



PRESS RELEASE

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First 5 Yolo Needs Assessment Reveals Parent, Provider and Caregiver Concerns About Education, Healthcare and Safety of Kids

*First 5 Yolo Children and Families Commission to Address Issues in Long-Range
Strategic Planning*

(Woodland, CA) First 5 Yolo, whose mission is to raise children who are healthy and ready to learn, released the results today of a comprehensive study pertaining to the delivery of critical services for children ages 0-5.

“First 5 Yolo conducts a needs assessment every five years to help us understand the progress we have made in addressing critical needs and identifying where gaps still exist between needs and available resources,” said Helen Thomson, Chair of the First 5 Yolo Children and Families Commission. “Hearing from the community about what First 5 Yolo can do to improve the lives of children ages 0-5 goes to the heart of our mission.”

Community Needs Assessment

The study, conducted over a period of several months in the summer and fall of 2007, identified critical needs of approximately 15,000 Yolo County children ages 0-5 and their families and ascertained the existing gaps between those needs and available services. The research incorporated a parent face-to-face and on-line survey in English, Spanish and Russian and interviews with child welfare and health experts, special needs and childcare providers in addition to preschool and early education representatives. Foster parents, kinship care parents and monolingual Spanish-speaking mothers participated in discussions. In addition, interviews were conducted with grandparents raising grandchildren and parents with special needs children.

The community needs assessment report was divided into key areas:

- Access to Quality Healthcare
- Childcare and Early Childhood Education
- School Readiness, including Universal Preschool
- Parent and Family Support
- Strong Communities
- Foster Children
- Neighborhood Safety/Crime Prevention

Some general themes emerged through the primary research:

- **Parent and family support would have a positive impact in reducing child abuse and neglect.** A desire for increased access to parent and family support was a recurring theme in the research. Support in areas such as post-partum depression;

- anger management; home visits following births; early intervention and prevention of problems related to substance abuse and child abuse; and education to help with parenting skills all were identified as being beneficial.
- **Availability of mental health and dental care for children under 6 years of age is severely lacking.** Families identified a shortage of mental health professionals well versed in the treatment of small children. Cultural sensitivity was also a concern. In addition, too few Yolo County physicians, dentists and mental health professionals are willing to accept Medi-Cal/Denti-Cal payments for services, creating shortages and longer wait times and, even worse, untreated conditions for young children.
 - **Yolo County does not have enough affordable and available childcare to meet the need, especially for infant care.** Negatively impacting this need are the relatively few spaces available for infants and the high cost of childcare and preschool making childcare unaffordable for low-income parents without financial assistance. Those working in childcare environments find the low pay and negligible benefits problematic, and turnover of employees is high.
 - **Parents desire to access affordable and high-quality preschool.** Access to affordable and high-quality preschool programs was a predominant theme expressed by parents of young children. In addition, parents of special needs children want preschools staffed with teachers trained on caring for and educating special needs children. The average cost of part-day, five-day-a-week preschool in Yolo County is \$550 a month. For a single parent making minimum wage, this is nearly 40 percent of his or her annual income and doesn't include the additional costs for childcare.
 - **Foster children are not getting the services they need, particularly as they relate to healthcare, including medical, mental health and dental care.** The biggest problem facing foster parents in Yolo County is accessing medical care, dental care and mental health services. Foster children tend to have more illnesses and need for counseling or psychological help.
 - **Some Yolo County parents are concerned about neighborhood violence, drug abuse and gangs.** Exposure to community violence may have enduring consequences on children's development beginning in the preschool years and continuing through adolescence. Top concerns for parents in the needs study included gang activity, drugs and violence in their immediate vicinity and city, lack of streetlights and the need for better security patrols in parks and neighborhoods.

According to Julie Gallelo, executive director, "These findings, as well as the breadth of the research, will be taken into consideration by First 5 Yolo Commissioners when identifying the strategic focus for funding programs and services during the next five years."

To read First 5 Yolo's Community Needs Assessment January 2008 in its entirety, go to www.First5Yolo.org, click on "About Us" and then on "Reports and Evaluations."

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In November 1998, California voters passed a statewide ballot initiative to add a 50-cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes. The funds collected are utilized to fund education, health, and childcare programs that promote early childhood development from prenatal through age 5. For more information about First 5 Yolo, please visit www.First5Yolo.org.