

FIRST 5 DEL NORTE
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION



STRATEGIC PLAN
2007 - 2012

September 14, 2007

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**FIRST 5 DEL NORTE
STRATEGIC PLAN: 2007 - 2012**

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FIRST 5 Del Norte Children and Families Commission Strategic Plan: 2007 - 2012

INTRODUCTION

The California Children and Families Act (Proposition 10) was enacted in 1998, increasing taxes on tobacco products in order to provide the funds to create a comprehensive and integrated delivery system of information and services to promote early childhood development from prenatal to age 5. This movement has since become known as “FIRST 5” to emphasize the importance of the first five years of each child’s life.

FIRST 5 is based on the latest scientific information about brain development. Young children learn and grow because of the key role their parents or caregivers play in their development. Although a wide range of individuals and institutions impact the health and well being of young children, the role of parents is paramount. Parenting is much more important between the ages of birth to five than we once believed. By providing children with safe, nurturing and stimulating environments, parents and caregivers influence long-term growth and development during these important early years.

FIRST 5 Del Norte, also known as the Del Norte Children and Families Commission and referred to as “the Commission” throughout, was created in 1999. The Commission is required by state law to evaluate the current and projected needs of young children and their families, develop a strategic plan that describes how the community needs will be addressed, determine how to utilize and manage local FIRST 5 resources, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and activities funded in accordance with the strategic plan. The Commission serves many other important roles on behalf of children and families in Del Norte County such as making children’s issues more visible in the community, bringing diverse groups together to better serve children and families, being a catalyst for positive change and acting as “glue” to fill in resource gaps in order to hold important services and projects together.

Funds from Proposition 10 are distributed to local counties based on the number of babies born in the county. Del Norte County receives approximately \$400,000 a year from tobacco tax allocations and supplemental funding from FIRST 5 California. In order to guide the investment of these resources, the county must adopt a strategic plan that shows how funds will be used to promote a comprehensive and integrated system of early childhood development services. This document is a five-year strategic plan for FIRST 5 Del Norte covering the period from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2012. It

updates and replaces the previous strategic plan, which was adopted in 2003. The plan will be reviewed annually by the Commission and may be modified at any time. A public hearing will be held prior to adopting any revisions to this plan.

MISSION, VISION AND GUIDING VALUES

A mission statement describes the essence of why an organization exists – in other words, its fundamental purpose. The mission statement of FIRST 5 Del Norte is:

FIRST 5 Del Norte Mission Statement

FIRST 5 Del Norte will promote and enhance the health, development and wellness of children ages 0-5 and their families by utilizing, increasing and sustaining resources to support innovative, integrated, family-centered, culturally appropriate programs and services.

The vision statement is a statement of the ideal future that FIRST 5 Del Norte is trying to create for Del Norte County’s young children (prenatal to age 5) and their families. This strategic plan is intended to create measurable progress toward achieving the following long-range vision:

FIRST 5 Del Norte Vision Statement

All Del Norte children thrive in supportive families, neighborhoods and communities and are nurtured to realize their unique and highest potential. Our children enter school healthy, developmentally ready and eager to learn. Parents feel valued in the community, and are knowledgeable about parenting skills, child development, family support services and community involvement. Services are structured to be integrated and seamless, responsive, culturally appropriate, sustainable and stable.

The Commission has also identified several core values that help guide the decisions and actions of FIRST 5 Del Norte. These guiding values are:

- Children and their families are at the center of our programs and policy making.

- All children and families will flourish in safe, loving, and healthy environments.
- All children will grow to realize enlightenment of self, family, and community.
- Our policies, programs and services will:
 - ✓ Help children thrive, and to be ready and eager to learn
 - ✓ Be innovative
 - ✓ Be family-centered
 - ✓ Involve the whole community
 - ✓ Be culturally appropriate
 - ✓ Promote well being and realization of full potential
 - ✓ Connect children age 0-5 and their families to resources and opportunities
 - ✓ Be accountable by demonstrating tangible results
 - ✓ Address the unique needs of the rural and remote communities

All other aspects of this strategic plan are rooted in the commitment of FIRST 5 Del Norte to fulfill its mission and vision while staying true to the guiding values.

PLANNING ENVIRONMENT AND PROCESS

This strategic plan must be placed into a proper context. Since FIRST 5 Del Norte already has spent over seven years working to promote and enhance the health, development and wellness of children ages 0-5 and their families, efforts in the next five years should build upon past investments and successes while also recognizing that community needs may have changed enough to require a shift in priorities. This section of the plan summarizes the progress made over the past seven years and then describes the process that was used to define priorities for 2007-2012 and revise the strategic plan.

