



**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
May 10, 2010

Contact: Julie Gallelo 530-669-2475
jgallelo@first5yolo.org

First 5 Yolo Funds Safety Net Programs for Kids

County's program cuts leave many young children without critical necessities

Woodland, CA — One doesn't have to look far in Yolo County to find a family in need of food, shelter, health care, dental care, mental health services, child care or other basic necessities to help them function and stay afloat in a sea of financial despair. The fortunate few have family or friends who can help. Others are not so lucky. Hundreds of those desperate for help are parents of Yolo County's youngest children.

Yolo County is the provider of last resort for low income pregnant women, teen parents, indigent families needing health care, severely emotionally disturbed children, and children experiencing abuse and neglect. Regrettably, due to declines in the economy, pieces of Yolo County's safety net infrastructure are in jeopardy as a result of budget cuts and lay-offs in the County's health and human services departments. Reductions include the layoff of critical employees such as nurses, social workers, mental health therapists and child welfare staff over the last three years. Since July 2007, Yolo County's Health Department has shrunk by 30% and the Alcohol, Drug & Mental Health Department by 39%. In the past year alone, the Department of Employment & Social Services has reduced its staff by 29 percent. As a result, programs serving Yolo County's most vulnerable families with young children have been significantly reduced, and in some cases, eliminated all together.

In response, First 5 Yolo has stepped in to pick up some of the pieces.

“After much discussion and analysis, the First 5 Yolo Children and Families Commission decided to provide Yolo County and several community based organizations an additional \$300,000 in 2010 and 2011 to bolster services to children 0-5 and their families which have been eliminated due to the shredding of the County's safety net,” said First 5 Yolo and Yolo County Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Helen Thomson.

Added Thomson, “Safety net services are critical for the poorest families – those living on the brink of homelessness and hunger and with the emotional trauma that comes from day-to-day survival.”

First 5 Yolo released the additional funds to provide vouchers for emergency food, rental assistance, mortgage assistance, utilities assistance and other basic needs through a partnership with the Yolo County Department of Employment & Social Services (DESS). The allocated

money will be used as a match to draw down Federal dollars. For every dollar spent by DESS on these emergency vouchers, Yolo County will receive four dollars from the Federal government.

Additionally, First 5 Yolo initiated a number of urgent programs in early 2010 to assist those in need. In partnership with the Yolo County Children's Alliance and the Yolo County Food Bank, fresh produce is distributed to families with young children in West Sacramento each week. RISE, Inc., a program that serves the needs of Esparto region residents, received First 5 Yolo funds to hire a Safety Net Resource and Referral Case Manager to assist isolated families in rural Yolo County with accessing the resources they are eligible for as they struggle to obtain basic needs such as food, shelter and health care. Finally, CommuniCare Health Centers received funds to expand its Perinatal Day Treatment Program which serves pregnant and parenting women who are fighting an addiction to drugs and/or alcohol.

First 5 Yolo is also assisting its grantees in leveraging state and federal funds. In fiscal year 2009/10, the Commission and its funded partners brought in more than \$2.3 million to Yolo County for a variety of programs providing services such as health care, dental care, preschool, food and shelter.

First 5 Yolo Executive Director Julie Gallelo said, "It is our hope these programs and the additional \$300,000 to Yolo County will help shore up basic safety net services so desperately needed by hundreds of Yolo County's youngest children and their families."

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.

###