves a four-county area Children are being enrolled in dental insurance programs through First 5 outreach Parents and child care providers are being educated about oral health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 5,300 children age 0-5 received oral health screening, treatment and education services over the past three years Over 5,000 parents and child care providers received information on proper oral health practices for children Over 2,000 children were enrolled in dental insurance programs Many more children reach kindergarten without tooth decay; Lake County, for example, showed a 25% improvement in the number of school children without tooth decay
<p>DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING AND TREATMENT: Detect and address developmental concerns at the earliest possible age, before children start school</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No systematic approach existed to developmental screening for children 0-5 Child development assessment methods were often not consistent or coordinated across agencies Many children reached kindergarten with unidentified special needs; for example, only 63% of children with special needs were identified before kindergarten in Mendocino County in 2003 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developmental screening is integrated across over 100 more programs and sites throughout the region The same research-based assessment methods are being used across agencies Services are coordinated to refer and help children when developmental concerns are identified Over 80% of the region is covered by new programs to assist families who have a child with special needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 1,300 children had a complete developmental screening last year 20% of children screened had developmental concerns and were connected with services \$7.5 million in long-term social savings may be achieved from early identification of special needs 82% of Mendocino County children with special needs are now identified before kindergarten (up from 63% in 2003)

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<p>OTHER HEALTH FACTORS: Maximize child health through prenatal care, breastfeeding of infants, good nutrition, physical fitness and mental health services</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prenatal care and breastfeeding support services were not reaching many Spanish-speaking mothers • Virtually no agencies in the region were trained to recognize or address early childhood mental health issues • Little focus existed on early prevention of obesity, despite overwhelming research showing adverse health effects of obesity with medical care costs to society exceeding those of smoking and problem drinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingual/multi-cultural perinatal education programs in four counties are reaching Spanish-speaking mothers • Five counties have best practice programs to train service providers to detect and address early childhood mental (ECMH) issues as well as help families affected by these issues • Every county has programs for early prevention of childhood obesity through nutrition education and physical fitness activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 6,000 mothers have received perinatal education or breastfeeding support services over the past five years • Almost 400 child care and medical professionals were trained on ECMH issues over the last two years • 1,500 parents and 350 child care providers were reached by nutrition education programs last year; 93% of parents and providers surveyed said they will serve healthy foods as a result of these programs
<p>EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION: Provide children with quality child care and preschool programs to help their learning, social-emotional development and other development</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual turnover rates of 20-42% were noted among early care and education (ECE) providers • Broad-based professional development was not available for ECE providers • Virtually no programs that supported the ECE field were reaching unlicensed (family, friend & neighbor) care providers • Local Child Care Planning Councils and Child Care Resource & Referral agencies did an excellent job of defining needs and linking parents to care, but neither had adequate funding to increase child care availability or quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) programs exist in eight counties, providing an effective system of professional development and stipends to retain ECE providers while improving ECE program quality • First 5 resources are complementing those of other community partners to increase the availability and quality of ECE programs • Systematic methods to assess ECE program quality called Environment Rating Scales are much more commonly used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost 800 ECE providers received professional development support, affecting the quality of care for an estimated 4,700 children in their classes • An additional 1,150 unlicensed care providers received training and support over the past five years to improve quality • ECE provider turnover rate was cut by one-third in Glenn County and others • 228 more preschool slots were created last year • Over 100 child care centers and family child care homes received quality improvement grants last year
<p>READINESS FOR SCHOOL: Make sure children are ready to succeed in school</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No comprehensive school readiness programs existed beyond the Head Start and State Preschool programs available only to families in limited income ranges • Little focus existed on early literacy; only 23-40% of children across the region were proficient in reading by second grade • Almost no support existed to help children transition into kindergarten • ECE providers rarely communicated with kindergarten teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School readiness programs exist in all ten counties that take a comprehensive approach to help child learning, social-emotional skills and health before children enter kindergarten • Programs to improve early literacy skills are available to over 90% of the region • Eight counties have special programs to help children transition into kindergarten • Kindergarten teachers and ECE providers coordinate regularly in most counties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Readiness programs served over 4,100 children last year • Early literacy programs reached 5,000 children • Second grade reading scores are higher in every county, with six counties showing jumps of 13-20% in the percent of children proficient in reading • Kindergarten teacher assessments show children in First 5 School Readiness programs are much more prepared for school than non-participating children

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<p>FAMILY ACCESS TO SERVICES: Ensure that parents are able to access community resources that can help their family</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services were mainly concentrated in the largest towns; parents in outlying communities had to travel long distances or else they could not access services Services that did exist were generally not coordinated; families had to go from one service provider to another but those providers often did not connect with each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 more Family Resource Centers (FRCs) give families local access to services in many more communities Service providers meet regularly in most counties to continually improve how services are coordinated so they are more user-friendly and more effective for families Culturally competent services are reaching many more Native American and Spanish-speaking families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An estimated 7,000 more families with children 0-5 now have access to an array of family support services through the FRCs and other outreach programs Surveys in different counties show 70% or more of parents using FRCs say the FRC has had a significant positive effect on their children or family
<p>PARENT EDUCATION AND SUPPORT: Empower parents with information and support to build their knowledge, skills and confidence in parenting</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No systematic approach existed to get important information about child health, development and parenting to parents of newborn children Parent education programs were largely limited to people who were required to attend, such as court-mandated classes, and were not inviting to all types of parents No consistent approach to parent education was used across agencies, creating confusion for parents Few or no options existed in most communities for parents to come together for mutual support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Kit for New Parents, an extensive set of information for new parents, is available and distributed widely in each county Parent education programs that are open to any interested parent are available in eight counties Quality research-based curricula for parent education are being used consistently across many agencies in four counties Seven counties have home visiting programs to serve hard-to-reach families Playgroups exist in over 40 more communities that create peer support among parents while building the social skills of children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 3,900 Kits for New Parents were distributed last year Over 1,400 families were served by parent education or home visiting programs Studies show major impacts of parent education programs, such as 59-71% increases in reading to children, physical activities with children and play dates Across all counties, two-thirds or more of parents participating in First 5 parent support programs report being able to deal much better with parenting issues as a result of the parent education program or playgroup
<p>CHILD SAFETY: Ensure that children are safe from abuse, neglect and unintentional injuries</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families reported for suspected child abuse or neglect but not meeting Child Welfare Services criteria to open a case rarely received any support services When child abuse/neglect was substantiated, support services ended when the case was closed; over 27% of cases had a recurrence of abuse within 24 months Little awareness existed within the community about the real effects that exposure to violence has on young children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First 5-funded FRCs and family support programs are the cornerstone of differential response systems to connect families with a child abuse/neglect report to support services that would not otherwise be served by Child Welfare Social service, child care, law enforcement and other personnel throughout the region have been trained to improve detection and response to family violence Water safety, car seat and other programs help cut unintentional child injuries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the region as a whole, the percent of cases with a recurrence of abuse or neglect within 24 months has dropped by 31% When abuse or neglect is substantiated, First 5 FRCs and other family support programs are now able to continue aiding the families after they leave the child welfare system Efforts to <u>prevent</u> child abuse and neglect have been greatly strengthened by the presence of First 5 parent education and family support programs

The impact of First 5 goes beyond the multitude of essential programs and services that it has helped to create and sustain. To fully appreciate the effect that First 5 has had, it is necessary to understand the many roles that are served by First 5 – roles that were not being addressed or not fulfilled sufficiently before First 5 was created – and the characteristics that make First 5 unique. Here are some of the key ways that First 5 is truly unique, along with what local and state leaders have to say about the impact of each item in the Northwest Region.

CHAMPION FOR CHILDREN 0-5

First 5 is uniquely focused on the first years of life, and addresses the full range of issues that lead to healthy, well developed children

“First 5 finally drew attention to the needs of children age 0-5 in the community. Prior to First 5, there was little emphasis on funding, programs and knowledge of the 0-5 age group.” - Cris McCollum, Director, Del Norte Child Care Council

“I wish people could see the enthusiasm within the First 5 commissions for helping the kids they are commissioned to help. I have never worked with a more enthusiastic group of people.” - Dr. Melvin Sage, Dental Director, Northern Valle Indian Health

CATALYST FOR CHANGE

First 5 focuses on results for children, not specific types of services, and is able to seek fundamental changes in services to create better results

“First 5 is part of the local community, where everyone knows each other and works together for the common good of children instead of becoming territorial.” - Linda McBride, Shasta County Office of Education Board

“First 5 has the resource base to allow them to be the convener. It has pulled partners together and determined a way to deliver oral health services more effectively.” - Jon Roth, Director, California Dental Association Foundation

LOCAL FLEXIBILITY

Each county is able to decide how to best use First 5 funds in order to meet unique local needs and complement what already exists in the community

“First 5 investments are based on a thorough and valid assessment of the needs in the county. They are also flexible, meaning they adapt to the county’s needs as needs and conditions change.” - Jeannie Jacobs, Early Childhood Specialist, Tehama and Shasta Counties

“First 5 allows us to tailor programs so that they are culturally appropriate and fit our frontier circumstances.” - Marcia Armstrong, County Board of Supervisor Member, Siskiyou County

HOLISTIC APPROACH

First 5 works across disciplines and acts as the “glue” to bring services together and fill critical gaps that no other funding source is able to address

“Services for young children were generally very disjointed. First 5 provides a menu of different services, and families can use those services as they need them. Nothing like that existed before First 5.” - Roberta Peck, California County Superintendents Educational Services Association

“Somebody has to take a comprehensive view. By putting all pieces together, First 5 provides a safety net for the vulnerable kids.” - Allan Katz, Community Health Alliance of Humboldt-Del Norte (retired)

RELATIONSHIP BASED

First 5 respects and builds upon family and community relationships; children are served in the context of their family, and families are supported in the context of their community

“On a global level, First 5 is inviting people with young children to participate in their community.” - Sally Aldinger, Trinity County Office of Education

“First 5 has helped reduce isolation of families and helps them get peer support from each other. It allows families to create their own village and enables them to get to know one another. It lets them share knowledge of available resources.” - Siskiyou County Family Resource Center Coordinator

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION FOCUS

First 5 is committed to preventing child health/development problems and addressing issues early

“One thing we know is that prevention works. We are living in a time where we are making investments when children and families are in crisis. That doesn't work. First 5 has invested in prevention.” - Leticia Alejandrez, Executive Director, California Family Resource Association

“First 5 can do far more preventative work, rather than wait until the children and the families need much more expensive interventions. It's a great investment.” - Gary Blatnick, Director, Del Norte County Health & Human Services

INCLUSIVENESS

First 5 is concerned about all children age 0-5, not just particular income or demographic groups

“First 5’s mission and goal has been to educate the entire community. It affects the poor, rich and middle class. It’s all about being a good parent or provider. That focus has been very effective and wouldn’t have been if we just focused on direct service.” - Camille Schraeder, Executive Director, Redwood Children’s Services

PARTNERSHIP SPIRIT

First 5 engages all sectors of the community – public and nonprofit agencies, businesses, parents and others – and strives to build lasting partnerships across sectors to serve children and families better

“First 5 has provided a table that is powerful because of money attached. All of the various prenatal to age 5 service providers and other stakeholders are working together on a regular basis because of this table.” - Marianne Pennekamp, Humboldt County community advocate

“There is a push to bring in all partners, like bringing in the tribes. First 5 also has been able to outreach to Spanish speaking families; most Spanish-speaking parents are eager to use classes because there were none available to them before this.” - Joan Reynolds, Healthy Start Director, Lake County Office of Education

LEVERAGING OF FUNDS

First 5 gets the most out of its limited resources, having used its funds as matching funds or other forms of leverage to secure over \$7 million in additional funding from federal reimbursements, foundations, special grants, investments from the business community and other sources over the past three years

“The northern counties are very unique in the way that they have worked hard to use the money for the biggest bang. They do wonderful things with it. They should be commended for the way they use the money, for the programs they’ve implemented, and for the families and the children they’ve helped.” - Carmen Padilla, Child Development Consultant, First 5 California

“First 5 serves as a catalyst for other funding and has many examples where their investment in a particular area has brought other partners to the table, who have contributed their dollars as well.” - Allan Katz, Community Health Alliance of Humboldt-Del Norte (retired)

ACCOUNTABILITY

First 5 is committed to evidence-based and/or promising practice programs, evaluation of services to assess results and strong fiscal accountability; annual independent audits show solid fiscal systems with no adverse findings

“First 5 made multi-year commitments to establish programs and make sure that they are effective and that you can see positive changes in your own community.” - Pam Klier, Kindergarten Teacher, Lakeport Elementary School

“First 5 had great evaluation from the start and has been able to see if programs are or are not working. Because of this, they are able to tailor each program in order to really meet the needs.” - Michelle Rosauer, School Readiness Coordinator, Tehama County Department of Education

The impact of First 5 in the Northwest Region is explained further in the remaining sections of this report. Each section highlights a major area of investment – health, child development, early care and education, readiness for school, support for parents and families as a whole, efforts to coordinate services and make them more accessible to families, community awareness of early childhood issues, and the means to use resources in an efficient and accountable manner. The accomplishments of First 5 can be best appreciated by understanding the full range of ways that communities have been profoundly changed because there are champions for young children that have local control of the resources to turn visions into reality.