FIRST 5 Progress in Del Norte County

FIRST 5 has accomplished a great deal already in Del Norte County for children and families, and also for the support systems that many children and families depend on. Highlights of the achievements from the last five years include:

- The first Family Resource Center (FRC) in Del Norte County was established in Crescent City to provide a warm, accessible place where

families can enjoy many enriching activities and also connect with many support services ranging from health insurance to parent education. The value of the FRC became so evident that FIRST 5 Del Norte launched a major campaign to build a new, larger FRC that would be capable of providing more activities and services for families. The new FRC was completed in September 2007 and will be a tremendous resource for years to come.

- Numerous new parent and child enrichment programs were developed and launched, using the FRC as a central location to conduct these activities. Programs now in operation because of FIRST 5 include Happy Toes that helps children develop coordination and rhythm, Ready Set Grow! to help parents prepare their children for school, Family Fun Nights, multiple playgroups targeted to different groups of children like Totally Toddler Time for children 10-30 months old and Kids Together for children age 0-5 with special needs, Parents Together for anyone caring for a child with special needs, a weekly Storytime and more.
- The Wonder Bus, a collaborative project started with the library, brings books and early literacy services to communities throughout Del Norte County. The vehicle is also able to serve as a mobile FRC.
- FIRST 5 partnered with many other local agencies to launch the Children's Health Initiative, which ensures that every child age 2 to 18 in Del Norte County is able to receive health insurance. Moreover, for the first time ever, uninsured children in Del Norte County are efficiently linked to a primary care physician and are able to have a medical and dental home via health insurance.
- In partnership with the Open Door Health Center, free health screenings that include dental, vision and hearing exams have been provided to hundreds of children age 0 to 5 in order to detect health issues at an early stage so they can be treated. A mobile medical outreach van allowed these exams to be conducted all over the county.
- A Kit for New Parents has been made available to all expecting parents with a medical provider in Del Norte County, giving parents extensive practical information on child health and development, child safety, positive discipline and much more. The Welcome Every Baby program then provides a baby gift and additional parent resource materials to each new mother.
- The Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) program worked to improve the quality of child care throughout Del Norte County by helping preschool teachers and child care providers

obtain training on child health and safety, children with special needs, infant and toddler support, and many other topics. More than half of the child care providers in the county were served by this program.

- The FIRST 5 Service Corps brought new AmeriCorps and VISTA volunteers into Del Norte County to help prepare children to succeed in school.

This is only a partial list of accomplishments but should illustrate the substantial impact that FIRST 5 has already had.

Process for Developing the 2007-2012 Strategic Plan

The strategic plan itself is a requirement of state law under California Health and Safety Code Section 130140. More than that, however, it is a blueprint for the continued implementation of FIRST 5 in Del Norte County through a coordinated effort of service providers, funding sources and other community resources.

Because conditions have changed quite a bit since the last strategic plan was adopted in 2003, the Commission decided in April 2007 that it was time to reconsider all aspects of the plan in order to better focus FIRST 5 resources on the most important priorities – to have a larger impact on a few top priority issues rather than having a lesser impact on many areas – while also reflecting the significant progress made in recent years.

A thorough process was then conducted from April to September 2007 to revise the strategic plan. This process included the following key steps:

- The first-ever Children’s Report Card for Del Norte County was developed, bringing together the best available data on various indicators of health and well being for children age 0 to 5 and their families. The Report Card was used by the Commission as one source of information on community strengths, needs and priorities.
- Two community surveys were conducted. One survey engaged parents, foster parents, and legal guardians of children in Del Norte County; 117 survey responses were received. The second survey was issued to child care providers, preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and professional staff at agencies that work with children age 0-5 and their families; 26 responses were received. Together, these two surveys provided critical community input about the primary needs and gaps in existing services for children age 0-5 and their families.

- Two day-long planning forums, each open to the public, were conducted by the Commission in order to have in-depth discussion about the issues addressed in this strategic plan. The first planning session was held on June 8, 2007, and focused on core issues such as the mission, vision, values and roles of the Commission along with analysis of data from the first draft of the Children's Report Card. The second session, held on August 13, 2007, was used to develop the goals, objectives, strategies and indicators for this strategic plan and a companion five-year financial plan.
- A first draft of the strategic plan was developed and presented for discussion at a public meeting on September 11, 2007. Revisions to the plan were then made based on guidance from the Commission, producing a final version that was adopted in a public hearing on October 9, 2007.

