



Key Impact: FAMILY STRENGTHENING



50% of our state's zero to five year-old-children live in poverty.

WHAT WE KNOW

Children rely on their families for almost everything, yet life with a young child is simultaneously joyful and stressful.

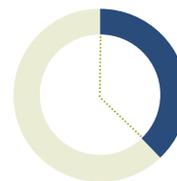
Too many California children live in families coping with enormous stressors. Every parent experiences moments of crisis, when support from relatives, friends, and community is essential. Factors like poverty, housing instability or social isolation can cut families off from these essential support systems and, by extension, deeply affect a child's early development.

Family strengthening programs have been shown to provide the community-based supports parents and caregivers need to be emotionally healthy, maintain safe and nurturing environments for their children, and participate in their child's early learning. First 5 invests in proven family strengthening programs designed with cultural specificity to build on a community's own values and resources. These programs have a strong evidence base of positive outcomes:

- **PARENT EDUCATION:** Evidence-based parenting programs have been shown to slow rates of child abuse, reduce foster care placements and decrease hospitalizations from child abuse injuries. Evaluations show parents in programs report they are less stressed, less depressed and don't use harsh discipline.
- **VOLUNTARY HOME VISITING:** Children participating in evidence-based home visiting programs were more likely to demonstrate key school readiness skills, such as working cooperatively with others and following oral instructions and classroom rules.
- **PARENT-CHILD PLAYGROUPS:** Playgroups improve parent-child interaction, support early literacy, help prepare children for kindergarten and provide opportunities for parents to connect to each other.

IN CALIFORNIA

Nearly 30,000 young children experienced homelessness in 2014.



34% of children live without secure parental employment.



26% of children live in food insecure households.

WE CAN DO BETTER: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

California can enhance systems that support parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need and knowledge of parenting and child development.

The First 5 Association of California recommends that policymakers take action to:

Expand access to evidence-based family strengthening programs, including voluntary home visiting, which optimize child development and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect.

Increase and improve child and parental mental health and substance abuse awareness, diagnosis and treatment.

Strengthen the social safety-net to ensure families are self-sufficient and can meet their basic economic needs, such as food, housing, child care, transportation and health care.

First 5 leads the effort to build strong, effective and sustainable systems to serve young children in California. The First 5 Association of California is the membership organization for the 58 First 5 county commissions. In 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10 — The California Children and Families Act — creating First 5 commissions in every county. First 5 supports the healthy development of children from birth through five years of age.