New Law Mandates Oral Health Assessments for Kindergarteners

A new California law recently signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger will require all kindergarten or first grade students to present proof of having had an oral health assessment by a licensed dentist or registered dental health professional no later than May 31 of the school year.

Effective next year, the law requires public schools to notify a parent or guardian of this requirement and provide information about the importance of primary teeth and oral health to overall learning and health, a toll-free phone number to receive Healthy Families and Medi-Cal applications, and contact information for the local county public health department.

According to a Dental Health Foundation study released earlier this year, nearly 71 percent of California third-graders have suffered from tooth decay, and nearly 29 percent of children surveyed across California had untreated cavities.

Dental professionals agree that tooth decay is 100 percent preventable. Tips for dental health are featured in First 5 LA’s parent education program, continuing through November on local media outlets.

For information on how to qualify for free and low-cost health and dental insurance, including First 5 LA’s Healthy Kids program, and tips on dental care, visit www.healthykidsla.org.

New Law Increases Enrollment in Medi-Cal & Healthy Families Programs by 94,000

Another bill signed into law last week by the governor increases enrollment of children in California’s Medi-Cal and Healthy Families programs by approximately 94,000 through substantive improvements to the programs.

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**Dental Assessments Required**

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**Increasing Insurance Enrollment**

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**Working Families Uninsured**

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**Reach Out and Read**

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**Jenny Marshall Champion Profile**

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**Domestic Abuse Conference**

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**CALENDAR**

**October 3, 12 & 26, 10-11:30 a.m.: Healthy City Focus Groups** for feedback on LA County WIC data additions and navigational elements for the new website. For reservations and location information, contact Mercedes Perez at mperez@advanceproj.org or (213) 989-1300 x 33.

**October 5, 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.: A New Beginning for Partnerships for Children & Families in Los Angeles County, 11th Annual Conference** at the Los Angeles Convention Center, Petree Hall, 1201 S. Figueroa St., LA, 90015. $60. Sponsored by the LA County Superior Court and Cal State LA. Call (323) 343-4832.

**October 7, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.: The 9th Annual Parent U Conference 2006** on positive parenting at the Hyatt Valencia 24500 Town Center Dr., Santa Clarita 91355, presented by the City of Santa Clarita. $25. Visit www.santa-clarita.com/seasons or call (661) 255-4965.
SB 437 strengthens Medi-Cal and Healthy Families, boosting enrollment for more uninsured children who already qualify for these health insurance programs by simplifying the application and enrollment processes. The new law also helps children already enrolled in Medi-Cal and Healthy Families stay insured without gaps in coverage.

"Comprehensive health insurance for children is cost-effective, and it provides access to early, less-costly preventive care and treatment," said Ted Lempert, president, Children Now, one of the bill's proponents. "Children with health insurance also perform better in school."

Through its county-wide outreach program, First 5 LA has facilitated applications of nearly 24,000 children 0-5 years old for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families, as well as another 7,500 for Healthy Kids insurance, which covers children 0-5 not eligible for other programs.

### Report Shows Majority of Uninsured Kids Live in Two-Parent Working Families

A majority of the more than nine million children without health insurance in the United States live in two-parent families in which both parents work, according to a report released last week by the national consumer organization, Families USA, on behalf of the Campaign for Children's Health Care, a coalition of more than 50 national organizations that is raising public awareness about the plight of uninsured children.

According to "No Shelter from the Storm," 88 percent of uninsured children come from families where at least one parent works. Children who are uninsured are far less likely to receive needed health care than insured children.

There are huge differences from state to state in the percentage of children who are uninsured. The states with the highest rates of uninsured children (from 16-20 percent) are Texas, Florida, New Mexico, Nevada, Montana, Arizona, and Oklahoma.

In California, almost 1.4 million or one in seven children are uninsured, and 90 percent of them come from working families. Among California children under 6 years old, 11 percent do not have health insurance.

Los Angeles County is one of 22 counties in California where Healthy Kids insurance is offered by local First 5 Commissions to children not eligible for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families insurance.

To fill the insurance gap for working families, First 5 LA committed $100 million over five years to fund the Healthy Kids initiative. Eligibility goes up to 300 percent of federal poverty guidelines, so a family of four can qualify with annual income up to $60,000. For information about Healthy Kids, visit www.healthykidsla.org.