The Children's Report Card and survey report are available as separate documents and can be obtained from the FIRST 5 Del Norte office. Highlights from these documents are presented in the Appendix to this plan.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

For FIRST 5 to have a lasting effect on the lives of children in Del Norte County, a concentrated effort must be made over multiple years. It is necessary to focus resources in a consistent way, and give that direction enough time to have a real impact. The emphasis of this plan is to show how FIRST 5, working together with many partners throughout the county, can make the greatest difference for young children and their families.

According to the planning guidelines created by FIRST 5 California, a **goal** is "a long run (e.g. 5-10 years) statement of desired change, based upon the vision statement." An **objective** is "a precise description of desired change that is short-range and measurable, and that supports the achievement of the goal."

Because of the need to focus in a few areas where measurable results can be achieved, four goals have been set with a total of seven objectives linked to those goals. Although FIRST 5 Del Norte is committed to impacting these issues, it must be emphasized that a community-wide effort involving many partners will be required to achieve these objectives. FIRST 5 alone does not have the resources to accomplish these goals but it can be a catalyst for positive change on behalf of children and families.



Goal One

Improved Child Health: Healthy Children.

Objective 1

Children will have improved access to and utilization of health care services.

Objective 2

Children will have improved oral health.



Goal Two

Improved Child Development: Children Learning and Ready for School.

Objective 3

Child and family literacy will be improved.

Objective 4

Children will have increased readiness to succeed in school upon entry to kindergarten.



Goal Three

Improved Family Functioning: Strong Families.

Objective 5

Substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect will be reduced.

Objective 6

Parent and caregiver knowledge, skills, and confidence will be increased.



Goal Four

Improved Systems: Integrated Services for Children and Families.

Objective 7

Families and caregivers of children will have improved access to available services.

These goals and objectives were selected as the best opportunities to use FIRST 5 resources to improve the health, development and well being of children age zero to five. The Commission recognizes that these are not the only issues facing young children, but the amount of funding available through FIRST 5 is not sufficient to pursue additional goals.

STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING RESULTS

Strategies identify the specific programs, services and projects to be pursued in order to achieve the goals and objectives. Because there are clear interrelationships between the objectives – for example, early literacy skills directly affect the readiness of children to succeed in school – FIRST 5 Del Norte emphasizes using *integrated strategies* that address multiple goals and objectives. The table below lists the strategies that have been adopted and show which objectives are targeted by each strategy.

Strategies	Objectives Addressed by the Strategy						
	1 Access & utilize health care	2 Oral health	3 Child and family literacy	4 Readiness to succeed in school	5 Child abuse and neglect	6 Parent/caregiver knowledge & skill	7 Family access to services
<p>1. Family Resource Centers. Family Resource Centers (FRCs) bring many types of activities and services together in one convenient family-friendly location. FIRST 5 will expand the ability of FRCs to support children and families in a variety of ways, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to operate the FRC in Crescent City, and transition operation of the FRC to a local nonprofit organization when the nonprofit entity is ready to assume management of the Center. b. Establish and sustain FRCs in Klamath, Smith River and Gasquet. c. Enhance the existing Wonder Bus to act as a mobile FRC to provide parents with information on topics such as early childhood oral health and family support services in addition to literacy services. 	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Objectives Addressed by the Strategy

Strategies	1 Access & utilize health care	2 Oral health	3 Child and family literacy	4 Readiness to succeed in school	5 Child abuse and neglect	6 Parent/caregiver knowledge & skill	7 Family access to services
<p>d. Maintain effective programs currently in place such as Happy Toes to help children develop physical skills, Family Fun Night, Storytime, Parent Café, playgroups and more, and expand programs to meet other targeted needs such as conducting nutrition education sessions in the FRC kitchens.</p> <p>e. Approach large apartment complexes about dedicating a room to an FRC, and assist apartment complexes willing to set up an FRC.</p> <p>f. Increase efforts to engage different cultural groups and expand use of the FRCs by all cultural groups.</p> <p>g. Expand community partnerships to use the FRCs to connect families to support for basic needs (food, housing, etc.), mental health services and other services that can help children and families.</p>							
<p>2. Kit for New Parents. The Kit for New Parents is a comprehensive resource for parents with practical information on nutrition, safety, quality child care, health, discipline, early learning and more. The Kit will continue to be distributed to all expecting parents at 28 weeks of pregnancy with a medical provider in Del Norte County. Expanded partnerships with medical providers will also be pursued to engage the providers on working with families on issues covered in the Kit.</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p>3. Welcome Every Baby. Via collaboration between FIRST 5 Del Norte and the Del Norte County Public Health Nurses, a gift packet will be presented to each new mother after giving birth at Sutter Coast Hospital that contains resource information and supplies for parents.</p>	X	X	X				X