Health

There are many facets to ensuring that children have good health. Prenatal care for pregnant women, together with breastfeeding and other practices after birth, increase the likelihood that infants will be healthy at the start of life. Regular access to health care services allows children to receive important preventive care and to have health issues addressed quickly before they become more severe. Oral health, mental health, nutrition and physical fitness are intimately connected to a child's ability to learn and can all profoundly affect the overall health of children.

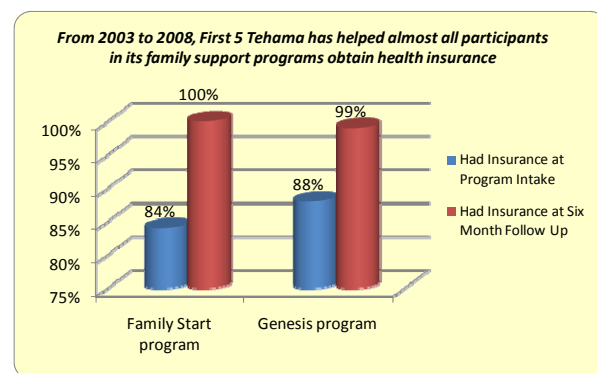
First 5 recognizes the interrelated factors that lead to good health, and has invested in a coordinated system of proven methods to improve children's health. This section highlights the variety of ways that First 5 has had a positive impact on the health of children age 0-5 in the Northwest Region.

Access to Health Services

The lack of health insurance is a significant barrier to receiving health care services. Results from the 2006 Rural Health Information Survey, covering four of the Northwest Region counties, showed that 48% of uninsured respondents were unable to get needed health care in the prior 12 months.⁷ The inability to access care, in turn, leads to high economic costs as well as poor health outcomes. Studies of Children's Health Initiatives report higher rates of emergency room visits and hospitalizations for uninsured children.⁸ Californians as a whole pay approximately \$7,000 every time an uninsured child visits a hospital for a preventable ailment. In contrast, only 17% of that amount, or \$1,200, is needed to provide health coverage for each uninsured child.⁹

First 5 has had a measurable effect on increasing the number of children with health insurance by helping eligible families obtain Medi-Cal, Healthy Families or other available coverage. Just a few of the success stories funded by First 5 are:

- In Lake County, the Lake Family Resource Center helped 293 parents last year with completing their health insurance application or resolving an enrollment issue. 97% of the families requesting insurance assistance qualified for an available health insurance program.
- Trinity County's Healthy Kids project monitors health insurance status at the time of medical visits and helps over 100 children a year enroll in available insurance programs.
- In Shasta County, the SMART Business Resource Center became a Healthy Families enrollment site and receives referrals from other employers with parents with uninsured children. As a result, 68 uninsured children were enrolled in less than a year.
- First 5 Tehama has integrated health insurance enrollment into all of its family support programs, leading to major increases in coverage rates.



For uninsured children that do not qualify for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families, First 5 led efforts to offer universal health insurance coverage in Del Norte, Humboldt and Mendocino Counties. In each county, First 5 helped to build strong public-private partnerships to ensure that every child age 0-5 could have health insurance, securing over two dollars from other sources (mostly private) for every dollar of First 5 investment. Thousands of children that did not have an insurance option now can receive quality coverage.

SPOTLIGHT ON FIRST 5 HEALTHY KIDS INITIATIVES

In Mendocino County, Healthy Kids Mendocino (HKM) has enabled nearly 1,600 children to get health insurance since May 2006. HKM has saved local hospitals more than \$330,000 by reducing the number of hospital visits by uninsured children.

In Humboldt and Del Norte Counties, First 5 took a leadership role in drawing in many partners such as the churches, county health and human services agencies, local hospitals, local and state foundations and other community based organizations. Siddiq Kilkenney, Regional Representative for the California Head Start Association, states that "as a result, every child aged 0-5 in Humboldt County has access to health care. And that is profound. I don't know of anything one could say that is more profound than that."

However, insurance coverage does not always mean that children receive health care services. Every First 5 commission in the region is working to help families find a medical home, reducing inappropriate emergency room usage and increasing access to preventive care. For example:

- Over the past three years, more than half of the families in First 5 Tehama family support and school readiness programs that did not have a medical home were connected to a medical home with access to health care within six months.
- Allan Katz, former Executive Director of the Community Health Alliance of Humboldt-Del Norte, reports that 90% of the children covered by First 5-sponsored California Kids health insurance are receiving preventative medical and dental care. In short, they are not only getting coverage, they are getting the health care services they need.

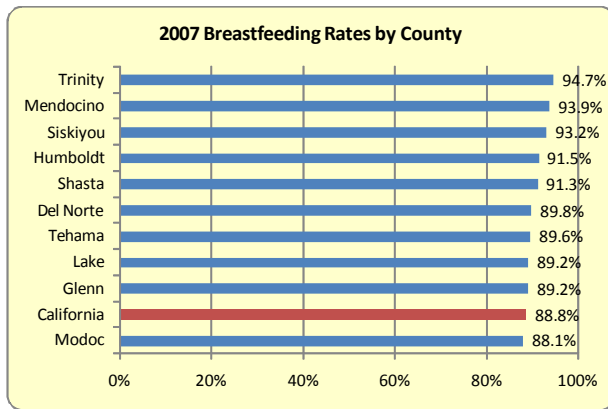
Finally, First 5 has created access to health care by offering free health screening, including vision and hearing tests, for children 0-5 at preschools, Head Start programs, community-based organizations, community events and other settings. Last year, 402 Del Norte County children received free health screens because of First 5; 102 referrals were made for follow up attention because of those screens. A mobile medical outreach van allowed these exams to be conducted all over the county. In Lake County, 156 health screenings were completed by AmeriCorps members.



Breastfeeding

Most medical associations acknowledge breastfeeding as the preferred method of infant feeding. Breastfed infants have lower rates of hospital admissions, ear infections, obesity, diarrhea, allergies and other medical problems than bottle-fed babies. Mothers who breastfeed have reduced risk for premenopausal breast cancer and ovarian cancer, and also have reduced rates of postnatal depression. Since breastfeeding promotes early attachment between mothers and their children, social-emotional health and developmental benefits are also realized for the children.

Education and support for breastfeeding has been an emphasis of most First 5 commissions in the region, and the results show. Nine out of the ten counties in the region had breastfeeding rates above the state average in 2007, with rates ranging from 88.1% to 94.7%.¹⁰



One of the many model programs supported by First 5 is the Shasta Breastfeeding Support Center, where pregnant women and new mothers in Shasta County receive expert education and support. Annually, weekly support groups for new parents and infants, breast pump loans and a parent resource library draw 3,700 parents to visit the center. Over 300 women a year that are experiencing challenges breastfeeding receive one-to-one consultations with a lactation specialist or a peer counselor. More than 2,500 people also receive assistance by phone.

Oral Health

Tooth decay is the most common preventable disease affecting California's children. One in four elementary school children in California has untreated tooth decay.¹¹ Within the Northwest Region, oral health screening efforts have found 30-40% of children age 3-5 screened had visible untreated decay in at least one tooth requiring dental attention and 10-12% had severe tooth decay, defined as four or more teeth with untreated decay.

The high rate of untreated tooth decay is a major public health issue. Oral health problems can be extremely painful, with the pain often leading to problems with eating, nutrition, sleeping and speaking. Children with tooth decay are prone to repeated infections in their ears, their sinuses, and other parts of their bodies, because their infected teeth are continually pouring pathogens into their systems.¹² Chronic dental problems in children adversely affect self-image, school attendance, and school performance.

Nationally, an estimated 51 million hours of school time are lost by children each year because of oral health problems.

Access to dental screening and treatment for children has historically been very limited in the Northwest Region, especially outside of the few larger population centers. First 5 has made a big difference in improving oral health across all ten counties in the region through a coordinated system of education, screening and treatment for children age 0 to 5.

Because of First 5:

- 5,357 children received oral health screening, treatment and education services from July 2005 to June 2008.
- Over 5,000 parents and child care providers received information on proper oral health practices for children.



- Mobile dental units are now operating in Glenn, Lake, Siskiyou and Tehama Counties, bringing critical dental services to isolated families in rural areas that otherwise likely would not have received care.

- A new dental surgery center was built that serves a four-county region including Lake and Mendocino Counties, providing oral surgery at an affordable cost along with case management and dental education services.

- Over 2,000 previously uninsured children 0-5 have obtained dental insurance due to First 5 efforts to enroll eligible children in Medi-Cal and

Healthy Families and to provide additional insurance coverage through the Children's Health Initiative. This is significant because children with dental insurance are more likely to have access to regular oral health care: 60% of insured children were found to have regular access to oral health care, compared to only 37% of children who do not have dental insurance.¹³

- 75% of all dentists in Modoc County participated in a First 5 program to provide oral health screening and treatment on a completely volunteer basis. The dentists have continued for four years to offer free screenings and fluoride varnish applications.

Research shows that First 5 efforts are making measurable improvements in the oral health of young children in the region. In Lake County, across the eight schools and preschools served by First 5 programs from 2002-03 to 2007-08, the percentage of children who were free from dental caries increased from 24% to 30% and the percentage of children with baby bottle tooth decay decreased from 39% in 2002-03 to 28% in 2007-08. Using a scientific method, the Quigley Hein Plaque Index, a 34% reduction in plaque levels of children was recorded after they participated in First 5 Humboldt's TOOTH program. A significant increase in the duration of brushing and other good oral health habits was achieved and endured well after the program was over.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Dr. Melvin Sage, Dental Director, Northern Valley Indian Health: "We are treating kids directly because of First 5 that were not receiving treatment otherwise." According to Dr. Sage, dental services for Medicaid children in the entire region would not exist without First 5. First 5 worked with other partners to secure additional funding to leverage the limited First 5 funds and put together a comprehensive program across three counties that includes oral health education to prevent oral disease, a mobile dental unit for screening and basic care, dental treatment for children who need it and access to dental insurance so that families can obtain preventive and restorative care.

Joan Reynolds, Healthy Start Director, Lake County Office of Education: "There is a very high dental caries rates in high-poverty areas. Before First 5, we didn't have the mechanisms to meet the oral health needs of the community. Now we can screen children at the schools and decide which kids need treatments. Healthy Start contacts the parents, gets them to the dentist, helps with insurance and provides information on dental care, which goes beyond the First 5 grant and leverages other resources."

Mental Health

Nationally, one in five children has a diagnosable mental health disorder.¹⁴ Yet roughly three out of four children in need of mental health services do not receive treatment,¹⁵ increasing the likelihood that they will experience problems at school, conflicts with family or peers, violence, drug abuse and even suicide.¹⁶ Research suggests that many of these mental health disorders in children might be avoided or ameliorated with prevention, early detection and intervention.

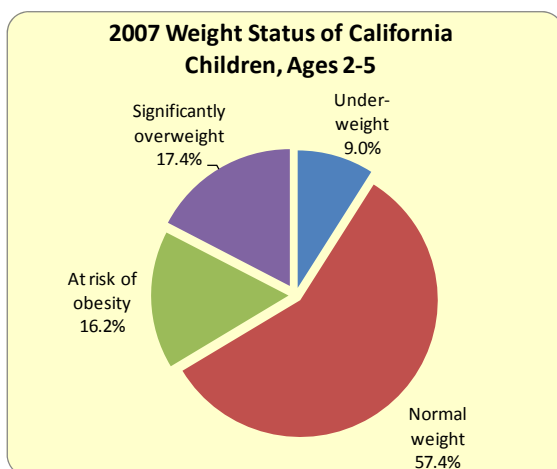
In many counties, First 5 is the only reliable source of funding for vital early childhood mental health services. The impact of First 5 support can be seen from these examples:

- In Mendocino County, more than 60 local professionals – including primary care medical providers – were trained to assist families with child behavior issues. A counselor is available to assist parents with more serious behavior issues. Last year, 758 children and 418 parents were served.
- First 5 Siskiyou funding trained 312 child care providers, social service staff, family resource center staff and other service providers on early childhood mental health (ECMH) issues and supported them with the resources to address ECMH needs in their communities.
- First 5 programs in Glenn County screen over 100 children annually for social-emotional concerns. Additional assessments and support services are provided for children with identified concerns. This has led to a measurable reduction in the number of behavioral problems in child care settings.
- The Healthy Pathways program funded by First 5 Shasta has provided early childhood mental health services to 127 children and 174 parents over the past two years. 92% of the children who entered with a mental health diagnosis left service with at least one improved diagnosis as measured by nationally defined clinical standards. Further, 77% of the parents with concerns noted in pre-assessments had measurably improved their relationships with their child.

