



FIRST 5 KERN Handprints

SPRING 2009

First 5 Kern prepares for new funding cycle

The Kern County Children and Families Commission – First 5 Kern – is preparing a Request for Proposal process for its new funding cycle that begins July 2010.

During June and July 2009, the Commission will be seeking proposals from qualified agencies, organizations and individuals interested in providing services to children ages prenatal through five and their families living in Kern County. These services will be funded for up to three years by the Commission using Proposition 10 funds and must be consistent with the goals and objectives outlined in the 2010-13 Strategic Plan developed by the Commission.

Proposition 10 funds are intended to enhance existing services for children ages prenatal through five and their families, and may not supplant existing resources or create service duplication.

The Commission will fund individual programs using the following criteria:

- ✓ Programs must target one or more of the four major strategic areas described in the Strategic Plan.
 - Health and Wellness
 - Child Care and Early Education
 - Parent Education and Support Services
 - Integration of Services
- ✓ Programs must serve children ages prenatal through five and their families

✓ Only programs serving Kern County residents and with an office residing in Kern County will be considered

✓ Both new and existing programs are eligible for funding

This will be a new funding process and the Commission will begin the selection with a clean slate. Agencies under a current contract with the Commission will need to apply for new funding to continue their programs. Agencies not currently funded through First 5 Kern are invited to submit a proposal. 🌱

Dates to remember:

Friday, June 5
Request for Proposal Release

Friday, June 12
Bidders Conference

Friday, June 19
Letters of Intent Due

Friday, July 31
RFP Closes

Week of Oct 26
Applicants to be notified of status

Wednesday, December 2
Commissioners to review and approve applicants for funding

Week of December 7
Notification letters will be sent to all applicants

(dates subject to change)



Jared Walker, age one, visits Joseph Nunez, DDS for his first dental screening, accompanied by his mom, Anne Walker

Dental health begins at birth

February is National Children’s Dental Health Month. Below are a few tips for parents from the American Academy of Pediatrics:

Birth to 12 months: Good dental habits should begin before the first tooth appears. After feedings, gently brush your baby’s gums using water on a baby toothbrush that has soft bristles. Or wipe them with a clean washcloth.

Schedule your baby’s well-child visits. During these visits your child’s doctor will check your baby’s mouth.

12 to 24 months: Brush! Brush your child’s teeth two times a day using water on a baby toothbrush that has soft bristles. The best times are after breakfast and before bed.

Limit juice. Make sure your child doesn’t drink more than one small cup of juice each day and only at mealtimes.

Consult with your child’s dentist or doctor about sucking habits. Sucking too strongly on a pacifier, a thumb, or fingers can affect the shape of the mouth; how the top and bottom teeth line up.

Schedule a dental checkup. Take your child for a dental checkup if he has not had one. 🌱

Lost Hills-Semitropic School Readiness Program involves community

The Lost Hills-Semitropic School Readiness Program has set the pace for community involvement like no other. Program Coordinator Alesha Hixson hit the ground running when she was selected to head up the District's School Readiness Program, which include case-management services, center-based and home-based activities, school transition and orientation activities, Summer Bridge, parent education and lots of one-time services such as insurance application assistance, food baskets, job application support, clothing referrals and referrals to other agencies.

Parent involvement is the focus of her program. Alesha conducted a parent survey and learned that very few parents were reading to their children. As a result, she began the "Little Readers" program and armed the parents with reading logs and unlimited access to books in the School Readiness library. Parents check out books on a weekly basis to read to their children, and parents who are illiterate check out books so older siblings or other family members can read to the child. A recent Little Reader of the Month had 33 books read to her by her dad, totaling 243 minutes of reading time.

Alesha doesn't keep her energy bottled up and is very active in the Lost Hills community during her off hours and on weekends, although she lives in Bakersfield. She is vocal at the school board meetings regarding needs of the community, which has increased Board members' awareness and involvement in the community. She has also begun the following services for the entire community.

- Youth Community Helpers Club, which is dedicated to community betterment and gives youth an opportunity to be active in a constructive manner. Monthly meetings are held during lunch and on weekends.
- Raises money through car washes and bake sales to help fund future projects and community activities
- Leads a group of teens in the graffiti removal program in partnership with the Kern County Graffiti Off Program.



Alesha Hixson reads to the children during story time.

- Holds community meetings with the help of Jerry Scott, District Superintendent, to discuss issues pertinent to the improvement of the community.
- Hosted the Toys for Tots distribution in Lost Hills for the first time. Prior to this, families had to pick up toys in Wasco and many were unable to find transportation.
- Developed relationships with area businesses such as Chevron, Kern County Sheriff's Department, Lost Hills Utility District, Liberty Composting and Public Health Nurses.

Most of the population being served in Lost Hills-Semitropic school readiness program are Spanish speaking – only one of 20 speaks English. This is not a barrier for Alesha or her staff, as they also speak Spanish fluently. However, in the center-based classes, the children are adding English words and phrases into their daily repertoire.

Being bilingual also allows them to work closely with 16 families, who they are case-managing.

Their efforts are showing positive results. Evaluation data shows that fifty percent or more of the case-managed families improved income stability, food, employment, transportation or health care stability. Additionally, data shows that the mean score for each area of child development was well above the expected mean cut-off score. 🍀

Welcome New Commissioners

Three new commissioners were appointed to serve on the First 5 Kern Commission beginning February 4, 2009.



Carrie Champness
Community Advocate



John McQuiston
Supervisor
1st District
County of Kern



Nancy Puckett
Coordinator
Kern River Valley
Family Resource
Center

Dental treatment program becomes Little Smiles and expands with Big Smiles

The Kern County Department of Public Health's Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) Treatment Program - Dental Component announced that the program has been renamed Little Smiles effective February 1, 2009, in observance of National Children's Dental Health Month. The former name was – well – a bit of a mouth full.

