### **First-5**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 7, 2015

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**First 5 Sonoma County Awards $10.97 Million to Community**

*13 Community Partners Receive Critical Funds to Support Strategic Plan*

Santa Rosa, Calif. – The First 5 Sonoma County Commission announces the release of multiple contracts totaling $10.97 million to 13 different community partners. First 5 Sonoma awards this critical funding as part of the Commission’s 2010-2020 Strategic Plan prioritizing support of all children entering kindergarten ready to succeed. First 5 Sonoma specifically focused on areas of critical need in Sonoma County with an emphasis on programs aimed at ensuring early care and education is high quality, engaging with the community on the importance of supporting children ages 0 to 5 and providing a complete system of health care to help our families and their children.

“First 5 Sonoma’s commitment to improving outcomes for all children is underscored by this substantial level of funding for our community. This strategic investment will make a lasting impact on the wellbeing of the children and families we serve,” stated Alfredo Perez, Executive Director, First 5 Sonoma. These contracts will cover the next three fiscal years. Community organizations can also apply to First 5 Sonoma for certain grants as part of this disbursement; via the Mini, Matching and Flexibility Fund Grants.

Community partners in Sonoma will receive funding to address the shortage of childcare access, lack of health insurance for children, provide dental visits at County WIC offices, strengthen positive parenting skills, and improve the social and developmental skills of children ages 0 to 5. First 5 Sonoma will also be working closely with the Redwood Community Health Coalition, comprised of federally qualified health centers here in Sonoma County. The Redwood Community Health Coalition’s Healthy Kids program, funded by First 5 Sonoma, will work to help achieve increased health insurance coverage for children in Sonoma County. First 5 Sonoma funding comes from the state’s tobacco tax to provide for a healthier and safer community for children 0-5 and their caregivers.

“First 5 Sonoma continues to be a leader in our community for providing early care and education services for those families and children that need it most. With a strong network of community providers we can work together to maximize the healthy development of children and their families,” said Sonoma County Supervisor Efren Carrillo, who also serves as a First 5 Commissioner.

The Early Learning Institute (ELI) and Community Child Care Council (4Cs) are two examples of programs receiving funding from First 5 Sonoma. The other community partners obtaining this funding include: Triple P America, Redwood Community Health Coalition, AVANCE National, Community Action Partnership, Sonoma County Office of Education, Nurse-Family Partnership, Sonoma Valley Education Foundation, Petaluma Adult School, Center for Well-Being, and Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce.

“We are thankful to the First 5 Sonoma Commission for having renewed their commitment to the work we do here at the Early Learning Institute,” said ELI Executive Director Michele Rogers. “Because of the Commission’s investment, ELI has become the most widely known ‘first responder’ agency in the region when it comes to helping families seeking assistance in the development of their children. First 5's partnership with us will ensure that every child we assist has the opportunity to achieve a successful tomorrow.”

ELI will receive two contracts, totaling $1.5 million, to support the highly successful Watch Me Grow program and ELI’s Consultation Project. Watch Me Grow includes screenings, social play-groups and home visiting services to support the healthy development of children with mild to moderate delays, significant risk factors, and/or social-emotional concerns. The prompt identification of any delays in a child’s life can have lasting impacts on their health with early treatment and support. The Consultation Project provides on-site consulting services to child care centers and family care homes serving children from birth through age 5. Consulting clinicians and specialists help providers deal successfully with the challenging behavioral, temperamental, and mental health issues of children for which they care.

Community Child Care Council (4Cs) was also awarded two contracts with First 5 Sonoma, totaling $1.58 million to provide preschool scholarships and quality improvement initiatives. First 5 Sonoma is supporting the Value in Preschool (VIP) program with $1.2 million available in preschool scholarships. One of the main objectives of the VIP program is to give low-income children the opportunity to attend a high quality preschool. Also, the VIP program provides coaching for child care providers to improve their programs including enhancing their parent engagement strategies or creating a more enriching environment. VIP is a Tier 3 (Innovative Practices) Program on the Upstream Investments Portfolio.

“Over the past three years 4Cs has administered the VIP Scholarship program funded by First 5 Sonoma. Through the VIP program 4Cs has had the opportunity to provide 138 preschool scholarships for children who would not otherwise have had the opportunity. Studies show that the return on investment for providing a preschool early learning experience is a $7 return for every $1 invested, translating to a return on investment for the VIP program of approximately $6.8 million dollars in our first three years,” said Melanie Dodson, Executive Director, 4Cs.

The nine-member First 5 Sonoma County Commission was established through the California Children and Families First Act of 1998 and directed to promote, support, and improve the early development of children from the prenatal stage through five years of age. The Act established a tobacco tax which funds the work of this Commission.

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