First 5 is also working to support the mental health needs of parents, and especially parents dealing with depression. Although occurring most frequently in mothers during the first few months after childbirth (known as postpartum depression), depression can affect parents at any time. In turn, children of depressed parents experience high rates of anxiety, disruptive and depressive disorders that can continue into adulthood. First 5 Shasta is addressing this head-on through its Healthy Pathways program, providing mental health support to parents together with their children. Over a six year period with 554 families served, 54% of mothers found to be depressed according to the Center for Epidemiological Studies - Depression Scale (CES-D) were no longer depressed upon exit from the program.

Nutrition and Physical Fitness

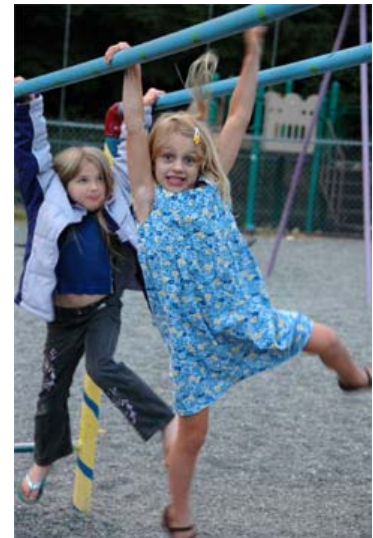
There is a growing epidemic in childhood obesity in California. As shown in the graph below, over one-third of California's children ages 2 to 5 are already significantly overweight or are at risk of obesity.¹⁷ Being overweight at a young age carries into later life; overweight preschool age children are five times more likely to be overweight at the age of 12.¹⁸



Children are rated as significantly overweight based on being over the 95th percentile of the Body Mass Index (BMI) for their age and are at risk of obesity based on being between the 85th and 95th percentile of the BMI for their age

Good nutrition, together with regular physical activity, is essential to combating this epidemic. The cost of failure will be staggering. According to a report from the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, "overweight children face a greater risk of problems including Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, asthma, and orthopedic problems. Overweight children also suffer psychosocial problems, including low self-esteem, poor body image, and symptoms of depression. For girls in particular, poor self-image from being categorized as obese follows them into adulthood, resulting in fewer years of completed education, lower family incomes, and higher rates of poverty, regardless of their initial socioeconomic background. Obese children are also hospitalized more often than children with healthy weight."¹⁹ The Center further noted that the medical care costs associated with obesity are greater than those associated with both smoking and problem drinking. Based on Surgeon General estimates, the total cost of obesity in California is \$14.2 billion.

First 5 has been on the forefront of fighting this looming health crisis. Four main approaches are being used: (1) educate children and parents about good nutrition; (2) encourage child care providers and other service providers working with young children to promote good nutrition and physical activity; (3) offer activities for young children that create physical fitness; and (4) create safe places for young children to play outside. In most counties, First 5 is the only source of flexible funding to support these types of projects.



Evidence of First 5's ability to have an impact on childhood obesity can be found throughout the region.

- First 5 Mendocino's SPARK (Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids) program has trained over 200 child care providers since fall 2006 to better incorporate good nutrition and physical activity into child care services. After participating in SPARK, teachers reported that children increased their use of positive social skills and demonstrated cooperative behavior; increased their ability to perform a wide variety of gross motor movements; and improved their listening and language skills.



- The Little Learners program launched by First 5 Glenn builds nutrition education into a broad range of parent support and child development services. In 2007-08, 93% of participating parents indicated that they will serve healthy foods to their child as a result of the program.
- A sample of children in Shasta County Head Start programs found 16% of children were significantly overweight and another 25% were at risk of becoming overweight. First 5 Shasta is fighting back through its Healthy Beginnings obesity prevention program, which trains early care and education (ECE) providers on ways to increase physical activity and healthy food choices for preschoolers. During the 2007-08 fiscal year alone, 150 ECE providers and 90 other medical providers were trained in strategies

to prevent obesity in young children. Pre- and post-test results show significant increases in provider knowledge of early childhood nutrition, physical activity and anemia. 93% of the providers plan to implement the program in their sites. Also, menus at all state-funded preschool and early care sites were changed to be more nutritious as a result of this program.

- First 5 Modoc's Obesity Prevention Project held events throughout Modoc County to promote parent and community involvement in physical activity; 238 parents, children and community members participated. Twelve other nutrition and physical activity sessions were completed at various locations in Modoc County to capture all children 0-5.
- In Del Norte, Humboldt and Siskiyou Counties, nutrition education is provided to parents on an ongoing basis through countywide networks of Family Resource Centers and as a component of other programs. As a result, well over 1,000 parents have learned about good nutrition and obesity prevention.
- First 5 Trinity funds an under-six soccer league to promote physical fitness plus a nutrition education program and children's garden. In the most recent year, these programs collectively served 532 children and 241 parents.

- Every county in the region has provided small grants to renovate parks, school playgrounds and play areas at child care facilities so that children would have fun, safe and age-appropriate places to play in their community. Fifteen toddler/preschool-aged playgrounds have been added or upgraded in Shasta County alone.

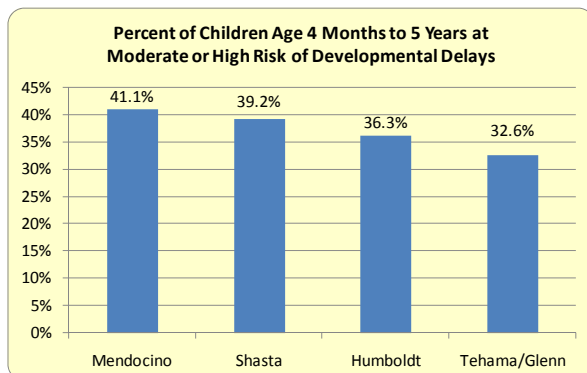


Child Development

There are five domains that cover different aspects of child development: cognitive development, social-emotional development, language/linguistic development, fine motor skills and gross motor skills. First 5 has been a leader in raising awareness about the many facets of child development and in creating a region-wide focus on the early detection and treatment of developmental delays or concerns. As a result, children are receiving the support they need in their first five years to reach their full potential and enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Developmental Screening, Assessment and Referral

Early detection of developmental delays and intervention prior to kindergarten has huge social and economic benefits. Studies have shown that children who receive early treatment for developmental delays are more likely to graduate from high school, hold jobs, live independently, and avoid teen pregnancy, delinquency, and violent crime. These improvements in life outcomes created by early intervention for developmental delays produce savings to society ranging from \$30,000 to \$100,000 per child. Put another way, for every \$1 we spend on early intervention, society saves \$13 – a savings so substantial that countries such as Great Britain fund early intervention programs directly from their national treasury.²⁰



Based on 2005-07 California Health Information Survey data. Only counties with statistically stable results are shown.²¹

As the graph shows, **well over one-third of children age 0-5 in the Northwest Region are at moderate to high risk of developmental delays.** First 5 support is critical to ensuring that these children are screened early for developmental concerns and that the children with identified concerns receive the services they need to address those concerns. In nearly every county, First 5 is one of the only consistent funding sources for developmental screening of children 0-5, when intervention is most likely to be effective.

In the 2007-08 fiscal year, over 1,300 children in the Northwest Region received comprehensive developmental screenings and assessments as a direct result of First 5 programs. On the average, about 20% of these children had developmental concerns identified that required a referral for follow up services. This means that because of First 5, at least 250 children a year received early intervention that most likely would not have had developmental issues identified until much later, if at all. Using the most conservative estimate from studies of \$30,000 per child in savings to society, long-term social savings of \$7.5 million may be realized from just one year of First 5 sponsored developmental screening.

“Everyone knows that when you intervene early, children are resilient and can respond well. Before First 5, there wasn’t a lot of focus on early intervention.”

Camille Schraeder, Executive Director,
Redwood Children’s Services

Highlights from model programs sponsored by First 5 in the region include:

- Last year in Mendocino County, 480 children age 0-5 received a developmental screening because of First 5. Of major significance is that countywide in 2007, 82% of kindergarten children with special needs were identified before entering kindergarten, a substantial improvement over 2003 when only 63% of children with special needs were identified before entering kindergarten.

- To build the countywide capacity for developmental screening, First 5 Lake funded a program to teach child care providers a comprehensive curriculum encompassing early childhood development, identifying developmental delays, approaches to managing behavior and an array of teaching techniques. Last year, 190 hours of training were offered with 146 licensed child care providers participating in these courses.

- A new Family Resource Center (FRC) in Del Norte County built and operated with First 5 funds has become a primary location for the Redwood Coast Regional Center to conduct developmental assessments for children ages 0-3. The Regional Center reports being able to reach many more families now, including families that would not agree to in-home screening but who feel welcome at the FRC.

- In several counties, First 5 has been the catalyst to build a coordinated countywide approach to developmental screening. In Glenn County, First 5 led the creation of a multi-agency collaboration where all participating agencies are using the same research-based child development assessment instrument across their various programs. Local schools soon became eager to learn about this assessment tool, resulting in training for kindergarten teachers to implement universal screening for children in their classrooms. Similar progress in implementing a systematic approach to developmental screening across a broad range of service providers is being achieved in Lake, Mendocino, Modoc and Shasta Counties.



Children with Special Needs

Once children with developmental delays or other special needs have been identified, it is vital to provide ongoing support for the children and their families. Early intervention for children with special needs has been shown to result in

children needing fewer special education and other services later in life, being retained in grade less often, and being engaged more fully in school and community activities. Longer term, children with special needs who receive effective supports are more likely to live independently and be employed as adults.

Early intervention services also have a significant impact on the parents and siblings of a child with special needs. The family of a child with special needs often feels disappointment, social isolation, added stress, frustration, and helplessness. Stress that can occur in caring for a child with special needs

may affect the family's well-being and interfere with the child's development.²² Families of children with special needs are found to experience increased rates of divorce and suicide, and children with special needs are almost twice as likely to be abused than other children.²³ Early intervention can result in parents having improved attitudes about themselves and their child together with improved abilities for raising their child.

First 5 is partnering with schools, Regional Centers, Head Start programs, county public health agencies and many other groups to strengthen the support systems for children with special needs and their families.

Following are several of the innovative approaches currently being sponsored by First 5.

- To create positive environments for children with special needs, First 5 Lake funded the local Easter Seals chapter to provide health and child development resources, information and technical assistance to child care and other service providers around the county. This program has simultaneously helped more parents of children with special needs to find quality child care and other services, while aiding the service providers to work effectively with young children that have special needs.
- In Shasta County, four-year old children identified with behavioral/social disorders or speech/language delays receive a boost before entering kindergarten by participating in First 5's Second Step Summer Transition program. This intensive, six-week psycho-educational intervention was offered over five consecutive summers, serving approximately 62 children with behavior and/or speech and language challenges each year. The program demonstrated successful improvement in overall school-adjustment behavior and age-appropriate speech skills. A follow-up evaluation of the program indicated children maintained these positive changes through their kindergarten year.
- First 5 Humboldt has a Children with Special Needs project where an Inclusion Specialist helps families with children with special needs to integrate into community playgroups and obtain needed services. A collaborative to provide in-home support services for these families is also being developed.
- In Del Norte and Siskiyou Counties, children with special needs are able to receive developmental services through their local Family Resource Center as a result of First 5 funding. This has helped greatly in making services more accessible to families.
- First 5 Del Norte contracts with the State Department of Developmental Services to integrate the Early Start Connections

program for children age 0-3 into School Readiness programs, partnering with Regional Center and the Del Norte County Unified School District.

“There was nothing in place to screen children with behavior concerns in our community before First 5. First 5 funded the early childhood mental health screening and prevention services our families need.”

From an interview with Family Resource Center coordinators in Siskiyou County

Early Care and Education

Early Care and Education (ECE) refers to the overall field of child care, preschool and other environments that promote early learning and care of children in the years leading up to kindergarten. Quality ECE can contribute greatly to the growth and development of young children by providing positive early learning experiences to foster their intellectual, social, and emotional development. Child care also impacts parents and families as a whole, allowing parents to work outside of the home to financially support the family and thus creating greater economic self sufficiency.



