

First 5 reports on Yolo County children services

By Jim Smith, Daily Democrat

March 9, 2017, 1:29 PM PST

<http://www.dailydemocrat.com/general-news/20170309/first-5-reports-on-yolo-county-children-services>

First 5 Yolo released an annual Local Evaluation Report showing the effect of \$1.6 million of investments in programs and services for children prenatal to 5 years and their families in Yolo County during Fiscal Year 2015-2016 this week and found that funded programs served 3,650 participants countywide.

Affected were children, families and caregivers, and providers across four priority areas: Improved Child Health, Improved Child Development, Improved Family Functioning, and Improved Systems and Networks.

Executive Director Gina Daleiden reported that funded programs focused on increasing the number of Yolo County children who are healthy and ready to learn by the time they enter kindergarten.

“Services strengthened the local foster care system, expanded home visiting services, delivered emergency child care for families in crisis, provided early developmental screenings including early child mental health assistance, offered high quality preschool, and emphasized early learning,” stated Daleiden.

Access to early child mental health services, and very early detection and intervention for children 0-5 is an emerging need.

“First 5 Yolo has launched an ambitious systemwide approach with Help Me Grow, a program administered by Children’s Therapy Center of Northern California in collaboration with Yolo County Children’s Alliance, RISE, Inc., and Empower Yolo,” Daleiden reported. “Help Me Grow works to increase the number of children 0-5 who are screened for developmental, social emotional, behavioral, and cognitive delays; connects families to services; and identifies and addresses barriers to accessing services.”

The program has developed cross-sector partnerships with organizations through the County to create a system of early child mental health support, with full launch at the end of fiscal year 2015-16. In the first year, Help Me Grow provided free screenings to 551 children in Yolo, identifying 21 percent scoring in the “concern” range in one of more of the assessments.

According to First 5 Yolo Commissioner Nichole Arnold, “The identification of possible developmental issues is a first step in early intervention for these children, and will pay dividends down the road in terms of health, education, and future life success.”

First 5 Yolo is looking to expand access to developmental screenings and connection to services, and is actively exploring options for leveraging other public and private funds to sustain and build the program.

Several other successful programs and services were funded as well, stated Daleiden

Yolo County Supervisor and Chairman of First 5 Yolo, Jim Provenza, noted, ““We are proud of Yolo First 5’s role in helping kids stay healthy, giving families the tools they need to remain safe and stable and providing early learning opportunities for our youngest residents.

“The evaluation report again validates that we are reaching and supporting many of the most vulnerable children in our community,” he stated.

Other key funded programs and partners included:

- Safe respite care and wrap-around services for families in crisis (Yolo Crisis Nursery)
- Evidence-based home visitation program for expectant parents (County of Yolo Health and Human Services and Yolo County Children’s Alliance Step by Step/ Paso a Paso)
- Parenting Classes for children and parents (RISE, Inc. Avance)
- Peer-led parenting support networks (Family Hui)
- Play School Experience early learning and parent support (YCCA, RISE, Empower Yolo)
- Enhancing early learning and literacy (Yolo County Library Storytime, Winters BOOST, and ARK Preschool)
- Quality improvement for early childhood providers (First 5 IMPACT and City of West Sacramento’s Up4WS)
- Foster Care Recruitment and Retention (YCCA)

Looking toward the future, First 5 Yolo is focused on improving systems that serve Yolo County’s youngest children and their families.

According to Daleiden, “First 5 Yolo is committed to investing strategically in programs, services, and systems, and to devoting agency resources to support early prevention and intervention efforts with other organizations, funders, and key stakeholders. Together, we can have the greatest impact.”

In November of 1998, California passed Proposition 10, an initiative taxing tobacco products. The funds collected are utilized by First 5 to fund programs that promote early childhood development from prenatal through age 5.

Since its inception, Yolo County alone has received over \$30 million.