

January 2003

Children's Summit

Continuing to Turn the Curve



ABOUT THIS REPORT

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The Sponsors

The Sacramento County Children's Coalition is an advisory body to the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors. The mission of the Sacramento County Children's Coalition is to assess community needs, evaluate existing services and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors and other policy-making bodies to promote the health and well being of children and families in Sacramento County. The Children's Coalition is an advocate for children's issues and provides policy oversight and community education about the needs of children and families.

First 5 Sacramento (formerly the Sacramento County Children and Families Commission) administers Sacramento County's share of Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues, which are used to promote the healthy development of children prenatal to age five, the empowerment of families and the strengthening of communities. First 5 Sacramento's vision is to have strong and inclusive communities, safe and healthy families, and valued children who can realize their potential and enjoy productive and fulfilling lives.

The Child and Family Policy Board includes leaders of major service agencies in Sacramento County who work together to improve service delivery through inter-agency collaboration, policy consistency and expanding implementation of successful service approaches. The vision of the Child and Family Policy Board is to create a responsive, comprehensive and collaborative continuum of services that resolves the underlying problems of Sacramento children and their families.



Rio Linda Union School District





Introduction

Improving the quality of children's lives is a goal that begins with the collective commitment of a broad cross-section of stakeholders who are clear on the results they want for children. This commitment is driven by passion around specific issues, and is guided by agreement on how to measure whether we are achieving the desired results. This requires taking a disciplined look at the data and the story behind the data, as well as assessing research on what works. This leads to the development of strategies that can, with persistence, lead to action and better results for children. It is important that action be both purposeful and measurable so that, in the end, the community can assess if our efforts made a real difference in the lives of our children.

That concept, voiced by the introductory speakers at the second biennial Children's Summit, is the driving force behind the Sacramento County Children's Report Card. Issued every two years, the Children's Report Card delivers a snapshot of how children in the county are faring as demonstrated by 45 indicators of the health and well being of children. The corresponding Children's Summit is designed to bring together child service providers and advocates to brainstorm strategies that can "turn the curve" on indicators in the right direction.

The Children's Summit, convened in January 2003, attracted 222 people from more than 70 organizations, departments and agencies. This report reflects their work as they addressed 10 critical indicators chosen at the initial Children's Summit for special focus and collaboration.

The Children's Summit began with remarks from the three sponsoring organizations that demonstrated the existing high level of engagement in children's issues throughout Sacramento County. Speakers included:

- ◆ Sacramento County Supervisor Roger Dickinson in his role as chairman of First 5 Sacramento (formerly the Sacramento County Children and Families Commission). First 5 Sacramento administers the local component of the tobacco-tax funding that is earmarked for child development. Dickinson reminded the audience that research indicates 70 percent of brain development occurs during the first three years of life, making it critical that society be committed to activities that increase the social, cognitive and physical development of its youngest members. Children who receive positive nurturing are better off socially, economically and educationally. Dickinson said First 5 is undertaking a major initiative to invest \$400 million over the next four years in an unprecedented school readiness program. In addition, the local commission has already supported a variety of programs that focus on several indicators in the Children's Report Card.

"We know that investing in the early years is the key to children's success, both early in life and in their future," Dickinson said. "First 5 Sacramento is committed to working with all of the advocates and service providers to make our vision become our common reality."



Sacramento County Children's Summit



- ◆ Penelope Clark, Administrator of the Sacramento County Public Protection Agency, in her role as chairwoman of the Sacramento County Child and Family Policy Board. The Board is a cross-jurisdictional entity that brings together service providers to collaborate and establish consensus around children's issues. Clark said the three areas of priority for the board are alcohol and drug abuse, mental health and domestic violence. The Board's approach is centered on seven principles: 1) Youths should have relationships with caring and supportive adults; 2) they should have the opportunity to develop their skills; 3) they should be active and meaningful participants in their communities; 4) they should have physically safe places; 5) youths and their families should be acknowledged for their strength and contributions; 6) youths and their families should be viewed as partners in change; and 7) research should influence practice, policy and procedures. The Board's current focus is a gap analysis that will bring closer alignment between services and programs.