For information about the health insurance report, click here.
November 15, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.: Proactive Breastfeeding Support and Management presented by the Breastfeeding Taskforce of Greater Los Angeles, St. Mary Medical Center, 1050 Linden Ave., Long Beach 90813. Call Debbie Cowley at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org.

EVIE’S DESK

Effects of Domestic Violence Evident at Conception of Baby

While we’ve known for a long time what devastating effects domestic violence can have on young children, a Harvard study now demonstrates conclusively that physical abuse by male partners compromises newborns and women’s health—beginning at conception.

The study, published in the July issue of the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, finds that physical abuse in the year prior to and during a woman’s pregnancy harms the health of women during pregnancy and the health of newborns, and increases the risk of serious health complications during pregnancy.

Abuse also increases a woman’s risk of delivering prematurely and having a baby who is born underweight and in need of intensive care. Researchers say that stress and depression resulting from abuse harms the reproductive endocrine system and leads to poor fetal development.

I hope that this study will spark further research and discussion, enabling us, as a society, to develop more effective strategies to not only address domestic violence, but to prevent it.

Each October, during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, First 5 LA is a principal sponsor of the Nexus Training Conference, which brings together 1,000 professionals from throughout the country to Los Angeles to discuss prevention and ways domestic violence affects children.

The one-day event, hosted by the Inter-agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, is set for October 26 at the Sheraton Universal Hotel in Universal City.

I hope you’ll plan to join us there by registering at www.cce.csus.edu/ican. The cost of not acting is too great on our children.

Evelyn V. Martinez
Executive Director
First 5 LA

GRANTEE PROFILE

Reach Out and Read Program Makes Doctor Visits Fun, Educational

Two-year-old Kimberlie Frias didn’t always look forward to her monthly asthma appointments at Kaiser Permanente's Baldwin Park Medical Center, but that all changed after her pediatrician started giving her picture books to take home on each visit.

The Reach Out and Read program, funded locally by First 5 LA, provides developmentally-appropriate books in Spanish and English to Kaiser Permanente pediatricians to distribute to patients between the ages of 6 months and 5 years.

Now Kimberlie and her mother both say they look forward to doctor's visits. "I hadn't been reading to my daughter because I thought she was too young for it to make a difference," said Betty Gonzalez, Kimberlie's mother.

"But now I read to her every day and she's learning to identify colors, animals, numbers, and some letters of the alphabet. Her grandmother also reads books to her in Spanish," she added.

Developed in 1989 at Boston Medical Center through a collaboration between pediatricians and early childhood educators, Reach Out and Read seeks to promote literacy as a standard part of pediatric primary care.

Studies show that parents who get books and literacy counseling from their pediatricians are more likely to read to their young children, read more often, and provide more books in the home.

For information on Reach Out and Read, visit www.reachoutandread.org or call Janet Rodriguez, program manager, at (626) 851-6943.

CHAMPION PROFILE

Jenny Marshall Trains Teachers, Social Workers & Parents on Child Development

Monday Morning Report features individuals who exemplify First 5 LA’s tagline, “Champions for Our Children.”

Jenny Marshall, who has worked with children and families for 16 years, is a special education and child development coordinator at Westside Children's Center in West Los Angeles.
As director of the First 5 LA-funded school readiness program and the First 5 California special needs demonstration site project, she oversees the delivery of kindergarten readiness services and developmental, health, and parent education, as well as social/emotional screenings.

Marshall also trains teachers, social workers, interns, parents, and foster parents on child development and special education issues. She carries a caseload of families seen onsite and in the home, and serves on the agency’s policy design leadership team.

She earned a BA from Cal Sate Northridge and an MA in early childhood special education from Columbia University in New York City.

**Which book has most influenced your life?**
*Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda.

**What makes you happy?**
My daughter’s laughter.

**What makes you angry?**
Close-minded people.

**Which historical figure do you most admire?**
Fred Rogers, a brilliant educator of parents and children, who wrote every word of every episode of “Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood” and used TV to connect people.

**What is the greatest challenge faced by children and families of LA County?**
We need to educate parents, doctors, teachers, and others about identifying and serving children with special needs at the earliest possible moment.

**Which living person do you most admire?**
Melinda Gates, for the effort she and her husband, Bill Gates, are making towards ending poverty and sickness, domestically and abroad.

**What is your motto?**
“Stay in the moment.”