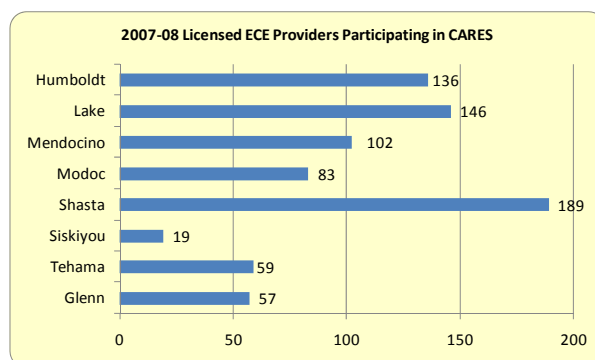
Quality ECE programs have strong economic benefits to the community. Multiple major longitudinal studies have found that high quality preschool programs saved taxpayers between \$2.69 and \$7.14 for every dollar invested by reducing special education, law enforcement and other costs.²⁴ A separate analysis by the RAND Corporation found that across 48 different preschool programs studied, the average return is \$2.36 for each \$1 invested in these programs.²⁵ Providing early childhood education also creates substantial cost savings for school systems; one study found the medium-term cost savings to schools from ECE ranges from \$2,591 to \$9,547 per child.²⁶

Recognizing the benefits of quality ECE, First 5 has invested heavily in improving the availability and quality of ECE throughout the Northwest Region. These efforts have focused mainly on three core strategies: training and retention of ECE providers in order to stabilize the child care system while improving quality, activities to increase the number of child care slots available, and activities to enhance the quality of ECE programs.

ECE Provider Training and Retention

Statewide workforce surveys prior to 2001 showed annual turnover rates for early childhood teaching staff between 20 and 42 percent per year, with turnover mainly triggered by low wages and a lack of support for ECE providers. The National Child Care Staffing Study found that staff turnover is detrimental to children, noting that children in centers with inadequately prepared teachers and high turnover rates are more likely to show delays in language and social development.²⁷ Using academic preparation of child care providers as a gauge of quality care, a 2002 study in one Northwest Region county found that 75% of providers in small centers and child care homes, and 41% of providers in large centers, had no post-high school degree.

The statewide Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) program addresses the dual challenges of high turnover rates and limited professional development support for ECE providers. CARES offers training and professional growth opportunities to ECE providers, encouraging them to meet professional standards such as accreditation and obtaining or enhancing their Child Development Permit status, and gives financial incentives to providers that meet professional development benchmarks to help retain those providers. The First 5 commissions in the Northwest Region have consistently invested in the CARES program since 2001, with considerable success.



During the 2007-08 program year, a total of 781 licensed ECE providers in the Northwest Region received training and stipends through CARES.

Evaluation studies of the CARES program in the Northwest Region counties shows a number of important ways that this program has had an impact over the seven years it has been operating.

- Over 60 participants throughout the region obtained a Child Development Permit or upgraded the level on an existing permit during the 2007-08 program year.
- A First 5 Humboldt study of their ECE Retention Incentives Program found that over the six year period from 2001 to 2007, 52% of ECE providers upgraded their Child Development Permit while participating in the program and 95% remained in the county ECE workforce during their participation, which lasted an average of 3.1 years.
- Over a six-year period in Mendocino County, 60% of 431 participants upgraded their Child Development Permit, 30% improved their level of education and 65 participants received a college degree while participating in the CARES program.
- Glenn County found that the turnover rate among ECE staff decreased from 23% in 2001-02 to 16% in 2004-05.
- CARES is motivating ECE providers to obtain professional development that they would not have accessed otherwise. A First 5 Shasta study reported that only 18% of CARES respondents said they would have continued their education without this program, while 63% said they furthered their education sooner than planned because of this program. The remaining 19% said they simply would not have pursued continuing their education without CARES.

“CARES was a great incentive for me. The funding and support helped me complete my AA Degree. If it was not for CARES, I would not have finished my degree.”

Vicki Fraley, child care provider and CARES participant from Siskiyou County

- In exit surveys of ECE providers ending their participation in the program, 45% of Shasta County CARES participants reported being “a lot more likely” and another 31% “a little more likely” to stay in the ECE profession as a result of their participation in CARES.

“First 5 has played a vital role in early care and education by identifying parts of the system that were untouched. For example, with professional development, there are few groups other than First 5 that ask ‘what is the gap between the need for teachers and the development of those teachers?’”

Edward Condon, Managing Director of the Low Income Investment Fund and former director, California Head Start Association

- As evidence of the effect of CARES on the quality of child care, 67% of participants surveyed in Humboldt County’s program said the training and education increased their skills in relationships with children and 100% believe it improved the quality of their programs through better activities to promote age-appropriate learning and other aspects of child development. Similar high rates of impact on ECE quality have been found in evaluation studies in Shasta and Tehama Counties.

The results presented to this point only represent the impact on licensed providers. In every county, there is a large network of unlicensed child care providers, often referred to as informal or “family, friend and neighbor” care providers. These child care providers also need solid knowledge and skills in child development, health and safety, working with children with special needs, cultural competence and other areas. First 5 commissions in Lake, Shasta and Tehama Counties have made a special effort to engage these informal care providers in training and other professional development activities. As a result, over the last five years, more than 1,150 informal care providers have received training in these three counties. In Tehama County, 97% of participating informal care providers reported gaining child development knowledge and 81% reported making changes to make their home safer and healthier.

First 5 Tehama's program to support family, friend and neighbor (FFN) caregivers is a good example of the type of intentional, systematic investments and leveraging of resources initiated by First 5 to enhance child care capacity and quality. One objective of the program was to motivate FFN providers to become licensed child care providers. This effort has been successful; the number of licensed family child care providers in the county has increased 6% since 2004.

Professional development for ECE providers has a multiplier effect because improved teaching methods and other aspects of ECE program quality impacts all of the children taught by those providers. Using a conservative estimate of six children taught per year by each ECE provider participating in the CARES program, almost 4,700 children stood to benefit last year from quality improvements. The training and support for unlicensed providers impacted the quality of care for many more children.

ECE Availability

Retention of experienced and well trained ECE providers is a critical part of making sure there is sufficient capacity of quality child care to meet local needs. In addition to retention efforts, several First 5 commissions in the region are working to increase the number of child care slots available to families for children age 0-5.

Examples of First 5's impact on increasing the availability of quality ECE programs include:

- First 5 Lake County created 168 additional child care spaces in 2007-08, including recruitment of 21 new Family Child Care providers.
- In Modoc and Trinity Counties, First 5 funding allowed 60 children to attend preschool last year that would not have otherwise had access to a quality preschool.
- First 5 Humboldt provided leadership and funding for a Work-Life Alliance that brought together business, government, education, ECE and other community leaders to address the problem of insufficient child

care availability for working parents. The Alliance produced an economic impact report of the child care industry and increased outreach to businesses to promote involvement in child care. Upon finding that a key obstacle to the growth of child care in the county is land use barriers, the Alliance proposed county General Plan revisions to emphasize a stronger relationship between child care and community development, and recommended zoning ordinance changes to help to make use of existing affordable space and ensure that child care is considered in every new development in the county.

"First 5 has changed the public conception of child care and has made great progress in convincing business communities that investment in child care is an economic investment."

Allan Katz, former Executive Director (retired) of the Community Health Alliance of Humboldt-Del Norte

Child Care Quality Improvement

First 5 is dedicated to making quality child care available to families of young children. Simply put, First 5 does not invest in inferior care. Quality is a critical aspect of all First 5 efforts in early care and education.



The design of the CARES program is a clear example; financial incentives to retain ECE providers are only given to providers who invest in professional development that can improve the quality of their programs.

Other ways in which First 5 is improving child care quality in the Northwest Region are:

- In almost every county in the region, First 5 offers special grants to child care providers that allow them to improve their facilities and obtain supplies and learning materials to improve the quality of care. Over 100 child care centers and family child care homes in the region obtained grants last year.
- First 5 commissions throughout the region distribute information to parents of young children to educate them about the characteristics of quality child care and help them select quality care. As more informed parents demand quality care, child care providers have responded by enhancing their facilities, curriculum and learning activities for children.
- First 5 has sponsored training in Glenn, Humboldt, Mendocino, Modoc, Shasta, Siskiyou and Tehama Counties to train ECE providers on the use of research-based environmental assessment instruments such as the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) for center-based programs and Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCERS) for family child care homes. These tools are used by ECE providers to systematically assess the current environment in their programs and identify specific opportunities to make improvements. In Glenn County, 45% of all CARES participants during 2007-08 were trained in the use of an ECE environmental rating scale.
- First 5 Shasta's CARES program has included a focus on national accreditation of early care center-based programs and family child care homes. With First 5 support, providers made a significant two-year or longer commitment to achieve the "gold standard" in early care and education. Providers were offered support and guidance, funds for educational

advancement and environmental enhancements as they became qualified for this achievement. Since 2003, 34 family child care homes and 9 center-based programs with a total of 55 classrooms in those centers have received accreditation or are on the threshold of accreditation.

"First 5 has empowered those who are in direct relationships with children to reach for higher standards in personal care and safety"

Edward Condon, Managing Director of the Low Income Investment Fund and former director, California Head Start Association

Readiness for School

Getting children ready to succeed in school by the time they start kindergarten – “school readiness” for short – is one of the overarching goals of First 5. All of the efforts described throughout this report, such as good health, child development screening and early intervention, quality early care and education and support for parents and families with young children, are important contributors to school readiness. However, First 5 has made large investments to promote school readiness in the Northwest Region through three additional strategies: comprehensive school readiness programs, early literacy programs, and activities to help children transition into kindergarten successfully.

Comprehensive School Readiness Programs

The “school readiness” of children does matter. A longitudinal study released in 2008 of students in five high-need California school districts found that “the data are clear that the best outcomes flow to children who are well-rounded at kindergarten entry... [C]hildren who are solid in their early academics as well as their social-emotional skills significantly outscore their peers on English and math tests at third through fifth grades. Regression analyses show that academic achievement is closely connected to skills in Kindergarten Academics, but children who enter school knowing their letters and numbers and who have key expressive skills are those who do best.”²⁸

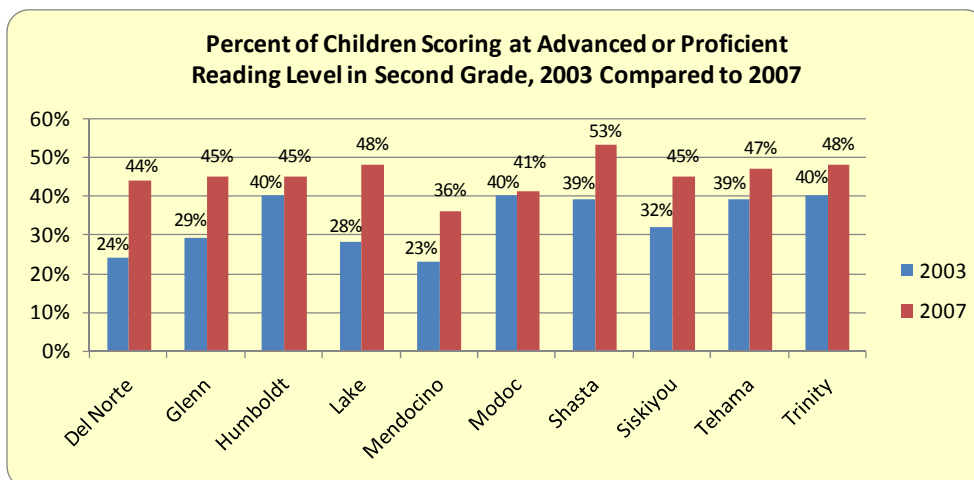
As noted in the study, school readiness requires a balance of academic and social-emotional skills. First 5 took this into account by designing comprehensive school readiness programs that offer a variety of services to

promote early learning, social skills and physical and emotional health for children while preparing parents to help their children succeed in school. To have the greatest impact in closing the school achievement gap, these comprehensive school readiness programs target the neighborhoods of schools rated in the lowest three deciles of the statewide Academic Performance Index (API).

First 5 school readiness programs are tailored to the unique needs of each community. In all cases, First 5 partners with the schools, other public agencies and community organizations to bring together and integrate the services that are most important for school readiness. First 5 helps to coordinate the program, using its funds very strategically to fill critical gaps in services.

All ten counties in the Northwest Region operate school readiness programs. Collectively, these programs served 4,152 children age 0-5 across the region in the 2007-08 program year.

Compelling evidence of the effect of school readiness programs can be seen in the dramatic improvement in countywide second grade reading scores over the past five years. Since First 5 programs were just getting started in 2001, children in second grade during 2003 would not have had the benefit of any First 5 funded programs. By 2007, however, a significant proportion of second graders had been reached by one or more First 5 program during their earlier years.