"The Children and Family Policy Board is trying to bring very large government entities together so they are pulling in the same direction and so there is a responsive, comprehensive and collaborative continuum of care," Ms. Clark said. "We need to pull together, we need to do it once, and we need to do it right."

- ◆ Marge Tomczak, chairwoman of the Children's Coalition. The importance of children's issues in Sacramento County has a long history. The Children's Coalition was established in 1994, taking the place of the Children's Commission set up in 1976. Ms. Tomczak said one of the early successes was using the state-created Children's Trust Fund to direct small amounts of financial resources to agencies that could make a difference without getting bogged down in red tape. Early recipients included programs like Mustard Seed (school for homeless children), the Child Abuse Prevention Council and CASA. The Children's Coalition issued its first Children's Report Card in September 2000.

"The Children's Coalition is committed to enriching the lives of children in our community by keeping them safe, healthy, nurtured, educated and happy," Ms. Tomczak said. "Our experiences shape the way we approach this task, and our challenge is to keep to the vision of what we are trying to accomplish."

The opening remarks were followed by a joint presentation by Ann Collentine, Sacramento City Unified School District Healthy Start, and Stephanie Biegler, Child Abuse Prevention Council. The two provided an overview of statistics from the 2002 Children's Report Card, as well as a summary of the current status of 10 indicators chosen at the 2000 Children's Summit.

Under the guidance of facilitators, Children's Summit attendees self-selected to participate in any of the groups discussing one of the 10 indicators. The following pages record the results of their collaboration to identify strategies for moving each of the selected indicators in a positive direction.



Rio Linda Union School District





Family Economics

Availability of Childcare

Result Increase number of childcare slots

At the table First 5 Sacramento, Child Action, San Juan Unified School District, Children's Receiving Home of Sacramento, Sacramento City Unified School District, Birth and Beyond, WEAVE, Beanstalk, SETA Head Start/Early Head Start, Yolo County Children's Alliance

Top strategies

Promote awareness that there is Child Care Development Planning Council

Link childcare planning to other county planning efforts (housing, transit, schools)

Continue to promote facility financing, specifically targeting redevelopment funds

Increase capacity to serve culturally, linguistically diverse populations, and special-needs children

Create an advocacy campaign so parents have a voice in county, state and federal discussions about budget cuts

Champion Sacramento Local Child Care Planning and Development Council

Availability and Access to Non-School Hour Programs

Result Ensure children/youth are in a safe, supervised environment before and after school

At the table Sacramento City Unified School District, Bret Harte Elementary School, SCUSD Healthy Start, Fairytale Town, San Juan Unified School District, Youth Services Provider Network, Summerbridge Sacramento, Sacramento County Office of Education, USAA Mentoring, Community Services Planning Council, Beanstalk, Ark Way Learning Center, Trinity Cathedral Church, Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento AFLP/Cal Learn, Sacramento Children's Receiving Home, Sacramento START

Top strategies

Establish a coordinating council for the many, fragmented programs and groups

Create a web site that connects to all out-of-school programs and update it periodically

Engage in an awareness campaign to raise the visibility of the available programs

Create a single information center that covers all programs

Champion Youth Services Provider Network



Sacramento County Children's Summit



Education

School Readiness

Result	By 2005, two-thirds of children entering kindergarten will have basic readiness skills
At the table	Cordova Community Collaborative, Folsom Cordova Schools Foundation, Partnership for Readiness Collaboration, Sacramento Unified School District, Rio Linda Union School District, Sacramento County Office of Education, SETA Head Start, Ethel Phillips Elementary School (SCUSD), Sacramento EN-RICHES, Partners for Readiness, River Oak Center for Children, Ethel I. Baker Elementary School (SCUSD), Oak Park Neighborhood Multiservice Center, Beanstalk Preschool, First 5 Sacramento, Child Abuse Prevention Council, Sacramento County Department of Mental Health, Birth and Beyond, Kidopolis, Elk Grove Unified School District, Child Action, Children's Coalition
Strategies	<hr/> Centralize all advocates working on this issue in a single group <hr/> Make all schools aware of available programs <hr/> Increase accessibility to Birth and Beyond so that everyone in the county is covered <hr/> Create programs that make schools more open and accessible to families before children are enrolled <hr/> Develop a packet of how-to materials that help pre-school parents navigate the school system <hr/> Encourage schools to host transition programs and activities <hr/> Reach out to childcare providers to inform them about training and information <hr/> Print all materials in as many languages as possible <hr/>
Champion	Sacramento County Office of Education, Countywide Approach to School Readiness Planning Committee

