



P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 22, 2010

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FIRST 5 SHASTA FUNDS EARLY ORAL HEALTH PROJECTS

Hill Country Community Clinic and Shasta County Public Health Provide Services to Children Age 0-to-5

REDDING----- Local surveying of kindergarten teachers has indicated that up to 14% of children arrive in Shasta County kindergarten classrooms with noticeable tooth decay. Learning, as well as the development of social and emotional skills, can be impeded when a child is experiencing the physical discomfort of oral health problems. As part of First 5 Shasta's commitment to young children being healthy and eager to learn, funding has been awarded to two early oral health projects that will support services to young children through June 2013. Between the two projects, First 5 Shasta is investing nearly \$230,000 in prevention and early intervention oral health services for children up to age five.

Since 2005, First 5 Shasta has supported Hill Country Community Clinic in extending preventive oral health services to young children. As of July 1, 2010, a new award of \$75,198 has been provided to Hill Country Community Clinic in support of its *Comprehensive Oral Health Care Program* serving young children and parents in the Intermountain area. For the next three years, registered dental hygienists will conduct oral health screenings and fluoride varnish applications for children at eight early education centers and WIC (*Women, Infants, and Children*) nutrition program sites in Burney and Fall River Mills. The program also will include efforts to educate young children, pregnant women, and early childhood education providers about the benefit of adopting good oral health practices that help prevent dental disease.

“We’ve seen a shift in oral health practices in families as services have increased with the support of First 5 Shasta,” said Richard Hardie, Deputy Director and Chief Financial Officer at Hill Country. “When Hill

Country began providing dental services seventeen years ago, we were overwhelmed with patients who had never had any dental care and were suffering painful results. Improved access to dental care, dental screenings for young children, and oral health education will continue to make a huge difference in the Intermountain community.”

Shasta County Public Health’s *Healthy Smiles Oral Health Program* has been awarded \$154,654 to provide early oral health services and education in Shasta County (excluding the Intermountain area). The program intends to reach about 350 young children a year by conducting oral health screenings and fluoride varnish applications at early care sites. Oral health education and information will be provided at early care sites to providers and families with children ages 0-to-5. Additionally, “Lunch and Learn” oral health promotion trainings will be offered to *Child Health and Disability Prevention* medical providers.

According to Megan Johnson, Community Education Specialist at Shasta County Public Health, “Dental caries persist as the number one preventable childhood disease. Providing screenings and fluoride varnish applications in the preschool setting will increase childrens’ access to preventive oral health services. Making oral health prevention fun is an important part of the Healthy Smiles program as children are receptive to learning brushing and flossing skills that they can take home.”

The funding awarded to Hill Country Community Clinic and Shasta County Public Health demonstrates a continuing investment in early oral health for First 5 Shasta. To date, First 5 Shasta’s investment in early childhood, including early oral health, has increased to \$14.5 million. To learn more about First 5 Shasta’s investment priorities, the *Strategic Plan 2010-2019* is available at www.first5shasta.org.

First 5 Shasta, the Shasta Children and Families First Commission, was established after voters passed Proposition 10 in November 1998, adding a 50 cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund education, health, child care and other programs promoting early childhood development for expectant parents and children up to age five. To date, First 5 Shasta has invested over \$14 million in local projects and programs that benefit young children and families.