Objectives Addressed by the Strategy

Strategies	1 Access & utilize health care	2 Oral health	3 Child and family literacy	4 Readiness to succeed in school	5 Child abuse and neglect	6 Parent/caregiver knowledge & skill	7 Family access to services
<p>4. Children’s Health Initiative. The Children’s Health Initiative (CHI) is a collaborative effort to provide health insurance for all children age 0-5. It includes enrolling families in available insurance programs like Healthy Families and Medi-Cal, providing insurance for children not eligible for other programs, and paying health insurance premiums in hardship cases. FIRST 5 Del Norte will continue to participate actively in this partnership, providing funding, coordination, outreach and other support.</p>	X	X					
<p>5. Health and development screening and assessments. Periodic medical, dental, vision, and hearing screenings of children will be conducted so that any identified problems can be addressed in a timely manner. Developmental assessments are also needed to help identify developmental delays, conditions like autism, and other special needs that can be addressed best when detected early.</p>	X	X					
<p>6. Parent co-ops. Community outreach and support will be provided to encourage development of parent co-ops for child care and children’s play centers. FIRST 5 can work with partners like the Del Norte Child Care Council in assisting co-ops with curriculum and other resources.</p>			X	X	X	X	
<p>7. Unlicensed child care provider outreach. Since many families rely on relatives and other unlicensed persons to provide child care, an effort will be made to engage the unlicensed providers that are registered with Trustline to assist them with offering positive child development environments. This can include helping the providers with curriculum, activities, access to resources at the FRCs and other forms of support.</p>			X	X		X	

Objectives Addressed by the Strategy

Strategies	1 Access & utilize health care	2 Oral health	3 Child and family literacy	4 Readiness to succeed in school	5 Child abuse and neglect	6 Parent/caregiver knowledge & skill	7 Family access to services
<p>8. Breastfeeding support group. Del Norte County has a high rate of breastfeeding among new mothers, in part because FIRST 5 and other partners have actively promoted the value of breastfeeding to the health of infants through breastfeeding support groups.</p>	X						
<p>9. Literacy programs. Several different approaches will be taken together to promote early literacy for children and support literacy for parents and caregivers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Launch the Raising a Reader program, a nationally recognized approach to foster early literacy skills critical for school success by engaging parents in a routine of daily “book cuddling” with their children from birth to age five. b. Launch the Reach Out and Read program, which promotes early literacy by giving new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud in pediatric exam rooms. c. Offer a Books for Babes program that provides books that parents can use with infants and toddlers. d. Work with the local library to increase use of the children’s reading area and use of library cards, and offer more children and family literacy activities. 			X	X			
<p>10. Kindergarten transition program. Activities for families with children entering kindergarten will be conducted to help children transition successfully into kindergarten. This will include sponsoring an expanded assessment of children entering kindergarten so that better information is available in the future about the strengths and challenges of these children.</p>				X			

Objectives Addressed by the Strategy

Strategies	1 Access & utilize health care	2 Oral health	3 Child and family literacy	4 Readiness to succeed in school	5 Child abuse and neglect	6 Parent/caregiver knowledge & skill	7 Family access to services
<p>11. Community partnerships. FIRST 5 Del Norte has always been committed to partnering with other agencies and community groups at every opportunity. In the 2007-2012 period, efforts will be made to build on existing partnerships and engage new partners. This can include an expanded relationship with the school district and new activities with the Boys & Girls Club and the Redwood Coast Regional Center.</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p>12. Public communications. Greater use of local media outlets will be pursued to increase public awareness of key messages related to the strategic objectives. This can include editorials, ads, public service announcements and other avenues that speak out on behalf of children.</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p>13. Resource directories. As a tool to help families locate and utilize available services, a directory of community resources for families will be periodically updated and made available in print form and on websites.</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Since the Crescent City Family Resource Center (FRC) has been such a major investment for the Commission, more explanation is needed about the future transition of the FRC to be managed by a local nonprofit organization (and not FIRST 5 Del Norte). A nonprofit entity has already been created to operate the FRC. The steps that have been identified in order for this entity to assume the operation of the Crescent City FRC include:

