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NEW STUDY SHOWS FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA'S *KIT FOR NEW PARENTS* EFFECTIVE AT BUILDING BETTER PARENTING SKILLS

Free Toolkit Helps Answer Health, Parenting Questions

(Sacramento, CA) – Mothers who used First 5 California's *Kit for New Parents* demonstrated improved parenting skills and a greater understanding of their child's needs, according to the results of a three-year study published in the latest issue of *The American Journal of Public Health*. The *Kit for New Parents* is the first-of-its-kind comprehensive parent education resource that is distributed at no cost to California parents and caregivers.

According to the study, 94 percent of mothers who used the *Kit* said it was a helpful resource for providing important health and parenting information. Eighty-seven percent of mothers reported using the *Kit* within two months after receiving it. They turned to the *Kit* for information on specific issues, including child safety practices, infant learning, breastfeeding, introducing solid foods, smoking, health care and childcare.

"A top priority for First 5 California is making sure parents have access to up-to-date parenting information," said Kris Perry, executive director of First 5 California. "The *Kit for New Parents* is a high-quality, free educational tool that parents can reference for quick and easy answers to their most common questions."

The study found that mothers who used the *Kit* were more likely than mothers who did not use it to take additional steps to childproof their homes; read to their infants; enroll their infants in consistent medical care; and practice safer bottle-feeding.

"We saw significant gains in parenting knowledge among English-speaking mothers who used the *Kit*, and that effect nearly doubled among Spanish-speaking moms," said Dr. Linda Neuhauser, a professor at the School of Public Health at University of California, Berkeley and lead author of the study.

Mothers weren't the only ones who benefited from this high-quality information. Fifty-three percent of participants indicated they shared the *Kit* with their partners.

First 5 California launched its groundbreaking parent education campaign in 2001 to provide important information on a child's health and development to parents and caregivers. Nearly 2.5 million *Kits for New Parents* have been distributed at no cost to parents and caregivers throughout California since the program's inception. The innovative program has led four other states -- Alabama, Arizona, Kentucky and Pennsylvania -- to adopt a similar approach.

First 5 California's *Kit* includes an educational DVD with parenting advice from prominent child development experts and celebrities, as well as easy-to-read books and brochures. The *Kit* is free for California parents and caregivers.

The *Kit* is currently available in English and Spanish, and will be available in Asian languages in 2008. Californians can receive a free *Kit* by calling (800) KIDS-025 (English) or 800-50-NIÑOS (Spanish).

To evaluate the *Kit for New Parents'* effectiveness, 462 mothers received the *Kit* and were interviewed prior to receiving the *Kit*, two months after receiving the *Kit* and 14 months later. Their responses were measured against 1011 mothers in a comparison group who were also interviewed at the indicated times but had not received the *Kit*. Participants were recruited from prenatal and postnatal programs in California. A full copy of the report is available at www.ajph.org/first_look.shtml.

About First 5 California

First 5 California, also known as the California Children and Families Commission, was established after voters passed Proposition 10 in November 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund education, health, childcare and other programs for expectant parents and children up to age 5. For more information please visit www.first5california.com.

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