Currently, Little Smiles provides oral health education, health insurance application assistance, establishment of a dental home, fluoride varnish, preventive and restorative dental treatment, dental related prescriptions including fluoride supplements, and kindergarten oral health assessments as required by state law to uninsured, low-income children ages five and under.

The program was originally funded by First 5 Kern in November 2000. To date, more than 5,600 program- sponsored dental referrals and 1,100 check-up appointments have been made to contracted dental providers for children age five and under. Staff has educated nearly 1,700 Medi-Cal recipients of benefits while scheduling dental visits.

Additionally, staff is excited to announce plans to increase innovative in-reach and outreach strategies to further expand its oral health objectives throughout Kern County through its new Big Smiles program. The expansion of services was made possible by an \$80,000 two-year grant from the Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, Southern California Region Community Benefit Charitable Contributions Program. Big Smiles will provide preventive and restorative dental services to low income, uninsured children ages six through 18 years who are older siblings of established Little Smiles participants. Grant monies will allow the Department of Public Health

to extend services to more than 100 eligible children. As a result of the inception of Big Smiles, all children in a household originally served by Little Smiles may receive comprehensive dental care.

The Program developed a hands-on Fluoride Varnish Application Training for the Department's Public Health Nurses, the first its kind in the state. More than 60 staff members have received training. Public Health Nurses have begun integrating varnishing into routine patient care, making fluoride varnish the first preventive oral health benefit offered directly by the Department. Staff has also provided trainings to nine Child Health and Disability Prevention Program (CHDP) medical providers from Ridgecrest to Taft. The fluoride varnish training has been shared with the Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program's Oral Health Consultant at the California Department of Public Health, Tulare County CHDP, University of California, San Francisco's Dental School, and the Taft College Dental Hygiene Program.

“Over the last eight years we have evolved from being strictly a CHDP follow-up resource to initiating our own fluoride varnish training program for the medical community, among other projects. Our team has been working diligently on improving existing services while seeking ways to expand. Little Smiles will better reflect our overall strategic planning while allowing room for growth,” commented Program Manager, Karen O'Rear, RDH, RN, BSN.



Hudson Adamson shows off his healthy smile.



The Little Smiles Team

Front Row left to right: Amanda Adamson, Glenda Ramos-Vidrio, Mary Moreno, Debra Lamb Middle Row L to R: Melba Garcia, Amparo Martinez, Laura Vaca, Back Row L to R: Karen O'Rear, Rudy Cordero

You'll soon notice the Little Smiles name on all program correspondences. Other changes taking place to reflect the new program image will be a rebranding strategy that will include a new logo design, Webpage redesign on the Kern County Department of Public Health's Website and the redesign and creation of other marketing materials to better represent their focus on the children served.

The existing Little Smiles team, which has more than 35 years of experience in the dental field, will continue working with the community to keep Kern County's most vulnerable children smiling. For more information about the Little Smiles Program call (661) 868-0375.

– **Now that's something to smile about!** 🌱

Make fruits and vegetables a part of every meal:

Children should consume five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day, with a single serving equaling the size of a child's fist. Incorporating more fruits and vegetables into your child's diet can be as simple as adding lettuce and tomatoes to a sandwich or offering grapes or other fresh fruit with every meal.

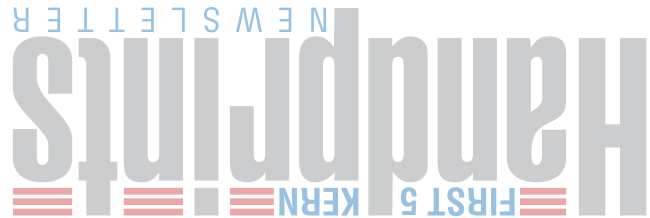


Notes & Niblets

- March 18** First 5 Kern Strategic Planning Workshop, 9 a.m.
San Joaquin Community Hospital, 1300 17th Street, Bakersfield
- March 19** School Readiness Coordinators Meeting, 1-3 p.m.
First 5 Kern Office, 2724 L Street, Bakersfield
- April 1** First 5 Kern Commission Meeting, 2 p.m.
Kern County Supt of Schools, 1300 17th Street, Bakersfield
- April 20** Technical Advisory Committee Meeting, 10 a.m.
First 5 Kern Office, 2724 L Street, Bakersfield
- May 18** Technical Advisory Committee Meeting, 10 a.m.
First 5 Kern Office, 2724 L Street, Bakersfield
- May 21** School Readiness Coordinators Meeting, 1-3 p.m.
First 5 Kern Office, 2724 L Street, Bakersfield
- June 3** First 5 Kern Commission Meeting, 2 p.m.
Kern County Supt of Schools, 1300 17th Street, Bakersfield
- June 12** RFP Bidder's Conference Times TBA
The Learning Center, 21st and K streets, Bakersfield
- June 15** Technical Advisory Committee Meeting, 10 a.m.
First 5 Kern Office, 2724 L Street, Bakersfield
- June 18** School Readiness Coordinators Meeting, 1-3 p.m.
First 5 Kern Office, 2724 L Street, Bakersfield

For more information on these and other Commission activities and events, please log onto www.First5Kern.org.

Free children's immunizations are offered at various locations throughout Kern County. For more information, please call (661) 324-2183.



www.First5Kern.org

Fax: 661.328.8880

661.328.8888

Bakersfield, CA 93301

2724 L Street



Published by:

PRSRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Bakersfield, CA
Permit 235