- Update the business plan for the FRC, which was developed in 2005, and begin to implement the business plan;
- Provide support for creating a strong governance and organizational structure for the nonprofit entity;
- Secure financing for the FRC beyond the existing three-year loan in order to promote sustainability of the FRC; and
- Develop and implement a specific transition plan to shift operation of the FRC from FIRST 5 Del Norte management to the nonprofit entity.

State law enacted by Proposition 10 also specifies, “no county strategic plan shall be deemed adequate or complete until and unless the plan describes how programs, services, and projects relating to early childhood development within the county will be integrated into a consumer-oriented and easily accessible system.” The strategies described above, and the ways in which those strategies are implemented, will promote a consumer-oriented and easily accessible system of early childhood services in a number of important ways.

- ❖ The Family Resource Centers offer a comprehensive way to integrate child development activities, parent/caregiver support, health care services and other community services in one location. The centers are also neighborhood-based, working to bring services to the families instead of requiring families to travel long distances to obtain services. The FRCs maintain a Parent Advisory Council in order to engage parents in the Centers and to ensure that the Centers remain responsive to the interests of families.
- ❖ The Wonder Bus is a mobile FRC capable of reaching isolated families and communities. A mobile health outreach van is also used to bring health screening and assessment services to communities throughout the county. Together, these mobile outreach vehicles are an important way of making services more accessible.
- ❖ Virtually all activities are conducted in collaboration or partnership with other agencies and community groups. This approach leads to a more extensive outreach network and coordinated outreach and materials across many agencies, increasing the probability that families get consistent information and timely services regardless of which agencies they interact with.
- ❖ Multiple points of entry are offered for many services, making it easier for families to access services. For example, linkage to health insurance programs can occur through the County Public Health Department, the FRCs, the Open Door Community Clinic and other outlets.
- ❖ Services funded through FIRST 5 Del Norte are non-discriminatory. Any family can access these services regardless of income or any other factor, unlike many public services that are income-based.
- ❖ Multiple approaches are used to make families awareness of available programs and services including a public events calendar, the FIRST 5 Del Norte website, newspaper articles, ads, and distribution of the resource directory.

EVALUATION OF RESULTS

In the context of this strategic plan, **evaluation** refers to the process and methods by which the Commission and community stakeholders can assess the degree of progress made toward achieving the goals and objectives described in this plan as well as assess the effectiveness of funding allocation decisions. In a rural county with limited resources, it is critical for evaluation efforts to utilize existing sources of data wherever possible because neither the money nor manpower exists to conduct extensive new data collection efforts, especially for data that must be captured annually to assess progress over time.

Measurable indicators have been selected for each of the seven strategic objectives. These indicators will be used to assess the extent to which progress has been made with each objective. The indicators are presented in the following table.

Objective	Indicators
1. Children will have improved access to and utilization of health care services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of children age 0 to 5 with health insurance coverage, with a goal of 100% of children having coverage • Percentage of children that have received all standard immunizations by 24 months of age and by entry into kindergarten • Percentage of children that have had a well child exam within the past 12 months
2. Children will have improved oral health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of children entering kindergarten with untreated dental caries • Percentage of children with untreated dental caries that are identified through health screenings of children 0-5 conducted by local agencies like Open Door and Head Start
3. Child and family literacy will be improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of children with age-appropriate literacy skills upon entry to kindergarten according to Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessments • Percentage of children scoring at or above Basic level for English-Language Arts on the California Standards Test at the first grade level in which children are tested (third grade for the 2007-08 school year)

Objective	Indicators
4. Children will have increased readiness to succeed in school upon entry to kindergarten.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of children age 3 to 5 (a) with a library card, and (b) using the library card • Percentage of age-eligible children enrolled in kindergarten • Percentage of children at age-appropriate developmental level for all developmental milestones upon entry to kindergarten according to Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessments
5. Substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect will be reduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of substantiated cases of abuse and neglect involving children age 0 to 5 • Number of substantiated cases of abuse and neglect resulting in out-of-home placement
6. Parent and caregiver knowledge, skills, and confidence will be increased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in parent/child relationships and other factors measured by the Family Development Matrix used in the FRCs • Survey of parents and caregivers • Number of parents and caregivers participating in FIRST 5 funded or sponsored events
7. Families and caregivers of children will have improved access to available services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of parents and caregivers • Number of parents and caregivers accessing family support services, with tracking of how parents/caregivers learned about the services

Some of these indicators are contained in the first Del Norte County Children’s Report Card, which provides baseline data against which changes over future years can be compared. The Commission plans to update the Children’s Report Card annually and may add more indicators to the Report Card as reliable data becomes available for additional indicators.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

This section describes the overall approach that will be used to manage FIRST 5 resources available in Del Norte County.

