

First 5 Yolo's new focus supports key programs for kids

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The First 5 Yolo Children and Families Commission announced its 2015-18 strategic plan funding priorities and allocations supporting initiatives in the areas of improved child health, child development and family functioning.

“We are very excited to work with our partners to bring two new evidence-based programs to Yolo County that will improve children’s health and development,” said Jim Provenza, a Yolo County supervisor and chairman of First 5 Yolo. “Help Me Grow will provide screenings and link children who have developmental issues to early intervention programs. AVANCE will develop parenting skills for underserved families in rural Yolo County.”

To help parents recognize potential health-related developmental issues in young children, the commission is allocating \$305,000 to the Help Me Grow developmental screening program. Building on current programs in Yolo County, the new model will increase the number of children screened for developmental, social emotional, behavioral and cognitive issues and subsequently connected to early intervention services.

Screening services will be available through the Yolo Family Service Agency and Family Resource Centers, a current First 5 Yolo partner, and will be expanded to include a call center.

Improving child development through parent education, child literacy and school readiness is the goal of the intensive evidence-based child development model, AVANCE. The program targets low-income Spanish-speaking parents with children from birth through age 3 living in Esparto. RISE Inc., based in Esparto, is receiving \$150,000 a year for three years to implement the program and serve as a demonstration project.

Another program funded at \$506,500 a year is the nationally recognized universal preschool program in West Sacramento, which provides high-quality early learning at affordable costs for low-income children. First 5 Yolo leveraged more than \$450,000 to implement this program, which is a partnership between First 5 Yolo, First 5 California and the city of West Sacramento.

Improving family functioning is a cornerstone for ensuring healthy child development. First 5 Yolo commissioners decided to continue their support for several existing programs that have demonstrated positive results in the community, including the bilingual Family Hui parent support groups, foster parent recruitment and retention, home visiting to help new moms, and parent-child play groups. These programs will receive a combined \$279,000 per year during the three-year strategic plan.

The collective total for all programs with funding commitments from First 5 Yolo is nearly \$2 million a year.

Some other previously funded programs will continue with help from outside funding not related to the tobacco tax revenue used for First 5 Yolo’s local grants.

According to First 5 Yolo Executive Director Julie Gallelo, “We are pleased several programs and services previously dependent on First 5 Yolo grants are now finding new sources of funding. First 5 Yolo has

initiated sustainability groups that are finding ways to keep vital programs open to serve the county's most vulnerable children and families.”

To learn more about First 5 Yolo and its funded programs, go to www.first5yolo.org or call 530-669-2475.