Pupil Support Services

Result	Improve the emotional well being of children in schools
At the table	Healthy Start, Sacramento CORAL, Sacramento City Unified School District, City of Sacramento, Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services and Child Protective Services, AmeriCorps, CHES Foster Youth Services, CM Goethe Middle School (SCUSD), Adult Education, Sacramento County Office of Education, North Sacramento School District, Sacramento Emergency Housing, Head Start, River Delta School District, Peter Burnett Elementary School (SCUSD), Sacramento County Division of Mental Health
Strategies	<hr/> Collaborate with outside services to provide extended services <hr/> Ensure students have access to free counseling support <hr/> Recruit volunteer organizations (Habitat for Humanity, AmeriCorps, etc.) <hr/> Create communications resources (web site, newsletter, etc.) <hr/> Establish networking meetings that will allow sharing of best practices <hr/> Educate parents about the systems of care that provide services <hr/> Establish a countywide model of training for school personnel <hr/> Support home-based teacher visitation countywide <hr/> Designate liaisons at each school and at each county service organization to focus on student needs <hr/>
Champion	To be determined





Health

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Result	Reduce the rates of sexually transmitted diseases
At the table	Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, Sutter Teen Education, Center for Fathers and Families, Elk Grove Unified School District, Healthy Start, Sacramento City Unified School District, Planned Parenthood
Strategies	<p>Increase comprehensive outreach and education, broadening the reach of message by adding communication channels (web sites, etc.)</p> <hr/> <p>Carry out advocacy at all levels – local and state government, school districts, neighborhood associates, churches, etc.</p> <hr/> <p>Improve collaboration among service providers</p> <hr/> <p>Identify new funding sources and collaborate, rather than compete, on seeking grants</p> <hr/> <p>Increase awareness of existing providers and programs</p> <hr/>
Champion	To be determined

Access to Health Care

Result	Increase the percent of families accessing quality health and dental care
At the table	Sacramento City Unified School District, City of Sacramento Mayor's Committee on Children's Health, Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance, Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, Shots for Tots, Golden Empire Elementary School (SCUSD), First 5 Sacramento, Healthy Start, Tahoe/Colonial Collaborative, Sacramento Public Health Advisory Board
Strategies	<p>Develop and maximize funding streams</p> <hr/> <p>Collaborate among all stakeholders to continuously work on the issue</p> <hr/> <p>Focus on education, outreach and marketing</p> <hr/> <p>Disseminate information widely in a variety of languages</p> <hr/> <p>Build toward a system of one-stop service</p> <hr/> <p>Offer pre- and post-natal health care enrollment at all hospitals</p> <hr/>
Champion	Amerish Bera, MD





Safety

Child Deaths

Result	Reduce number of child deaths
At the table	UC Davis Medical Center, Child Abuse Prevention Council, Sacramento County Alcohol and Drug Service Division, Birth and Beyond, SCUSD CHESS Foster Care Services, WEAVE, Goethe Middle School (SCUSD), Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, Sacramento County Sheriff's Department, Sacramento City Unified School District
Strategies	<hr/> Improve access to and coordination of services <hr/> Engage in outreach so that everyone is aware of available information and programs <hr/> Train everyone in the community about child safety <hr/> Encourage all child service providers to incorporate child safety in everything they do <hr/> Lobby educators at all levels to focus on family-centered safety <hr/> Create a county resource packet on child death prevention <hr/>
Champion	WEAVE and Child Abuse Prevention Council