Allocation Guidelines

The Commission is committed to ensuring that the greatest possible benefit is realized for young children and their families through the use of FIRST 5 resources. In order to meet this overall goal, the following guidelines have been established related to the allocation of FIRST 5 funding.

1. Funds will only be allocated to activities that are in direct furtherance of the elements of this strategic plan or that are necessary for the operation of the Commission, consistent with the purposes expressed in the California Children and Families Act.
2. In compliance with California Revenue and Taxation Code section 30131.4, Trust Fund monies will be used only to supplement existing levels of service and/or create new services, and not to fund existing levels of service. No monies from the Children and Families Trust Fund will be used to supplant state or local General Fund money for any purpose.
3. All recipients of funding must show a commitment to accountability and be willing to work with the Commission to implement evaluation models to objectively demonstrate the cost-effectiveness and overall efficacy of their services.

Financial Planning and Management

As required under current state law, the Commission has adopted a long-range financial plan together with this strategic plan. The financial plan defines the objectives, policies and strategies for obtaining, managing and sustaining the financial resources necessary to implement the strategic plan. It also contains a five-year forecast of revenues and expenses covering the same 2007-2012 time period as the strategic plan. Each year when the strategic plan is reviewed, the financial plan will also be reviewed to ensure that it remains consistent with the strategic plan and is a meaningful blueprint for proactive management of financial resources. The financial plan is available from the FIRST 5 Del Norte; it is kept as a separate document since the financial plan may need to be revised more frequently than the strategic plan.

The long-range financial plan will serve as the initial guide for developing a detailed annual budget. Each budget covers one fiscal year, which runs from July 1 to the following June 30. The annual budget, which is adopted by the Commission in a public meeting, then becomes the primary tool for managing revenues and expenditures throughout each fiscal year.

CONCLUSION

FIRST 5 Del Norte's strategic plan supports a vision of a county with family services that are integrated, accessible, results-oriented, and focused on ensuring children reach school age healthy and developmentally ready and eager to learn. The Commission's role is not only to help to fund programs and services for children and families, but also as to provide leadership in developing partnerships and securing new resources to sustain and further develop vital family support services. This plan envisions the Commission accomplishing its mission through providing leadership and resources for long term projects, like the Family Resource Centers and Children's Health Initiative, as well as providing targeted support for other projects that address the most important issues facing Del Norte County's young children. By working together with many other community partners, FIRST 5 Del Norte can make a measurable difference in promoting and enhancing the health, development and wellness of children ages 0-5 and their families.

APPENDIX: COMMUNITY PROFILE AND INPUT

This appendix contains more detailed information about Del Norte County, along with highlights from analysis of public data and community surveys that served as the basis for setting the priorities contained in this plan.

Overview of Del Norte County

Del Norte County is the northernmost county in California, located in the corner of the state bordering Oregon and the Pacific Coast. The County is remote and geographically isolated, covering approximately 1,070 square miles. Del Norte is in the coastal redwood area of California, with much of the land and property tax base restricted due to tribal government, federal and state government, and private company ownership. Major road systems through the county are US Highway 101 and Highway 199, connecting the county with major urban areas in Oregon, the Bay Area and the Central Valley.

The population of Del Norte County in 2007 is approximately 28,800, with most residents living in the county seat of Crescent City and its surrounding area. The population is growing slowly and is projected to climb to over 29,100 by 2010 and over 30,750 people by 2020.

In 2007, there were an estimated 1,700 children 0-5 years of age in Del Norte County that can benefit directly from the activities described in this plan. Approximately 60% of these children are Caucasian, 20% are Hispanic, 12% are Native American, 3% are Asian and 5% are multi-race or other.

