What Do Parents Say About First 5 LA’s Healthy Kids Insurance?

Two and half years after First 5 LA introduced Healthy Kids insurance in LA County, nearly 45,000 children have gained access to health insurance coverage through the Healthy Kids program.

What do parents think about the program’s outreach and enrollment, access to care, and cost-sharing?

These were questions posed last spring to 12 focus groups with 86 parents of children who were enrolled in Healthy Kids or Medi-Cal or were uninsured. The responses were analyzed in a report released last week by the Urban Institute, external evaluators for Healthy Kids.

“Our findings strongly suggest that First 5 LA’s Healthy Kids program is providing families with a highly valued service in the form of comprehensive and affordable health insurance for their children,” said Ian Hill, principal research associate for the Urban Institute.

Key findings included:

- Unanimously, parents said that Healthy Kids insurance provides them with "peace of mind," "security," and "assurance," and that the coverage affords their children easier access to more affordable care.
- Intensive, community-based enrollment efforts are succeeding in reaching uninsured families.
- The application and renewal processes appear to be simple and efficient.
- The Healthy Kids network is affording access to primary health care, dental, vision, and pharmacy services.
- Parents are sometimes frustrated with long wait times for doctor’s appointments and expressed a wish for more providers.
- Most parents said their copayments were affordable, although some parents with children with chronic conditions and disabilities said their copayments are a financial burden.

To further evaluate the program, a Healthy Kids parent survey was completed recently, with results expected to be released next month.
April 28, 8:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m.: Kindergarten Discovery, for parents with children entering kindergarten, sponsored by Wilmington Ready for School, Wilmington Park Elementary School, 1140 Mahar Ave., Wilmington 90744. For information, call Verle English at (310) 513-9908.

April 28, 1:00 p.m.-2:15 p.m.: Jog/Walk-A-Thon, to help fight childhood obesity and bring awareness to the importance of healthy eating and exercising, Dyer Street School, 14500 Dyer St., Sylmar 91342. Deadline to participate as a vendor is April 26. For information, call Daniel Delgadillo at (818) 838-3939.

April 29, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.: Passport to Adventure, Health & Safety, presented by United Way Success by 6, Banning High School, 161 W. Williams St., Banning 92220. To register by April 14, call Lupe Lopez at (310) 834-7266.

April 29, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.: Health Fair during National Infant Immunization Week, WIC Office, 4101 S. Figueroa St., LA 90037. For information, call (323) 757-7244 x231.

April 29, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.: International Kids Day Fair, presented by Yorkdale Neighborhood Leadership Group and LA Councilmember Jose Huizar, Yorkdale Elementary School, 5657 Meridian St., LA 90032. For information, call (323) 254-5295.

April 29, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.: Family Health Fiesta, presented by LA's Best Afterschool Enrichment Program, Gates Street Elementary School, 3333 Manitou Ave., LA 90031. For information, email Edith Balesteros at edith@labest.lausd.net.

April 30, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.: El Dia de Los Niños (Children's Day), East Los Angeles College, 1301 Avenida Cesar E. Chavez, Monterey Park 91754. For information, call Ancelma Sanchez at (323) 981-0028.

May 2, 8 a.m.-noon: The Los Angeles Faith Based Child Care Providers Network presents a symposium featuring keynote speakers on topics concerning preschool in Los Angeles County, 3715 McClintock Ave., LA 90089. For information or to register, call Rev. Kathy Cooper-Ledesma at (323) 256-3162.

May 3, 8 a.m.-4:15 p.m.: Campus and Community Connections: Conversation for Change, featuring a discussion led by "The Village" Ready for School Center on "It takes a village to raise a child," Cal State Northridge, Student Union, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge 91330. For information and registration, call (818) 677-7395 or visit www.csun.edu/csl/conference.html.

To view the focus group report, click here.

Two Local Family Literacy Programs Win Barbara Bush Foundation Grants

Two First 5 LA grantees, Mothers' Club Community Center in Pasadena and Elizabeth Learning Center (ELC) in Cudahy, have been named 2006 winners of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Literacy Grants.

The two organizations, selected this year from 550 applicants nationwide, are among ten Bush Foundation grant recipients who were honored in Houston last week, in ceremonies hosted by former president George Bush and former First Lady Barbara Bush.

The foundation’s grants, ranging from $44,682 to $65,000, recognize promising and pioneering family literacy programs provided by private nonprofit and public organizations including libraries, correctional institutions, universities, housing projects, and public schools.

According to Sarah Orth, development director at Mothers’ Club, their Bush Foundation grant will fund expansion of a home visitation program that provides individualized instruction to parents on recognizing and using teachable moments in everyday life to boost children's language and early literacy skills.

In addition, the new grant will fund teacher training, independent program evaluation, and supplies at Mothers’ Club.

ELC's Bush Foundation grant will fund a natural science literacy curriculum, enhance an outdoor playground area, and allow for hiring of additional infant caregivers.

For information, visit barbarabushfoundation.com.

Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic Receives National Mental Health Award

The Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, a First 5 LA grantee and long-standing mental health provider in South and Central Los Angeles, is being honored with the American Psychiatric Association's 2006 Award for Advancing Minority Mental Health.

The clinic’s First Steps Program was cited for its innovative efforts to raise awareness of mental illness and increase access to quality mental health services in underserved minority communities.
May 4, 8 a.m.-5:15 p.m.: In Harm's Way 2006: Preventing and Healing Childhood Trauma, presented by the Children's Institute, The Biltmore Hotel, 506 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles 90071. With early registration before April 6: $150. For information, call (213) 385-5100 or visit www.childrensinstitute.org.

