



**PRESS RELEASE
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Two First 5 Yolo Funded Programs Serve as Models for Other Communities *Only in Yolo Programs*

Woodland, CA — The young mother of two carefully typed in the internet address given to her by the county social worker. Then proceeding through the series of questions on the CompassHelps Web site, she filled in the required information, and in about 20 minutes, a page displayed the programs for which she and her children were likely eligible to receive services. They included healthcare coverage, food assistance, home energy-saving assistance and tax credits. Using the Web site Elizabeth (not her real name) quickly looked up the names and locations of five Yolo County organizations with certified application assistants (CAAs) that could help her apply for services. Completing the entire process in the privacy of her home, Elizabeth was unaware the new system that assessed her family's eligibility for multiple assistance programs was unique to Yolo County.

Yolo County once again is serving as a model for other communities; this time to increase family access to enrollment in public and subsidized assistance programs and services and to increase awareness and knowledge of early childhood mental health issues among a diverse range of providers.

The CompassHelps Web site guides users through an online process to pre-screen their eligibility for multiple health and social services programs in the convenience and privacy of their home, or at any computer with internet service.

In addition to screening for healthcare and social service programs, CompassHelps provides information about community organizations that offer help with the application and enrollment process. Families can go to a single assistance location to get help filling out program specific applications for many of the included programs (some programs such as WIC and food stamps require in person interviews). The CAA will even print out the application forms, apply the stamp and place them in the mail to ensure families get the help they need.

Current programs and services include California's Food Stamps program, WIC, the free and reduced lunch school lunch, breakfast, and special milk programs, low income energy and weatherization assistance, Earned Income Tax Credit, and a variety of free and low cost health insurance programs for children and pregnant women. These insurance programs include Medi-Cal for Children and Pregnant Women, Healthy Families, the Kaiser Child Health Plan and Healthy Kids.

CompassHelps at www.compasshelps.org is currently available in English, and will have a Spanish version in the future.

CompassHelps, funded by First 5 Yolo, is part of the larger COMPASS software system already being used by outreach organizations in Yolo County. The COMPASS system allows outreach organizations to screen potential beneficiaries for eligibility and complete accurate program specific application forms. During First 5 Yolo's 2008/09 fiscal year, 463 young children were screened for services eligibility using the new COMPASS universal application system. Seventy-seven percent, or 357, were successfully enrolled into health insurance programs.

In another area of innovation, First 5 Yolo and the WestEd Center for Prevention and Early Intervention have joined forces to increase local expertise in early childhood mental health.

First 5 Yolo and WestEd are working to increase the capacity of a diverse group of Yolo County providers to work with children 0 to 5 years of age and their families on early childhood social emotional issues. A group of 25 participants were given full scholarships (valued at \$4,500 per person) to attend the newly developed program which offers a series of training sessions during a two- year period. Sessions build mental health expertise along the continuum of prevention, early intervention and treatment to promote and ensure child social-emotional and developmental well-being. The multi-disciplinary group includes providers currently offering early intervention, early childhood education, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language pathology, special education, human development, audiology, social work and pediatric services to young children and their families in Yolo County.

The Early Childhood Mental Health Training Program is based on the Revised Training Guidelines & Personnel Competencies for Infant-Family and Early Childhood Mental Health in California (2009) and includes both face-to-face training sessions as well as outside assignments. At the end of the 2-year program, participants will be eligible for a California endorsement in early child mental health.

While enrollment for the two-year California endorsement program is closed, there are approximately 5 slots available for "drop-in" participants who wish to attend specific Friday sessions. Trainings take place at the Woodland Community and Senior Center. For more information contact Jackie Hausman, jhausman@first5yolo.org, (530) 669-2330.

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About First 5 Yolo

Research shows a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. 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.