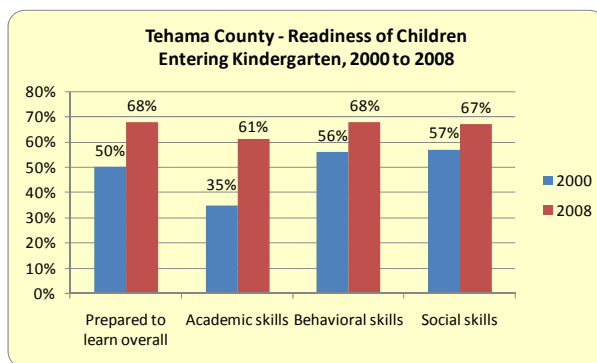


Reading scores climbed in every county by 2007, with six counties showing double-digit jumps such as 20% improvements in Del Norte and Lake Counties.²⁹ Many factors influenced this rise in reading proficiency, including changes in school standards and efforts to reduce class sizes, but First 5 has been a vital part of these community-wide efforts to improve school performance.

Second grade math scores also climbed substantially from 2003 to 2007. Six counties – Del Norte, Glenn, Lake, Mendocino, Shasta and Siskiyou – all showed improvements of at least 6% in the percent of children scoring at Advanced or Proficient levels in math, with the greatest improvement occurring in Lake County (a jump of 14%, from 50% in 2003 to 64% in 2007). In each of the other four counties in the region, second grade math scores were already above the statewide average in 2003 and remained above the state average in 2007.³⁰

Further proof of the impact of First 5 school readiness programs can be found in the following research results.

- Every two years starting in 2000, the kindergarten teachers in Tehama County assess the readiness skills of their entering kindergarten class. The teachers estimate the numbers of students at varying levels of readiness on dimensions of social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Overall, clear improvement has been noted since First 5 programs were launched, as shown in the graph below.



- 2007 Kindergarten Entry Profile results for Mendocino County showed that 65% of children entering kindergarten at schools with First 5 School Readiness programs were

assessed as having fully or almost mastered the skills necessary for school success, compared with 55% in schools without First 5 School Readiness programs. The differences were most notable in Reading (16% better at School Readiness program sites), Math skills (18% better), Writing (11% higher) and Social (10% higher) skills.

“Before First 5, 40% of kindergarteners were being held back because they were not prepared. First 5 has the Parents as Teachers program and home visits, so now there is a trend that the children of these families are hitting the marks and are ready for school.”

Lee Ann Grigsby-Puente, community member working with a First 5 School Readiness program in Glenn County

- In Trinity County, children participating in the First 5 School Readiness program were assessed in fall 2007 at the beginning of the program using a research-based instrument, the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), and then again in spring 2008 after program participation. Significant increases of at least 13% occurred across all developmental domains in the percentage of children rated with “fully integrated” skills. The largest increases were found in
 - Language skills: +31% average improvement (16% to 47%)
 - Motor skills: +29% (24% to 52%)
 - Learning skills: +23% (8% to 32%)
 - Cognitive development: +20% (15% to 35%)
- Last year in Lake County, across seven First 5 School Readiness sites, 65% of participating children achieved Building or Integrating status in the 20 DRDP skill areas at the end of the year, an increase of 28% from the beginning of the program.
- An independent evaluation in Shasta County found a marked decrease in the number of behavioral referrals for kindergarten students since the First 5 School Readiness Initiative was implemented.

Early Literacy

Experts generally point to several early literacy skills that should be developed before children enter kindergarten in order to create later reading success. These skills include vocabulary, interest in books, understanding about printed words, knowing their letters, storytelling and phonetics.



Second grade reading test scores were very low in 1999-2001, the first few years after Proposition 10 was passed. This highlighted the need for a special focus on building early literacy skills before children reach kindergarten. First 5 has met this challenge through special early literacy programs in most of the Northwest Region's counties. First 5 literacy programs reached over 5,000 children and 4,000 parents throughout the region, also distributing almost 20,000 children's books, during the 2007-08 program year.

Innovative approaches to early literacy that First 5 has brought to the region include:

- In Shasta County, First 5 brought the Raising a Reader program to the county. This is a research-based early literacy program that promotes reading among young children and their families and encourages early care and education (ECE) providers to teach early literacy skills in their programs. In 2007-08, Raising a Reader reached 2,784 children 0-5 and 2,302 parents and service providers. Surveys show a 15% increase in parents who

read to their child three or more times a week and an increase in the duration of reading among program participants. Further, over half of participating ECE providers reported increases in reading a greater variety of books with children (52%) and talking more to parents about books and stories (61%).

- First 5 Humboldt has built an extensive partnership with the County Library system, operating multiple literacy programs that target both English- and Spanish-speaking families. In 2007, 1,529 people participated in Share a Story literacy activities and 5,578 books were distributed through this program. Since the beginning of First 5's partnership with libraries, the libraries report a 67% increase in circulation of Beginning Readers books and a 90% increase in circulation of children's books in Spanish.

"First 5 brings families and children together and increases reading among children. Without First 5, the library wouldn't have an outreach coordinator or programs specifically designed to promote early literacy. Leap into Literacy has reached out to Native American populations, and First 5 helped to get the materials for this outreach."

JoAnn Bauer, Children's Librarian, Humboldt County Library

- First 5 Del Norte operates the Wonder Bus mobile literacy unit in collaboration with the School District, County of Del Norte, cities and other partners to distribute books and promote early literacy throughout the county. Last year, 676 children – roughly 1/3 of all children age 0-5 in the county – were reached through a First 5 funded early literacy program.



- Last year, over 10,000 children's books were distributed to 0-5 year old children in Siskiyou County.

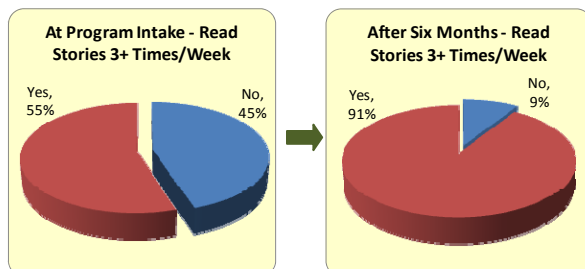
"If it was not for First 5 my child would have very few books at home, because I cannot afford to buy books. Now my child has so many books that we read every day. I am so glad First 5 is in our community."

Quote from a parent at the Yreka Community Center in Siskiyou County

It is important to note that literacy activities are integrated into many other First 5 programs, including comprehensive school readiness programs and family support programs. These broader programs are also having an impact on the number of families that make reading and storytelling an active part of their lives, which research shows is a vital part of building good literacy skills among young children. For example:

- 18% of parents participating in First 5 Lake County's school readiness programs increased the frequency of their reading books or stories to their children, and 45% increased how often they tell stories to their child.
- First 5 Tehama recorded a 32% jump among school readiness program participants in the percent of families where parents read regularly to their children each week. Similar increases have occurred among parents reached through other programs that include a literacy component as part of a larger program.

Families served by First 5 Tehama's Family Start program show significant gains in family literacy practices after six months of participation



Kindergarten Transition

Kindergarten can be challenging for many children that are not used to the schedule, curriculum, behavior expectations and other types of structure imposed in the classroom. This is especially true for children that did not attend a preschool or other type of early learning program. First 5 kindergarten transition programs address these challenges and help children succeed in multiple ways. They:

- ✓ Introduce children and families to their new school and teacher to help them transition socially and emotionally;
- ✓ Develop relationships between kindergarten teachers and ECE providers, helping ensure that the schools are ready for the children;
- ✓ Identify children and families who will need additional support during enrollment or the first year of school; and
- ✓ Address questions and concerns parents have about their school and community resources.



First 5 was responsible for starting the first kindergarten transition programs within most counties in the region. Highlights from just a few of those programs are:

- Over a four year period from 2004 to 2007, children participating in First 5 Humboldt's Transitional Summer Program scored higher upon entry to kindergarten than non-participating children on 29 of the 30

dimensions of the Modified Desired Results Developmental Profile (MDRDP). 100% of parents surveyed felt the program was “very helpful” in preparing their child to start school. Community Transition Teams in 13 communities now work to promote effective coordination between ECE providers and schools, leading to much better relationships between preschools and elementary schools.

- Each year, First 5 Glenn distributes about 450 kindergarten readiness backpacks with information and supplies to prepare children for kindergarten. Last year, 96% of parents surveyed said the backpack was helpful or very helpful in preparing their child for school, helping their child to learn, and understanding what their child needs to be “ready to learn.”
- In Trinity County, First 5 distributes kindergarten backpacks and emphasizes both school outreach to parents of incoming kindergarten students and coordination between ECE providers and kindergarten teachers. All of the parents surveyed whose children were transitioning into kindergarten said their community’s school had conducted a transition conference and provided a transition packet.
- First 5 efforts in Modoc County allowed 88 children to participate in early enrollment into kindergarten. Kindergarten transition services include a “kindergarten roundup” event, media campaign, and a kindergarten transition backpack distribution. First 5 Siskiyou County offers similar services,

helping 115 children in very rural areas with their transition to kindergarten.

- First 5 Del Norte’s Kindergarten Transition Partnership is a first-ever partnership with the county’s only school district, providing transition support throughout the county such as summer kindergarten readiness programs and developmental assessments of children entering kindergarten.
- In central Tehama County, prior to First 5 close to half of kindergarten students entered school with no previous preschool or other early learning opportunity. This has changed because of the range of First 5 school readiness programs and an earlier kindergarten registration process that identifies children with no early learning experience or with health needs. Now, over 90% of kindergarten students in each of the past three years have participated in an early learning experience before kindergarten.
- First 5 Mendocino is developing and strengthening Transition Committees at each of its four school readiness sites, including representatives from local preschools, family child care, parents and the elementary schools. The purpose of the Transition Committees is to plan and manage the kindergarten transitioning events on campus, provide information to parents about kindergarten entry and registration, and provide a forum for cross training of early childhood and elementary school staff and teachers.



Support for Families

Parents truly are their children's first teachers. To ensure that children grow up healthy and ready to learn, we must provide parents and other family caregivers with the information and support they need to keep their families strong. Nurturing family environments allow children to receive the love, attention and encouragement they need to thrive. Providing support for parents is also essential to achieving the best possible outcomes with health and other investments. A study of First 5 programs by the Harvard Family Research Project found that parents receiving education and support services were much more likely to have their children receive developmental screenings, have regular doctors and medical homes, and participate in an early childhood education program.³¹

Family Resource Centers

When Proposition 10 was passed in 1998, there were very few places in the Northwest Region where families could go for information and assistance. The limited services that did exist usually required travel to the county seat – a trip of an hour or more each way for many families spread across this vast mountainous region. Further, most of those services were government programs that were only available to families meeting eligibility criteria. For example, programs to build parenting skills and confidence were largely limited to parents mandated by the courts to attend parent education classes.

First 5 has changed this situation in a very profound way by creating Family Resource Centers (FRCs) throughout the region. FRCs provide families with a comprehensive entry point for information about available programs and services, assistance in accessing services, parent education and support services, child development activities and much more. The centers are distributed throughout the region, reaching isolated communities. They are community hubs that have brought public and private organizations together in new ways, providing accessible locations for health screenings and many other types of services.

By 2008, there were 30 FRCs established or expanded across seven counties as a direct result of First 5. In most cases, no local services were available in or even near those communities until the FRC was established.

Locations of FRCs Created or Expanded by First 5



The impact of the FRCs that exist because of First 5 is best understood by looking at two examples: the building of a new FRC in Del Norte County and the development of a countywide network of FRCs in Siskiyou County.

Del Norte Family Resource Center

First 5 Del Norte undertook the ambitious project of purchasing and remodeling a building in Crescent City to create an FRC that could be a lasting resource for the community. The new FRC opened in October 2007. Services include a full time resource and referral coordinator to assist families with finding and accessing community resources, numerous child development activities and playgroups that help children learn while promoting positive parent-child interactions, parent classes and support groups, a kitchen for nutrition classes, a parent resource library that holds over 600 resources such as books and parenting videos, and much more.

The new FRC quickly became a central site for many other agencies to reach more families because the FRC is a welcoming, family-friendly environment. Agencies that regularly provide services at the FRC include:

First 5 Del Norte started with this...



...and built this – a new Family Resource Center



- County Department of Health and Human Services - child welfare visits, mental health therapy and other services
- Redwood Coast Regional Center - developmental screening and support for children with special needs
- Del Norte Child Care Council - Incredible Years parent education program
- Local health centers, clinics and the School District have partnered to provide health screenings and insurance enrollment
- Baby Steps program for pregnant and parenting teens
- Community Assistance Network - support for parents referred because of a report of child abuse or neglect
- Del Norte County Unified School District - Early Start program development assessments and mental health services
- First 5 sponsored School Readiness enrichment programs and activities

with space for parent classes and family events,



a child development activity room, and much more



In just the first nine months of operation, the new FRC had over 6,200 visits from parents and other caregivers and over 2,300 visits from children age 0-5. Other FRCs have been established in the towns of Gasquet and Klamath at the elementary school sites.