Birth rates were stable from 2001 through 2004 with between 275 and 299 births annually during this period. However, birth rates have climbed recently with 327 births in 2005 and 369 births in 2006 to mothers residing in Del Norte County.

There are four main population areas in the county:

Crescent City, the county seat is the only incorporated city. Crescent City is the port community for the county and the major population center. A branch campus of College of the Redwoods is located in Crescent City.

Klamath, lying to the south of Crescent City on the Klamath River, has withstood two devastating floods over the past forty years. The community has been actively recovering with the assistance of the Yurok Tribe and other community members.

Smith River, located north of Crescent City, is known for its superb farming and dairy land.

Gasquet is east of Crescent City, inland along the banks of the pristine Smith River. Gasquet was once a stage stop for travelers going to Grants Pass and Medford, Oregon.

Many families in Del Norte County face significant economic challenges. Del Norte County had the second-lowest per capita personal income of any county in California in 2004 and 2005, and the lowest per capita income in the state from 2001 through 2003. One-fourth of all children under age 18 within the county were living in poverty in 2004. Low incomes and relatively high unemployment rates make it extremely difficult for many families to maintain adequate housing and nutrition, obtain health care and child care services, and meet the other family needs. As one example, data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that, because the 2006 median household income for renters in Del Norte County was a relatively low \$22,090, half of all renter households in Del Norte County can only afford housing with zero or one bedrooms without incurring economic hardship.

2007 Children's Report Card Highlights

The Del Norte County Children's Report Card presents the most current, publicly available and defensible data on key indicators of health, development and well being affecting the children of Del Norte County and their families. The development of the Report Card was sponsored by FIRST 5 Del Norte and thus emphasizes data for children age 0 to 5 and their families since that is the group that FIRST 5 is limiting to serving according to state law.

Following is a summary of selected information from the 2007 Report Card. The purpose of presenting this information is to show the underlying evidence that the Commission considered in setting the goals and objectives contained in the strategic plan. Readers of this plan are encouraged to obtain and review the complete Children's Report Card to get a better understanding of important strengths and challenges that are experienced by children in Del Norte County.

Indicators that had good results based on trends for Del Norte County and appropriate comparisons to other counties and state averages, and therefore can be considered strengths, were:

Low birth weight infants	Throughout the decade, Del Norte County has consistently had one of the lowest rates in the state of infants born at a low birth weight (less than 2,500 grams or about 5.5 pounds at birth).
Breastfeeding rate	Over the three-year period 2002-2004, an average of almost 92% of Del Norte County mothers initiated breastfeeding during the early postpartum period. This is an excellent rate that is well above the statewide average of under 84%.
Infant mortality	There were no infant deaths in 2004 for children born to mothers residing in Del Norte County, and very few infant deaths recorded throughout the decade.
Health insurance access	Almost 90% of Del Norte County residents reported in recent surveys that they have some type of health insurance. This is above state averages and very good for a rural county. FIRST 5 Del Norte, together with many other agencies, has been working very actively to make sure every child has health insurance and sees this as a sign that local efforts are having an impact. It is not a sign, however, that health insurance and access to health care should be a lower priority.

Indicators where improvement is needed based on trends for Del Norte County and appropriate comparisons to other counties and state averages were:

Births to teen mothers	13.1% of 2005 births were to mothers age 19 and below, significantly higher than the statewide average. However, the teen birth rate had been in the 18-21% range in previous years but had dropped significantly in 2004 and again in 2005, so the trend is moving in a positive direction.
Late or no prenatal care	21.1% of 2005 births were to mothers who did not start prenatal care until the second trimester of pregnancy or later, which is considered late for optimal health of the mother and baby. Very few of these births, however – just four to be exact – involved “very late” care starting in the third trimester or no prenatal care at all.

Oral health	About 40% of the 405 children ages 2 to 5 receiving health screening from October 2005 to June 2006 had visible untreated tooth decay. Almost 12% of children screened had severe decay with four or more teeth with untreated decay.
Second grade test scores in English-Language Arts	In the 2005 school year, 40% of second grade students scored at a Below Basic or Far Below Basic level in English-Language Arts on the California Standards Test. This indicated a high level of need for early literacy efforts that ensure that children reach kindergarten with strong literacy skills.
Child abuse and neglect	In 2005, there were 118 children age 0-5 with at least one incidence of abuse or neglect that was substantiated by Child Welfare Services. The number of substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect has been at an unacceptable level throughout the decade.