May 5-7, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.: Cinco de Mayo Celebration and Health Fair, presented by Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas en Norte America, at MacArthur Park, Wilshire Blvd., LA 90057. For information, call Arturo Carmona at (310) 669-9922.

May 6, 10 a.m.-noon: Behavior: The Tip of the Iceberg, presented by Valerie Copelan, MSW, and the Early Childhood Parenting Center, 1440 Harvard St., Santa Monica 90404. For reservations, call (310) 281-9770.

May 6, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.: 107th Kindergarten Orientation Fair, presented by 107th Elementary School, Locke/107th Ready for School and Freedom 101, 107th Street Elementary School, 147 E. 107th St., LA 90003. For information, call Felecia Johnson at (323) 755-0721.

May 6, 9 a.m.-noon: World Asthma Day, presented by The Asthma Coalition of Los Angeles County, Hooper Ave. Elementary School, 1225 E. 52nd St., LA 90011. For information, call Melissa Burch at (213) 689-9170.

May 17-18, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m.: Looking Back, Moving Forward: California REACH 2010 Conference, to address inequality in health among racial and ethnic communities, Wilshire Grand Hotel, 930 Wilshire Blvd., LA 90017. To register, call Tamekia Mosley at (323) 757-7244 x281 or visit www.careach2010conference.org.

June 21, 9 a.m.-5:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.: Importance of Early Attachment: Relationships and Resilience in the Development of the Brain, presented by the Intercommunity Child Guidance Center, Radisson Hotel Whittier, 7320 Greenleaf Ave., Whittier 90602. For information, call Benny Garcia at (562) 692-0383 or www.intercommunity.org.

First Steps uses home visits to encourage early intervention mental health services for families with infants and toddlers experiencing multiple stressors, including poverty, language or cultural differences, isolation, mental health problems, domestic violence, and/or substance abuse.

First Steps promotes strong parent-child attachment for at-risk families by addressing specific language, economic, and cultural barriers that impede access to service by the Latino and African-American communities.

As a result, parents and caregivers demonstrate improved interaction styles with their infants and toddlers, which in turn, help youngsters to develop appropriate emotional, social, and early learning skills. These children have also been shown to be less prone to future mental health problems.

First Steps Program is one of six programs of the clinic's Early Intervention and Community Wellness Division, which annually serves 1,400 children 5 years old and their families.

For information, visit www.lacgc.org.

Study Reveals Prolonged Effectiveness of Early Intervention Programs on Children


This is the largest-scale and longest-running study ever to evaluate the effects of early development intervention for preterm infants, who tend to be at risk for health and developmental problems.

“These findings provide compelling and useful data for health care providers, policy makers, economists, and parents with regard to the enduring benefits of early childhood interventions,” said principal investigator Marie McCormick, MD, ScD, professor of maternal and child health at Harvard School of Public Health.

Adolescents in the intervention group were more likely to have higher achievement scores in math and reading and fewer risky behaviors (e.g., antisocial behavior, suicidal thoughts/Attempts, smoking, and alcohol or marijuana use) than the follow-up only group.

The original 36-month intervention consisted of home visits every week for the first year of the child's life and every other week in the second and third year, along with daily center-based education beginning at 12 months (corrected for duration of gestation) and a support group for parents of participating children.
EVIE’S DESK
Working to Ensure That All Children Have Health Care

Since 2003, First 5 LA has offered Healthy Kids’ free and low-cost health coverage to families with children 5 years and under who do not qualify for state-funded medical programs.

The newly released parent focus group report and upcoming parent surveys on Healthy Kids tell us that we are reaching our target groups.

In fact, First 5 LA’s outreach efforts through the LA County Department of Health and other community partners have been so successful at reaching families with children of any age that the limited private funds raised to provide Healthy Kids insurance to children 6-18 are quickly being exhausted.

First 5 LA continues to cover and enroll new families with children 5 years and under. But recently, new enrollment of children 6-18 has been frozen because the private funds raised to cover them are being depleted.

To date, the Children’s Health Initiative (CHI) has raised $100 million toward a $128.6 million goal for the Healthy Kids 6-18 program, but until the goal is reached, the freeze continues.

First 5 LA is working closely with CHI to advocate for public policy solutions that will ensure that no child has to go without health insurance. Only when we have achieved this objective, can we rest assured that all of LA County’s children-our children-have access to the health care they need to be healthy and ready to learn.

"Results indicate that high-quality early education services can greatly improve children's lives, giving them the best chance to achieve their full potential and become successful, healthy adults," said Laura Leviton, PhD, senior program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which provided funding for this study.

For report details, visit www.rwjf.org/vulnerable.

GRANTEE PROFILE
Elizabeth Learning Center Family Literacy Program Strengthens Parent/Child Bonds

Faviola Delgado went to Huntington Park-Bell Community Adult School in Cudahy simply to improve her English skills, but she ended up learning much more.

At the school’s Elizabeth Learning Center (ELC) Family Literacy Program, the mother of two was able to register for both English as a second language and parenting classes, while her sons were able to enroll in free on-campus preschool and child-care programs.

Instead of allowing Julian and José to watch hours upon hours of TV, Delgado learned how to support her children's language and social development through play, storytelling, reading, and other educational activities.

“Our program is aimed at reaching parents and children through classes as well as interactive activities,” said Gina Paiz, ELC’s program director.

"Not only does this prepare young children for school but also provides parents with the tools to better themselves and improve their relationship with their children.”

“I would never trade my experiences with my sons in the parent-child interactive literacy activity class for anything, because it has created a new bond between us," said Delgado.

For information on ELC’s Family Literacy Program, contact Paiz at (323) 562-0175 x1713 or paizland@aol.com.