



For Immediate Release
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First 5 California Issues Statement on New Kids Data Report *Executive Director Highlights First 5 Efforts Combating Issues Affecting Californians*

Sacramento, CA – Today, First 5 California Executive Director Jackie Thu-Huong Wong issued a statement on The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s [2022 KIDS COUNT® Data Book](#), a yearly report on child and family well-being. The report found California ranked 33rd of all states in children’s overall well-being and highlighted how anxiety and depression rose 70 percent in California’s juvenile population in 2020, the first year of the pandemic.

“By now it is well-established that the COVID-19 pandemic created real conditions contributing to negative outcomes for children and families. For many California families—especially low-income families and communities of color—the pandemic exacerbated existing challenges to social, structural, and fiscal conditions contributing to California’s low ranking in this report, especially in the area of behavioral and mental health,” said Ms. Wong.

“As the Executive Director of First 5 California, I am proud that we are, and continue to be, at the forefront of investing in trauma-informed, healing-centered, and culturally responsive support systems focused on the whole child and whole family that provides parents and caregivers the necessary resources and tools to promote safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. We have a strong focus on equity and our investments are prioritized for low-income and communities of color, which represent outsized segments of the population negatively affected by adverse childhood experiences and behavioral health issues and outlined in the report,” added Ms. Wong.

Since 1998, First 5 California has committed to ensuring all children receive the best start in life and thrive and has invested strategically to accomplish this goal. First 5 California supports initiatives that:

- Foster safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments
- Prevent and address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Support safe and healthy early learning and childcare development programs
- Focus on whole child health and development
- Conduct early childhood research
- Promote community awareness on the importance of the early years

– More –

Current investments and strategies include:

Child and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative - First 5 California is a key stakeholder in the development of the California's \$4.4 billion investment in the initiative, which is focused on promoting well-being and preventing behavioral health challenges and on routinely screening, supporting, and serving all children and youth from emerging and existing behavioral health, mental health, and substance abuse needs.

IMPACT: Improve and Maximize Programs So All Children Thrive / IMPACT 2020 - \$190 million in investments by First 5 California designed for:

- Strengthening adult-child interactions
- Engaging parents and families
- Expanding access to quality childcare for our most vulnerable children and providers
- Supporting workforce and ensuring data-driven continuous quality improvement
- Implementing sustainable systems at scale

Additional links to resources and information can be found at First 5 California's parent website, www.First5California.com. Selected content includes:

- [What Are Adverse Childhood Experiences?](#)
- [Support for Parents Who Have Experienced Childhood Trauma](#)
- [Trauma and the Brain](#)
- [Risk Factors and Early Warning Signs of Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Parenting During a Pandemic: Helping Children Cope with Mental Health Challenges](#)
- [Mental & Emotional Health](#)

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First 5 California was established in 1998 when voters passed Proposition 10, which taxes tobacco products to fund services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. First 5 California programs and resources are designed to educate and support teachers, parents, and caregivers in the critical role they play during a child's first five years – to help California kids receive the best possible start in life and thrive. For more information, please visit www.cfc.ca.gov.