The data on oral health, second grade English-Language Arts test scores and child abuse and neglect were important factors in the Commission choosing to address these issues as priorities areas over the next five years.

Other indicators presented in the Report Card were neutral, meaning that the data does not show them to be either a particular strength or area of concern. This group of indicators included exposure to secondhand smoke, child care availability and second grade test scores in mathematics. Calls to law enforcement agencies related to domestic violence have shown a noticeable downward trend from 2001 to 2005, with the 2005 number of 178 calls for assistance being almost half of the 2001 level of 343.

The Report Card also contained economic indicators such as per capita personal income, children living in poverty, housing costs, and child care costs. The Commission recognizes that these economic factors are important to families, but these are not issues that FIRST 5 Del Norte can address with its limited resources except by being one of many partners assisting with local economic development efforts.

2007 Community Survey Highlights

A survey of Del Norte County families was conducted in July 2007, with surveys issued in both English and Spanish. 90% of the people responding to

the survey have at least one child age 0-5 in their household and 96% have at least one child of any age up to 18, so the survey results provided important input to the Commission in understanding what families with young children view as the top priorities. The survey results showed four areas that are both major challenges facing families and issues that FIRST 5 can address.

1. **Access to health care.** 35% of respondents said accessing health care for their children was an urgent need or concern and 34% said accessing dental care for their children was an urgent need or concern. Almost 60% said accessing health and dental care was at least a moderate need or concern. The ability to maintain affordable medical and dental insurance, and difficulties in accessing local medical and dental service providers, were overwhelmingly listed in written responses as their top need. These responses support the Commission’s decision to make access to health care one of its top priority objectives in the next five years.
2. **Access to quality child care.** Being able to afford quality child care was an urgent need for 30% of respondents and at least a moderate need for 58%. Getting child care that meets the family’s needs was noted as an urgent need by 25% and at least a moderate need by 53%. Of the families that reported currently using child care, almost half are using multiple care options and 66% have a relative providing care for at least one of their children. Taken together, the survey responses pointed to multiple needs including promoting more affordable and flexible child care options and providing support to the large number of unlicensed child care providers (relatives, neighbors and friends) in Del Norte County. Programs and services described in this plan that are connected to the strategic objectives of increasing the readiness of children for school and increasing parent and caregiver knowledge, skills, and confidence – with “caregiver” including child care providers – are intended to address this important area of need.
3. **Parent education and support.** The responses to numerous survey questions pointed to the need for expanded parent education and support services. 52% of responses said having sufficient information and support to be an effective parent or caregiver was a moderate or urgent need, and 51% said understanding or dealing with their children’s emotions and behavior was a moderate or urgent need. Responses also showed a high level of interest in help with understanding their child’s physical development and needs, and also with accessing services for special needs of their children related to their physical, emotional, speech or other development. The Commission’s desire to provide this type of support is reflected in adopting a strategic objective to increase parent and caregiver knowledge, skills, and confidence.

4. **Activities for children.** 59% of respondents said that finding appropriate activities for their children or having worthwhile things for their children to do was at least a moderate need or concern. When asked what services would most benefit their children or family if made more available, 44% listed more activities for children and families as one of their top three requests. This strategic plan addresses this issue by using the Family Resource Centers as community-based hubs to offer more activities while ensuring that activities are enriching for the children and parents alike.

It is also worth noting that 49% of respondents said that helping their children learn to read was a moderate or urgent need or concern. This suggests that support for parents in helping their children to build early literacy skills would be valuable, so such support has been included in the FIRST 5 plan.

A separate survey of people who provide services to children and families was also conducted in July 2007 to get their views of the top priorities for enhancing services for children and families. Over 60% of the respondents to this survey were early care and education providers, and 88% said they provide direct services to children ages 0 to 5 or families with children in this age group. Although a limited number of survey responses (26) were received, the responses largely supported the same priorities identified in the survey of family members. Specifically, the service providers listed access to health care (medical, oral/dental and vision/hearing), parent knowledge and skill with positive discipline for children, and access to quality child care as top priorities. Additional priorities emphasized by the service providers were treatment for emotional disturbances or other mental health issues of young children, timely screening and identification of child development delays/issues (such as physical, emotional or cognitive delays and disabilities), addressing alcohol or drug abuse by one or more persons in the household, and addressing domestic violence.

As with the Children's Report Card, readers of this plan are encouraged to obtain and review the full report of survey results in order to obtain a more complete picture of the needs and priorities that were identified by families and service providers.