Siskiyou County FRC Network

As of the year 2000, no FRCs existed in Siskiyou County. By the end of 2008, a thriving network of ten FRCs had been established that are helping families in over 20 communities to prepare children to enter school healthy and ready to learn. During the 2007-08 program year, 1,820 children and 1,813 parents/caregivers were reached through the FRCs and school readiness programs linked to the FRCs. 85% of Siskiyou County's children ages 0-5 benefited from at least one First 5 funded service.

Parents clearly place a high value on the FRCs in Siskiyou County. Utilization of services increased by 40% in 2007-08. The FRCs also showed an average of a 35% increase in community volunteers, almost 40% increase in partnerships and 75% increase in funds leveraged compared to the prior year.

WHAT DOES A FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER MEAN TO THE COMMUNITY?

The FRCs launched by First 5 in Siskiyou County truly are one-stop community hubs to help families with a wide range of issues. Here is the list of services at just one FRC; the other FRCs in the county offer a similar array of services.

The Happy Camp FRC provides evidence-based parenting classes, assistance with Medi-Cal applications, food from an emergency food bank, nutritional education, playgroups, child development information, children's books, programs for fathers on parenting, infant feeding and breastfeeding support, car seats and installation, and infant gum cleaners and baby toothbrushes. The FRC also provides a facility for WIC, Workforce Connections, Behavioral Health and other agencies to serve clients locally.

Quotes from community members interviewed for this report show the effect of the FRCs.

"First 5 has affected the community by providing locally based services in a user friendly environment. Parents no longer have to travel extensively with their children in order to receive services. They create a bigger sense of community within the community, which affects children 0-5 and families. They support families so they can support themselves and help families become self-sufficient. Some families are mobile, and no matter where they move around the county, they can still receive services through the FRCs because of First 5 funding. The FRCs are also able to serve the greater breadth of the population of the county because of First 5."

"In Siskiyou County, Family Resource Centers have provided the social infrastructure that serves as a foundation for a variety of programs and services that can be delivered with great cost effectiveness."

"With the economic downturn, isolation will become even more prevalent. Family Resource Centers will help remove or reduce the negative impact of isolation in the rural communities."

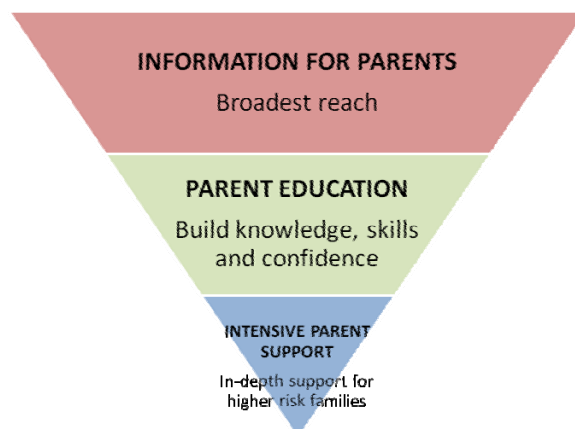
The impact of the FRCs in Del Norte and Siskiyou Counties has been mirrored across other counties in the region. For example, over 70% of parents using FRC services in Humboldt County in 2007 reported that the services and activities at the FRC have had a significant positive effect on them, their child or their family.

"Because of First 5 funding, FRCs are able to operate as a network. They are able to work as a collaborative and in partnership. They not only share information, but share resources and funding. They do so much with so little. Quite often, these FRCs are the backbone of social services in communities. And particularly, now, we are seeing many services being cut at the state and county levels. Many of these FRCs are the last safety net. It's the last place these families can go."

Leticia Alejandrez, Executive Director,
California Family Resource Association

Parent Education and Support

First 5 is unique in its goal to reach as many families with children age 0-5 as possible, and not just families meeting income or other eligibility criteria. Consistent with this goal, a multi-level approach has been used in the Northwest Region to help parents to do the best possible job in supporting their child's development.



Valuable information on child development, health, positive discipline and other topics is available to all parents of children age 0-5 in the Kit for New Parents provided by First 5 California. Every First 5 commission in the Northwest Region works with community partners to distribute these kits to all interested parents. In the 2007-08 program year, over 3,900 kits were distributed in Del Norte, Glenn, Lake, Mendocino, Shasta and Siskiyou Counties combined.



Information about parenting and access to parent support resources is also available through the network of Family Resource Centers established by First 5 across the region, the School Readiness programs supported by First 5 in every county, and a variety of other First 5-funded programs. First 5 Humboldt has taken this a step further, partnering with the county library system to create a section in each library for parenting information.

Parents seeking more in-depth education about child development and parenting can attend parent education programs that are available through First 5 support in almost every county in the region. Over 1,200 parents in the region participated in parent education programs in the 2007-08 program year. Important aspects of the First 5 approach to parent education are:

- First 5 programs use curriculum proven by independent research to be effective. For example, Glenn, Lake and Tehama Counties all use the Nurturing Parenting curriculum shown to increase nurturing and positive discipline skills of parents and to reduce the risk of child abuse or neglect. The evidence-

based Triple P Positive Parenting Program model is used in Mendocino and Shasta Counties.

Joan Reynolds, Healthy Start Director for the Lake County Office of Education, says that "First 5 was the catalyst to adopt one parent education curriculum county-wide. Lake County had lots of curriculums before and each had a different focus. First 5 led a collaborative approach so that one parenting curriculum could be embedded across different agencies. This is a consortium involving the Lake Family Resource Center, Child Protective Services and Healthy Start." As a result, "parents are more aware of child development and are using positive ways to discipline children" according to Pam Klier, a kindergarten teacher in Lake County who sees the impact of First 5's support.

- Many First 5 programs offer parent education as an integrated element of more comprehensive parent support programs. For example, First 5 Glenn's Little Learners program incorporates parent education with child development screening, preventative and supportive early mental health services and other services that enhance family stability.
- First 5 parent education programs are having a measurable positive effect on the attitudes and behaviors of parents. Parents participating in First 5 Shasta's Bright Futures program report many impacts; 71% said they have more play dates with children and other families, 65% read more to their children, 59% did more physical activities with their children and 56% took their children to the library more often. Pre- and post-program surveys from First 5 Modoc's Preschool Parenting program showed a 20% increase of knowledge in the importance of early childhood education and development as a result of attending the parenting classes.

In addition to parent education programs that are designed to reach a broad audience, several counties in the Northwest Region have more

specialized programs to provide intensive parent support services for families that are at high risk of adverse child or family outcomes. Examples of such programs include:

- New Beginnings is a comprehensive program to assist women in Lake County working to overcome substance abuse. 51 women and 55 children, 0 to 5 years old, received intensive daily services in the 2007-08 program year. These services included 447 parenting classes and 497 family-child therapy sessions. Spirit of Oh is a similar program serving 30 Native American women and their extended families.
- The Manila Teenship Wellness Village Resource Center in Humboldt County provides support and education to parents living in poverty. 60% of participants in this program said they dealt “much better” with parenting issues as a result of the program; another 20% dealt “somewhat better”.

“The most important thing I received from the Manila Teenship Wellness Village Resource Center – hope. They have been there with me each step of the way, forward and backward. Cheering in my successes, encouraging in my failures, offering support, assistance, advice and occasionally a little nudge. It is a journey I could not have begun alone.”

Quote from a Humboldt County teen parent

- First 5 Shasta’s Parent Partner Program provided one-to-one parent mentoring and support for 221 vulnerable pregnant women and/or parents of children under 3 in the 2007-08 program year. Using structured pre- and post-assessments, participating parents showed an average 52% improvement in their ability to provide fundamental family needs, 51% improvement in utilizing community resources and 42% improvement in demonstrating positive coping skills. In follow up surveys after completing the program, 78% of participating parents reported being “a lot more confident” in their ability to meet the needs of their families.

Child Safety

First 5 has been an essential partner in the fight against child abuse and neglect, working in collaboration with county Child Welfare Services and other groups, as well as minimizing other forms of family violence.

All of the Family Resource Centers and parent education and support programs described earlier in this report work to promote positive discipline and effective parenting skills, while reducing stress factors for families, in order to prevent child abuse and neglect. These efforts are complemented by more targeted programs, such as First 5 Shasta’s *Children Too!* program that provides case management, parent/child therapy and other support for women and their young children in the domestic violence shelter in order to break the cycle of violence.

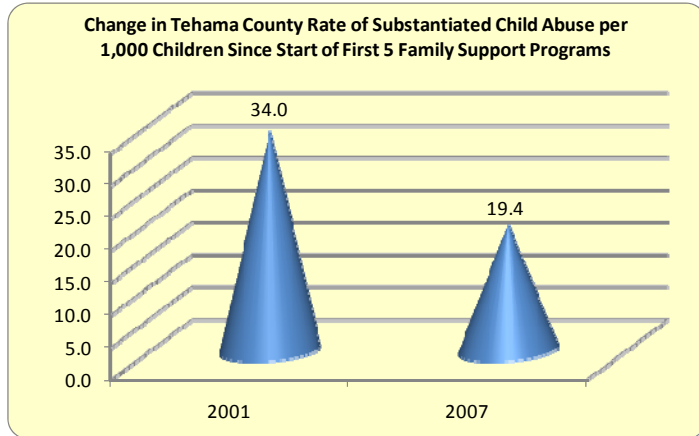
Family Resource Centers and other family support services funded by First 5 have provided the platform for implementation of “differential response” systems in the Northwest Region. Under differential response, families that are the subject of a report of suspected child abuse or neglect that do not meet the criteria for Child Welfare Services action are referred to their local FRC or family service provider to get assistance with issues that may be causing stress or conflict.

“The Department of Health and Human Services received 3000 referrals a year for child abuse or neglect, out of which they would only investigate 300. Those 300 go into the child welfare system. What happened to the other 2700? First 5 helped to create a system of outreach to refer these families to FRCs and provide other support services. Now we can see where the other 2700 go.”

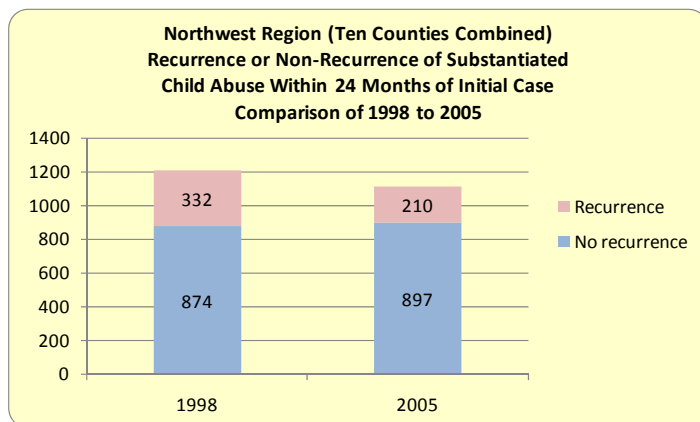
Marriane Pennekamp, Humboldt County community advocate

The increased emphasis brought by First 5 on supporting families with children is making a real difference. Tehama County, for example, has seen a 43% decrease in the rate of substantiated child abuse reports per 1,000 children since First

5 began funding parent education and intensive family support services.



For cases where child abuse or neglect is substantiated, family support services available because of First 5 are important resources in helping families prevent a recurrence of abuse. Once again, there is a direct correlation between First 5 investments and a substantial decline in the recurrence of abuse/neglect. In child abuse cases opened in 1998 when Proposition 10 was passed, there was a recurrence of abuse or neglect within 24 months in 27.5% of those cases. After extensive First 5 investments in family support systems, this had dropped to 19.0% of cases in 2005 that had a recurrence within the next 24 months – an improvement of 31% for the region as a whole.³² The total number of substantiated child abuse and neglect cases also declined by 8.2% despite a 7% increase in population from 1998 to 2005.



It must again be emphasized that First 5 is one partner among numerous groups working to fight child abuse and neglect. However, all available information indicates that First 5 family support services are an important part of child abuse prevention in many counties.

First 5 has also led the charge to educate parents, service providers, law enforcement personnel and others about the effect that exposure to violence has on young children. Noted experts such as Dr. Bruce Perry and Linda Chamberlain have been brought to the region on numerous occasions to conduct community education sessions on this important topic.

