First 5 LA Seeks Early Care/Education Consultant for Workforce Initiative

First 5 LA has issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for qualified groups or individuals to assist with managing implementation of its Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Development Initiative. Deadline for submitting qualifications and proposals is 5 p.m. on May 19, 2006.

The successful applicant(s) will have expertise and experience in ECE training and education, and knowledge of the child care system and organizations providing support to providers and teachers in this field. To address the growing shortage of qualified early care and education professionals, First 5 LA has committed $15 million to this initiative to train, mentor, and recruit caregivers and teachers.

"At a time when the average age of preschool teachers is over 50 years old and more than half of children 5 years and under have parents who work outside the home, there is a great need to recruit and train new teachers," said First 5 LA Executive Director Evelyn V. Martinez.

First 5 LA's Workforce Development Initiative is coupled with a $600 million five-year commitment, made by the commission in 2004, to provide preschool to all 4-year olds in LA County, regardless of income, by the year 2014.

Los Angeles Universal Preschool, created to implement this goal, has already funded 210 preschools (136 centers, 74 family care homes) serving 5,029 children.

For information on how to submit an RFQ, visit www.first5la.org or click here.
Recognizing Signs of Autism in Infancy Topic of International Conference at UCLA

When a 4-month old baby can't be consoled and rarely looks at her mother when she's speaking to her, is this a sign of pre-autism?

When an 8-month-old stares at lights but doesn't smile at parents or caregivers, and repeatedly wakes and cries during the night, should his parents consult their pediatrician?

These are among the questions to be addressed at the International Conference on Signs of Autism in Infants: Recognition & Early Intervention, May 20-22 at UCLA's Covel Commons in Westwood.

Hosted by a First 5 LA strategic partner, Child Development Media, Inc. (CDM) and the School of Infant Mental Health, London, the conference is the first of its kind in the nation to bring together international experts on autism in infancy.

"Since we know that the earlier the diagnosis and intervention, the better the outcome for the child, the goal of the conference is to create awareness and help develop a model for risk indicators in the first year of life," said Margie Wagner, president of CDM.

Among the presenters scheduled are Stella Acquarone, PhD., founder and director of the Parent Infant Clinic and School of Infant Mental Health, London; Hanna Alonim, founder and director of the Mifne Center for Early Intervention in Autism in Israel; Laurent Danon-Boileau, professor of General Linguistics and Language Acquisition, Alfred Binet Centre, Sorbonne, Paris; and Barbara Kalmanson, PhD, clinical director and co-founded of the Oak Hill School in Marin.

For information on early detection of autism, visit www.zerotothree.org or www.icdl.com. For early bird conference registration by May 6, visit www.earlysignsofautism.com or call (562) 692-0383.
EVIE’S DESK

Nearly a Quarter of a Million LA County Children Are Uninsured

This week, hundreds of communities across the US will mark Cover the Uninsured Week by mobilizing to advocate for legislative solutions to help the 46 million Americans, including 8 million children, who live without health insurance.

In LA County, we are even worse off than most major American cities. Recent surveys indicate that while one in four people under 65 years old in LA County are uninsured, the number in the most underserved communities, such as South LA, ELA, Cudahy, and Maywood, is closer to one in two.

Nearly a quarter million of LA County’s children 0-18 do not have any health coverage - and this means they are not receiving the immunizations they need to be protected, nor are they receiving the health screenings or health care they need to develop appropriately and be prepared to learn.

We’re proud that First 5 LA’s Healthy Kids insurance program currently serves about 8,000 children 5 years and under who are not otherwise eligible for state-sponsored coverage. But our Healthy Kids program can only address the needs of younger children in LA County.

That’s why we have joined partner organizations, such as the Children’s Health Initiative of Greater Los Angeles, in efforts to bring stakeholders together to develop creative solutions to address the issues of rising uninsured and ballooning costs.

We look forward to working with even more of you in the coming months to address these critical issues.

Evelyn V. Martinez
Executive Director
First 5 LA

Recently, Antonia got some great ideas at the Art2Go program of the Children’s Museum of Los Angeles. Co-sponsored by LA Unified School District’s Broadous Ready for School Resource Center, a First 5 LA grantee, the program, which started in 2004, has introduced nearly 400 parents and preschoolers from the community to the joys of art through family participation.

In two 90-minute sessions, the program sets out to help parents understand how art activities can open doors to literacy, numeracy, and other early learning skills that lead to school readiness.

"I had no idea how much fun we could have with household items such as paper bags, old greeting cards, marbles, paint, and paper," said Hurtado. "Now I don't throw anything away --instead, I try to think of how I can make them into a puppet, toy, or other project," said Hurtado.

According to Barbara Baldwin, site director, Art2Go emphasizes parent/child interaction in activities that make learning fun.

"By integrating arts into play and activities that develop creative thinking, communications, pre-literacy, cultural literacy, and self esteem, parents are able to truly become their children’s first teachers."

The resource center also offers a variety of caregiver education resources and bilingual parenting classes. For information, contact Baldwin at (818) 896-3234 or bossoff@aol.com.

CHAMPION PROFILE

Children’s Planning Council’s Yolie Flores Aguilar Seeks to Strengthen Communities

Yolie Flores Aguilar is executive director of the LA County Children’s Planning Council, the nation’s largest partnership network dedicated to improving outcomes for children.

Created by the LA County Board of Supervisors, the council seeks to strengthen communities to transform the systems that serve children and families.

Aguilar was previously a senior consultant to the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Making Connections Initiative, director of Child Care Policy and Planning for the City of LA and work/family director for the LA Department of Water and Power.

A former president of the LA County Board of Education, she has also served in numerous other appointed positions and on boards as a child/youth advocate.

She holds an MS in Social Welfare from the UCLA.
What book has influenced your life the most?
The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle.

Which historical figure do you admire most?
Cesar Chavez, for showing me what servant leadership looks like and for modeling what it means to be true to your convictions.

What is your favorite way to spend time with an important child in your life?
Talking to them as if they were the most important person in the world.

What is the greatest challenge that children and families of LA County face today?
Emotional disconnection from each other.

Which living person do you most admire and why?
My dad, who taught me how to love myself so that I could love others.

What is your motto?
"Be good to kids."