

It is challenging for Commissions to make critical decisions about addressing the many needs of children ages prenatal to five and their families with only a limited picture about the state of young children in their local community. To address some of these data gaps, the First 5 Commission of San Diego County issued a Random Digit Dial (RDD) to over 1,200 parents and caregivers with children ages 0 to 5. This 2005 study represents the first of its kind to focus on young children in San Diego County and provides a unique opportunity to present baseline data about child well-being that can be tracked and assessed over time.

Strategic Use of Findings

Below are some of the key ways in which the survey findings have been utilized by the First 5 Commission of San Diego:

Targeting Funding. The Family Survey provided comparison in some categories to state and national statistics. It also uncovered important regional disparities within the county, as well as opportunities to enhance services for specific subpopulations. This valuable information is being utilized to develop future Commission initiatives and to target areas with the highest needs.

Identifying informational needs and outreach opportunities. The Family Survey revealed that parents need more information about certain community resources but are unsure about where to find them. In addition, many respondents were unfamiliar with the Commission and the programs it sponsors. The Commission is using this data to target its media and outreach efforts.

Creating comparison data. Without relevant benchmarks, it is difficult to assess the success of programs and initiatives funded by the Commission. The Survey included questions designed to target specific gaps in local information, to provide more of the community-level indicators needed for comparative evaluation.

Becoming a resource for early childhood information. The findings from the First 5 San Diego Family Survey have been shared with other public and non-profit entities. The initial survey results are providing baseline data on local child wellbeing. Future surveys will supply critical information on early childhood trends in San Diego County.



Assessing community impact. The survey will be repeated every 2 to 3 years in an effort to reveal larger trends in the community, as well as begin to assess how the Commission's funded activities may contribute to improving outcomes for young children in San Diego County.

The First 5 Commission of San Diego County is committed to the vision that all San Diego children will enter kindergarten "Ready to Learn." In 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10, which added a tax to tobacco products to fund programs that promote the health and well-being of children during their most critical years of development, from prenatal to age five. Research demonstrates that the emotional, physical and intellectual environment to which a child is exposed in the first 5 years of life has a profound impact on how his or her brain develops. These experience influence how that child functions in school, as well as later in life. To help children enter school ready to learn, the First 5 Commission of San Diego funds services, and also advocates for policy change, helps to coordinate resources and builds community capacity to support long-term improvements in the lives of San Diego's children and families.