Homeless Children

Result	Increase the number of emergency and transitional shelter beds. Decrease the number of children who need shelter.
At the table	Birth and Beyond, Mustard Seed School, California State University Sacramento, Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance, Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Fathers and Families, SCUSD CHESS Foster Youth Services, Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, Goethe Middle School (SCUSD), Healthy Start, Sacramento City Unified School District
Strategies	<hr/> Bring all of the issues together in a Homeless Children's Coalition <hr/> Encourage involvement of more community-based organizations, especially churches <hr/> Increase awareness by involving media <hr/> Establish and update a list of homeless service providers <hr/> Advocate for funding and flexibility with funding to meet needs <hr/>
Champion	To be determined





Social and Emotional Well-Being

Out-of-Home Placement

Result Improve self-esteem and self-sufficiency of children by providing consistent, quality care in a nurturing environment

At the table Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, Sacramento City Unified School District, CHES Foster Youth Services, Children's Coalition, Sacramento Children's Receiving Home, River Oak Center for Children, Sacramento County Office of Education, EMQ Children and Family Services, Sacramento Child Advocates, Office of Assemblyman Darrell Steinberg, Child Abuse Prevention Council, GLSEN/Safe Schools, Stanford Home for Children, Healthy Start

- Strategies**
- Advocate for more funding and educate the public about children's needs
 - Establish systems for better information sharing and eliminate barriers in privacy laws
 - Create a health/information passport that travels with child
 - Address foster placement drift, including improving time frames
 - Develop more foster placement resources
 - Intervene earlier with high-risk families
 - Provide emancipation counsel
 - Increase collaboration with other service providers
 - Reduce stigma around group homes
 - Continue to restructure services so they come to the children rather than the child coming to them
 - Require two-year commitment for mentoring to promote stability

Champion To be determined

Youth Substance Abuse

Result Decrease substance abuse by youths

At the table Sacramento County Youth Commission, Sacramento County Alcohol and Drug Services Division, Project Help, City of Sacramento Parks and Recreation, San Juan Unified School District, Sacramento County Juvenile Court (Presiding Judge), Sacramento Children's Receiving Home, SCUSD CHES Foster Youth Services, Healthy Start, Sacramento Unified School District, Planned Parenthood

- Strategies**
- Increase partnerships to leverage available resources
 - Create mechanisms for sharing information among providers, parents, youth and schools
 - Look to Placer County's model for more flexibility in state funding
 - Address truancy issues to keep children in school
 - Increase training opportunities for school staff
 - Encourage courts to mandate parenting training when children are convicted of abuse
 - Disseminate information widely through media and outreach

Champion Project Help





Conclusion

As it has in the past, the Children's Summit brought together a variety of stakeholders who care deeply about the status of Sacramento County's youngest residents. The goals of the conference were threefold:

- ◆ Build relationships for collaboration and commitments for follow-up action.
- ◆ Increase awareness of the Children's Report Card and information on the current state of children in Sacramento County.
- ◆ Develop strategies for improving outcomes of children's health and well being.



Rio Linda Union School District

The success of the event was indicated not so much in specific achievements as in the promise of more collaboration and renewed energy around solving problems that often seem intractable, especially in an era of decimated budgets and draconian spending cuts. The Children's Summit was rich in outcomes – connections between people and organizations were initiated or enhanced, new ideas were stimulated and old ones were rehashed.

An observer of the daylong interaction could have concluded that the Summit uncovered at least one key indicator that isn't tracked by the Children's Report Card – noise level. In a room filled with representatives from dozens of organizations, the discussions were non-stop and lively as people shared their experiences, their frustrations and their progress in 10 areas that have a direct impact on children. The increasing noise level appeared to track the passion and commitment of people to improving the lives of children.

As Sacramento County enters an era of uncertainty about resources, the Children's Summit was a refreshing reminder that the people involved in these issues can continue to make a difference by working together on strategies and on eliminating barriers. Our shared goal of providing a nurturing environment for children and our common challenges make it imperative that we join hands, combine efforts and continue to look to the future. In doing so, we can anticipate seeing more positive indicators in the next Children's Report Card, due in Fall 2004.



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