A different aspect of child safety addressed by First 5 is prevention of unintentional injuries. First 5 Modoc, for example, funds an Injury Prevention Project to educate parents countywide about preventing childhood injuries. Last year alone, 24 presentations were completed covering a wide range of safety topics that reached over 450 parents and other family members. Water safety programs are funded by First 5 in Shasta and Trinity Counties to help children learn to swim and be safe in this region full of lakes and rivers. First 5 also distributes child car safety seats, bicycle helmets and other items to prevent injuries to children.

Home-Based Family Services

Seven counties in the region have First 5-funded programs to provide support services in the homes of families. This ensures that services are available in a familiar environment and reduces barriers, such as lack of transportation, that may prevent a family from seeking services. Services vary depending on the program but often include case management, health screening, parent education and support, child development screening, home safety and environment assessments and linkage to other services.

Across the region, over 200 families were served by home visiting programs last year with each family receiving an average of six visits. In Trinity County, First 5's Welcome Baby program makes home visits available to all families with newborns. Other counties provide home-based services on a targeted basis to reach families that would not otherwise be able to access family support services or who are at higher risk of adverse child/family outcomes.

Like other First 5 investments, these programs use research-based curriculum such as the nationally recognized Parents as Teachers model.

Parent-Child Activities

A low cost, high impact approach used by First 5 in many parts of the Northwest Region is to sponsor playgroups. Playgroups are conducted with age-appropriate activities that promote child development and positive parent-child interactions. They also provide a forum for peer support between parents, building stronger social networks and community relationships among families. Playgroups help reduce parent isolation and stress, giving parents opportunities to learn new skills and share tips and advice on childrearing. They are inexpensive to operate, and can be established in neighborhoods and communities where they are needed or desired.



The value of playgroups can be seen in these results from program evaluation studies:

- 100% of parents surveyed from First 5 Glenn's Little Learners playgroups indicated that the playgroups have assisted them in providing age appropriate activities for their child. All of the parents also indicated they learned something new about being a parent and improved their ability to guide their child in positive ways and respond to their child's changing needs.
- First 5 Humboldt sponsors 17 playgroups to reach communities throughout the county. Participants gave very strong agreement (4.4 to 4.9 on scale of 1-5) that the playgroups have helped parents learn more about parenting, parents support each other, children make new friends, children learn about getting along well with other children, and children are learning new things. Sixty-seven percent of participants of a different playgroup program called Mothers of Preschoolers report dealing "much better" with parenting issues as a result of the program.

WHAT PARENTS SAY ABOUT FIRST 5 PLAYGROUPS

Comments from parents about playgroups created by First 5:

"You can always connect to others and get support in an on-going manner. People get to know each other, kids become friends. You know there's a community out there, and it reduces isolation."

"Mothers of Preschoolers saved my sanity and gave me an outlet to speak with other moms who have had experience with whatever I may be going through at any given time."

"The Arcata Playgroup has been an essential forum for my son's development of gross motor skills...and for the development of language skills, learning how to behave in a group and creating friendships. I learn something new every time I go through my discussions with other moms."

Coordinated and Accessible Services for Families

The impact of First 5 goes far beyond increasing the type or amount of services for children and families. A critical role of First 5 is to help make services work **better** so that they are more accessible and effective for families. Two important ways that First 5 has fulfilled this role in the Northwest Region are by improving the integration and coordination of services and by building the capacity of organizations that serve children and families.

Integration and Coordination of Services

First 5 has been a major catalyst to increase collaboration across many types of service delivery systems, leading to better coordinated services for families and more efficient use of resources.

Here are a few of the many examples of how First 5 has stimulated better coordination of services:

- The Family Resource Centers (FRCs) established by First 5 are models for how many groups can come together to serve a community. Each FRC typically has six to ten different public and nonprofit agencies working together as collaborative partners to provide services at the FRC. With all of these services located in one place, it is much easier for families to access services and easier for agencies working with the same family to coordinate their efforts.
- First 5 School Readiness programs have successfully linked early care and education providers and elementary schools together so they can better coordinate the transition of children into kindergarten. At the same time, these programs offer integrated services for families whereby a family can get a variety of health, child development and family support services from one program instead of being passed around many different programs to get those services.
- First 5 Glenn led an innovative “meet to reach mutual agreement” grant making process whereby local agencies came together to determine how to best address community needs. The Little Learners program created from this process is a collaboration between the Glenn County Human Resources Administration, Health Services Agency, Department of Child and Family Services, and the Probation Department to coordinate a full range of child development and family support services.
- In Lake County, First 5’s Preventive Behavioral Health Program is creating a strong ongoing link between medical and social / behavioral health services and has developed an integrated system to increase communication, reduce duplication of services, and expedite treatment for high risk children. Under this program, pediatricians in rural health clinics are utilizing the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) child development assessment tool with all 9-month old children being seen at the clinic for their well-child check-ups. Children with developmental concerns identified by the ASQ are then connected directly with social / behavioral health services to address those concerns at an early age.
- First 5 has been an active partner in all types of community planning affecting children, including the development of differential response systems with child welfare agencies, child care systems planning with Local Child Care Planning Councils and county Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health planning. As a

“The Healthy Beginnings program [funded by First 5 Modoc County] brought together the public health and alcohol and drug programs. It makes families cases seamless because of the agencies’ collaboration.”

Jennifer Slinkard, Health Program Manager,
Modoc County Health Services

specific example, First 5 Shasta is a key partner in multi-agency collaborative planning of a countywide initiative to decrease early childhood exposure to violence.

- First 5 Siskiyou specifically requires funded agencies to show how they are coordinating with other community organizations. First 5 also helped launch the development of ten Family Resource Centers, grass-roots community nonprofit organizations to assure services and support to families with children birth to 5 in the most rural areas of the county. The FRCs have become community hubs for children, families, adults and seniors. Today the FRCs have multi-faceted services that include collaborations with local hospitals, medical clinics, Siskiyou County Public Health, County Human Services and Behavioral Health, Siskiyou Community Services Council, Siskiyou County's Child Abuse Prevention Council, Klamath Health Services, local schools and multiple other agencies. Many of the individuals who receive services at the local FRCs are now key volunteers. 73% of the FRC volunteers at one time were service recipients.
- In Humboldt and Tehama Counties, First 5 convenes regular collaborative meetings to bring many types of service providers together in order to share information about their services and identify opportunities to coordinate their efforts more effectively.

These examples focus only on improved coordination of direct services for families. Throughout this report are a multitude of other situations where First 5 has had a major role in creating powerful new community partnerships to address important needs of children and families. Partnerships include:

- ✓ Creation of the Children's Health Initiatives in Del Norte, Humboldt and Mendocino Counties to provide health insurance to uninsured children not eligible for other coverage.
- ✓ Creation of the Humboldt Work-Life Alliance to advocate for greater access to quality child care.

- ✓ Launching of the Community Capacity and Coordination Subcommittee of the Tehama County Health Partnership to promote greater availability and integration of health services.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Roberta Peck, Director of Preschool Planning, California County Superintendents Educational Services Association: "In the northern counties, one of the greatest effects of First 5 was the systems development that connected all child development and child care programs to be more systemically linked together."

Camille Schraeder, Executive Director, Redwood Children's Services: "First 5 has brought together the different silos and helped to facilitate the communication between them to provide focus for the community. For example, strong connections exist within the primary care system that did not exist before."

From an interview of Family Resource Coordinators in Siskiyou County: "Because Family Resource Centers are funded in part by First 5, that connection has allowed collaboration between health care facilities and the schools. A lot of linkage work is done between family, school and health care providers."

Lee Ann Grigsby-Puente, community member working with a First 5 School Readiness program in Glenn County: "First 5 has established 15 partners in Hamilton City (pop. 2000). As a result, every child from 0-5 is being served."

Building the Capacity of Local Services

First 5 has had an impact in building the capacity of community services in multiple ways: through training and technical assistance, investments in physical infrastructure and other investments to enhance service capacity.

Numerous examples of training and technical assistance for service providers have been presented throughout this report, such as professional development for ECE providers through the CARES program, training of providers in many counties on child development assessments and addressing early childhood mental health issues, and community training on the effects of exposure to violence on children. Other ways that First 5 has offered training and technical assistance:

- First 5 Humboldt funds a Family Violence Prevention Program to provide trainings based on a comprehensive training resource manual designed for staff working with pregnant mothers and children birth to five. In one year, these trainings were provided to 103 staff members in 48 organizations.
- First 5 Siskiyou has invested in extensive capacity building for the countywide network of FRCs including creation of business plans to guide the development of each FRC, providing solid fiscal tracking systems and sponsoring training in fund raising.
- First 5 Shasta sponsors a monthly Case Conferencing session for paraprofessionals who work with young children and their families. Sessions are facilitated by an early childhood mental health specialist and are attended by up to 30 home visitors, family advocates and parent partners from across the county.

“First 5 capacity building is valuable because it has a ‘training in systems’ piece that other programs might not get to offer.”

Edward Condon, Director, California Head Start Association

First 5 investments in physical infrastructure have produced lasting improvements in community service capacity. These include:

- Renovation of facilities, such as the remodeling of buildings in Del Norte and Glenn Counties to create Family Resource Centers.

- Upgrades to child care facilities to make them safer or better able to provide quality early learning experiences for children.
- Upgrades to playgrounds in many communities, including purchase and installation of safe play equipment designed for young children so that children and families have local places for active play.
- Purchase of medical equipment in several counties, such as First 5 Trinity’s purchase of specialized equipment for the Neonatal Care unit of the local hospital so that infants could be treated locally instead of having to be transported to Redding an hour away. As another example, First 5 Del Norte purchased hearing screening equipment for Sutter Coast Hospital. Every new baby is screened for hearing problems at birth, and children with congenital hearing problems are referred to specialists very early in life. Over 2,000 children have been screened since First 5 purchased the equipment.

“When the Family Resource Centers received funding, the only buildings available were run-down. First 5 helped them find a decent building that was close to schools, that parents wanted to go to. They were able to refurbish an unsafe building so that it was functional. The parent-child interactive equipment and therapy room was another change that occurred because of First 5. Parents are able to receive services locally now.”

Lee Ann Grigsby-Puente, community advocate in Glenn County

A final example of First 5 investments to create lasting improvements in service capacity can be found on the North Coast. The First 5 commissions in both Humboldt and Del Norte Counties contributed to a partnership with Humboldt State University to develop the first-ever Masters of Social Work (MSW) program in the region. The MSW program offers a way to continually cultivate new, well-educated professionals to serve families. The first cohort of students in the program led to 20 placements of MSW interns at agencies serving children 0-5 in Humboldt County.

Community Awareness of Early Childhood Issues

A central focus of First 5 is to increase awareness and knowledge among parents, service providers, community leaders and policy makers regarding the behaviors, practices and policies that enhance early childhood development. Community education is happening in many ways, large and small, that are steadily influencing people to invest in the well-being of their youngest citizens.

Extensive outreach and community education is built into most First 5 programs. As one indicator of the impact these programs have on parent attitudes and behaviors, 51% of parents participating in First 5 Lake County's School Readiness programs in 2007-08 increased their involvement with their child's school, for example, by attending a conference with a teacher or principal, observing activities in the classroom, meeting with the parent-teacher organization, or attending an event at the school.

On a broader scale are community awareness campaigns intended to fundamentally change community attitudes.

- First 5 Shasta's "Little Investments Big Returns" community awareness campaign addresses community leaders and policy makers with messages about the interdependence between thriving communities and thriving children. A separate campaign provides employers with information and resources related to creating a family friendly workplace. Outreach efforts in this campaign reached 675 employers during 2007-08.
- First 5 Mendocino leads an annual TV Turn-Off campaign to get families to reduce TV viewing. The campaign includes many family friendly events during National TV Turnoff Week each April.
- "Better Together in Eureka" is an effort by First 5 Humboldt to create smoke- and drug-free neighborhoods that have a greater sense of community and belonging for children and families.

- First 5 Tehama and other counties run a regular series of articles about early childhood and parenting issues in local newspapers.

First 5 is also active in public events that celebrate children or offer opportunities to reach a broad cross-section of the community.

- In Trinity County, an annual Children's Festival had been going on for many years before Proposition 10 was even passed. With the addition of First 5 as a partner and greater overall awareness of early childhood issues, community support for this event has significantly increased in recent years. Participation has jumped from 100 people prior to the passage of Proposition 10 to over 700 a year now.
- Annual celebrations of the Week of the Young Children occur in Shasta County as a result of First 5 support and leadership. In 2007-08, the sixth year of First 5 Shasta's leadership of this community-wide celebration, 41 events for young children and their families were offered by 26 organizations along with other activities. The celebration engages providers and businesses in activities and messaging related to the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets.
- First 5 has a visible presence at the annual county fair and other major local events in Modoc, Del Norte and other counties.



Efficient and Accountable Use of Resources

First 5 is one of the most effective models anywhere of investing in what works, holding service providers accountable to producing results, evaluating the results of investments and getting the most value possible out of a relatively small but vital amount of money. The ability to consistently use resources in an efficient and accountable way is driven by four core capabilities found throughout the Northwest Region: in-depth planning to target resources where they can have the greatest impact, fiscal leveraging efforts to stretch dollars as far as possible, program evaluation and accountability systems to monitor and learn from investments that are made in specific programs, and fiscal accountability systems to diligently manage revenues and expenditures.

First 5 Planning

All First 5 commissions are required by state law to adopt a countywide strategic plan that identifies the goals and objectives to be achieved, the programs and projects to be supported to achieve those goals, the approach to integrating early childhood development services into a consumer-oriented and easily accessible system, and reliable indicators to be used in monitoring progress and achievements.

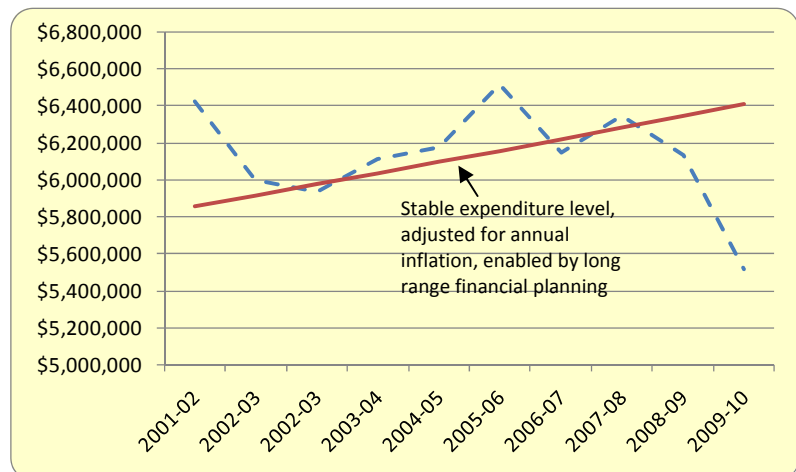
Each First 5 commission in the Northwest Region has conducted an extensive strategic planning process to understand community needs and develop priorities for First 5 investments. These strategic plans are reviewed annually, and are revised whenever it is necessary to reflect changing community conditions.

Another critical form of planning done by every county is long-term financial planning. Revenues from state tobacco tax collections were always expected to decline steadily – in fact, one of the stated purposes of Proposition 10 was to discourage smoking through higher costs, thus

leading to lower tobacco tax revenues. It would be irresponsible at best to spend all available funds each year and be faced with steadily cutting funds to effective programs year after year as tobacco tax revenues drop. A better approach is to take a long term view, carefully managing resources so that a target level of funding can be sustained for many years. In this way, investments in programs for children and families can be maintained long enough to really have a measurable effect.

First 5 has been able to maintain stable levels of funding despite fluctuating tobacco tax revenues because of diligent long-range financial planning. Five, ten or even fifteen year financial forecasts have been prepared by every county and are reviewed and updated at least once a year. These forecasts are used to determine a stable level of expenditures that can be sustained over the entire time period covered by the forecast. Often, this requires building a reserve for sustainability in the early years which is then spent in the later years when annual revenues dip below the expenditure target. The graph below illustrates the effect of First 5's approach to long-range financial planning.

The dotted line shows actual and projected tobacco tax revenues allocated to the counties in the Northwest Region (excluding First 5 California matching grants and other revenue sources). Instead of having program funding fluctuate so much from year to year, long-range fiscal planning allows stable program investments to be sustained for many years.



Fiscal Leveraging

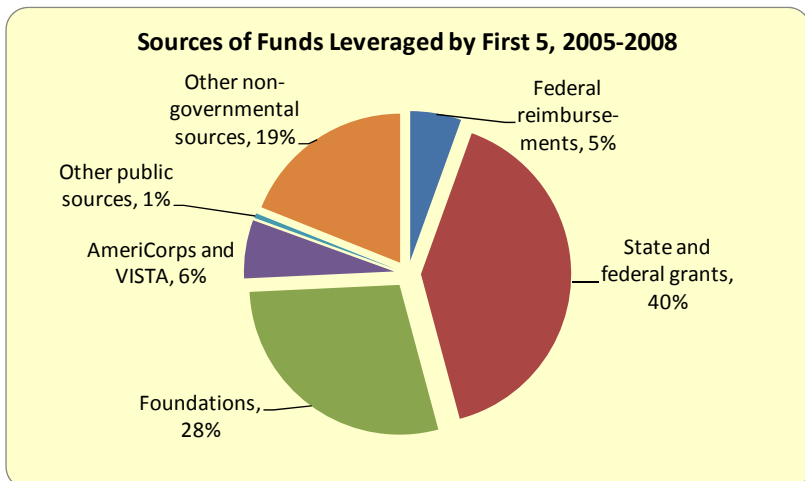
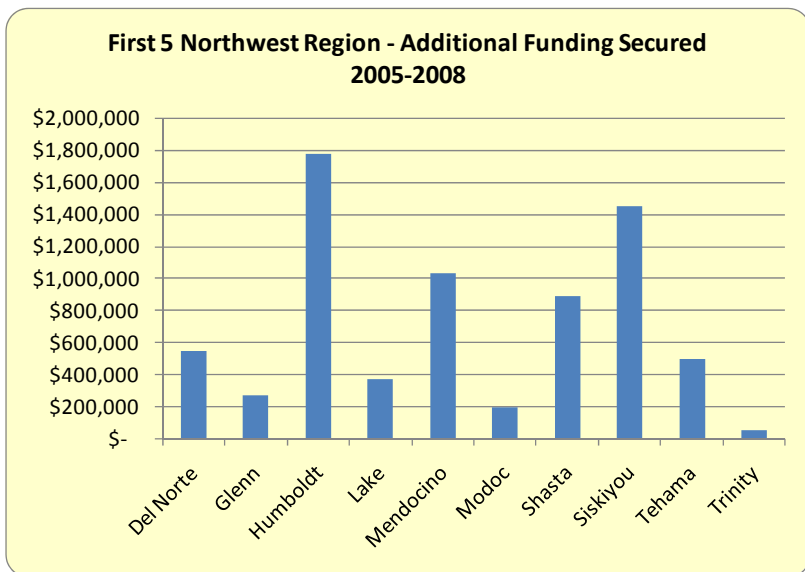
The First 5 commissions in the Northwest Region have been very resourceful in working with community partners to attract other sources of funding, often using the flexibility of First 5 funds as a cash match to bring additional resources to the county.

For the three year period from 2005 to 2008, a total of \$7,057,565 in additional funds have been secured as a direct result of leveraging First 5 funds. This figure does not include First 5 California matching funds; it represents “new” resources from federal and private sources that would not have been received otherwise. Compared to total expenditures during this period, First 5 funds were extended by an additional 20% through fiscal leveraging.

The charts to the right show the breakdown of fiscal leveraging by county and by source of funds.

A representative example of how First 5 has been creative and highly effective in leveraging funds comes from Tehama County. An initial First 5 investment launched a program to reach, train and support family, friend and neighbor child care providers to improve the quality and safety of care. This led to engagement of several community partners and braiding of multiple funding streams to expand and sustain the program, growing the program from \$80,000 to \$203,000. First 5 funds have been leveraged by state child care funding, Head Start training dollars, workforce investment funding and other sources in the process.

Numerous other examples of fiscal leveraging have been presented in the report, such as the success of three counties to attract two dollars of public and private investments for every dollar of



First 5 funding to offer universal health insurance coverage to all children age 0-5 or the ability of several counties to bring new funding sources together to expand services at Family Resource Centers launched by First 5 without requiring additional First 5 investments. The common thread is that First 5, working in partnership with other community-based organizations, has been able to take advantage of the unique flexibility of First 5 funds to stretch those funds much further.

Program Evaluation and Accountability

First 5 has rigorous standards to ensure that funds are used properly. Each organization that receives First 5 money signs a contract with performance standards to be met for the program or project being funded. Those agencies submit regular progress reports – quarterly in most counties – and also participate in program evaluation activities to assess the quality and effectiveness of services. Annual reports are prepared by each First 5 commission to show what was accomplished each year.

Ongoing investments have been made in evaluation processes throughout the region. These evaluation systems include designing an evaluation framework for First 5 as a whole and for each program, creating systems to collect and report evaluation data, monitoring of services delivered, analysis of specific desired outcomes, and regular discussion of evaluation findings with program staff and the First 5 commissions.

All of the information in this report was obtained from First 5 annual reports, program evaluation reports and other research conducted by the counties. It shows the depth to which First 5 closely monitors all investments and is able to modify programs or redirect funding as needed to invest in programs and services that truly have an impact.

Fiscal Accountability

The First 5 commissions have established strong fiscal systems to maintain full accountability over the use of the tobacco tax funds and other resources. These fiscal systems include the following elements:

- Policies and procedures that control how projects are selected for funding and how contracts are developed and administered for those selected projects.

- Accounting policies, procedures and systems to ensure that First 5 funds are only expended for purposes authorized by law, in alignment with the county strategic plan and annual budget approved by the Children and Families Commission.
- Close monitoring and evaluation of programs, services and projects funded by First 5, as described in the previous section on Program Evaluation and Accountability.
- Regular reporting of expenditures and other financial information at public meetings that are open to the community.
- Annual financial audits by independent auditors, which not only verify the accuracy of financial statements but also the effectiveness of internal accounting controls and county compliance with state laws governing the First 5 commissions.

The results of the annual audits show the effectiveness of these fiscal systems. All of the counties in the region have received unqualified audit opinions on their financial statements, which means that the auditors have certified that the financial statements are materially accurate. No other audit findings have been noted by the independent auditors in any county related to fiscal controls, use of funds or other issues affecting fiscal accountability.

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The information presented in this report about the investments and accomplishments of the First 5 commissions in the Northwest Region was compiled by Social Entrepreneurs, Inc. from review of literally hundreds of reports and data sources provided by the counties. These included the county strategic plans, annual reports prepared in accordance with state law and submitted to First 5 California, evaluation reports for individual programs funded by First 5, research reports prepared by or for First 5 and a variety of other materials. People interested in more detailed information about county level activities in the Northwest Region are encouraged to contact the counties directly. Access to the websites of each county First 5 commission is available through the First 5 Association of California website at www.f5ac.org by selecting the County Commissions option.

Valuable insights about the impact of First 5 in the Northwest Region were obtained from a series of telephone interviews with local and state level stakeholders with direct knowledge of the work of First 5. The participation of the following individuals in these interviews is greatly appreciated.

Sally Aldinger - Child Care Planning Council Coordinator, Trinity County Office of Education
Leticia Alejandre - Executive Director, California Family Resource Association
Marcia Armstrong - County Board of Supervisor Member, Siskiyou County
JoAnn Bauer - Children's Librarian, Humboldt County Library
Gary Blatnick - Director, Del Norte County Health and Human Services
Donna Burcher - Executive Director, Butte Valley Community Resource Center
Edward Condon - Managing Director, Low Income Investment Fund and former Executive Director, California Head Start Association
Cynthia Cook - Regional Lead, California Preschool Instructional Network
Karen Derry - Executive Director, Happy Camp Family Resource Center
Donnell Ewert - Director, Shasta County Public Health
De Funk - State Preschool Administrator, Modoc County
Lee Ann Grigsby-Puente - community advocate in Glenn County
Jeannie Jacobs - Early Childhood Specialist, Tehama and Shasta Counties
Allan Katz - former Executive Director, Community Health Alliance of Humboldt-Del Norte
Siddiq Kilkenny - North Coast Regional Representative, California Head Start Association
Pam Klier - Kindergarten Teacher, Lakeport Elementary School
Margie Lee - Human Response Network, Trinity County
Kathy Maes - Director, Lake County Child Protective Services
Linda McBride - Board Member, Shasta County Office of Education
Cris McCollum - Executive Director, Del Norte Child Care Council
Michelle O'Gorman - Executive Director, The HUB Communities Family Resource Center
Carmen Padilla - Child Development Consultant, First 5 California
Roberta Peck - Director of Preschool Planning, California County Superintendents Educational Services Association
Marriane Pennekamp - community advocate in Humboldt County
Joan Reynolds - Healthy Start Director, Lake County Office of Education
Michelle Rosauer - School Readiness Coordinator, Tehama County Department of Education
Jon Roth - Director, California Dental Association Foundation
Dr. Melvin Sage - Dental Director, Northern Valley Indian Health
Camille Schraeder - Executive Director, Redwood Children's Services
Jennifer Slinkard - Health Program Manager, Modoc County Health Services
Sara Taylor - Director, Tulelake/Newell Family Resource Center
Paul Tichinin - County Superintendent of Schools, Mendocino County

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