



First 5 San Mateo County is entrusted with the strategic investment of nearly \$7 million public dollars each year specifically earmarked to help children and families in our county succeed. We work on behalf of the more than 53,000 children ages zero to five living here to ensure their every need is met, their families are supported and their future is a priority.

## Improving Oral Health for Children Prenatal to Age 5



When a pregnant woman has a dental disease, her baby is also at an increased risk of developing a dental infection. Research has shown that without proper oral health practices and good nutrition, dental decay can begin soon after babies get their first teeth. Pain from dental disease impacts nutritional intake and tooth loss, damaged teeth, and other dental issues erode self-esteem and confidence, leading to diminished success in school.

### Identified issues facing San Mateo County include:

- Inadequate number of dentists providing care to meet demand, particularly for Medi-cal/Denti-cal eligible populations.
- Current reimbursement rates are insufficient and exacerbate gap in services.
- Appointment wait time can be months at community clinics.
- Parents of children served by First 5 San Mateo County-funded programs, particularly non-English speaking families, have reported difficulties accessing dental care.<sup>4</sup>

Data from the San Mateo Medical Center Emergency Room suggest that more than

# 25%

of costly dental-related ER visits **could have been prevented** with routine preventive and primary dental care.<sup>1</sup>

**Flouride varnish**, easily applied to young children's teeth during medical or dental visits, leads to a

# 37%

**reduction** in the risk of childhood tooth decay.<sup>2</sup>

Dental sealants, plastic coatings applied to the chewing surfaces of molar teeth, can be

# 88%

effective in **preventing the most common form of dental decay** in school-age children.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Data obtained from San Mateo Medical Center's Emergency Room and Stanford Hospital and Clinics for San Mateo residents, August 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Weyant, Robert J., et al. "Topical fluoride for caries prevention." The Journal of the American Dental Association 144.11 (2013): 1279-1291.

<sup>3</sup> Ahovuo-Saloranta, Anneli, et al. "Sealants for preventing dental decay in the permanent teeth." The Cochrane Library (2013).

<sup>4</sup> Data from Parent Focus Groups around Oral Health, conducted by First 5. March 2011.

## Our Impact

Across the country, agencies at the county, state and federal levels are recognizing the need for additional resources to assure access to dental care, improve oral health, and integrate with overall health efforts. First 5 San Mateo has funded a dedicated Oral Health Initiative since 2012, and has been purposefully investing in the development of county-wide solutions using both capacity-building and collective impact strategies.

Most recently, First 5 San Mateo contributed funding toward the creation of an Oral Health Strategic Plan for the county. First 5 San Mateo commissioners, staff and grantees have furthered the investment by leading the efforts of the San Mateo County Oral Health Coalition as convenors and champions. The coalition, which includes more than 30 organizations and individuals from the oral health, medical, philanthropic, and other fields, has accomplished:

- Launch of the strategic planning process December 2015 at a planning retreat attended by more than 60 cross-sector stakeholders.
- Environmental scan of the current data and resources on oral health in San Mateo County.
- Final Oral Health Strategic Plan, released in October 2016.

First 5 San Mateo County's commitment to the implementation of the Oral Health Strategic Plan includes funding support for two new county staff positions: an Oral Health Strategic Plan Director and a Dental Program Specialist. These key staff positions will oversee the implementation of the Strategic Plan, including initiating the ongoing convening of local oral health stakeholders, whose support and direction will continue to be integral to the Plan's success.

**Former Menlo Park Assemblyman Rich Gordon** is one of the county's original First 5 Commissioners. "Thanks to First 5 San Mateo County and partners like the University of the Pacific School of Dentistry, hundreds of children throughout the county will now have access to high-quality oral hygiene," he said. "Studies have shown there is a relationship between dental care and self-esteem, school performance, and critical developmental health needs."

"I am delighted that the Peninsula is the home of so many test sites of this important pilot project," said **Senator Jerry Hill, D-San Mateo**. "By exploring innovative technology and public-private partnerships, this venture is making dental care more widely available to one of our community's most vulnerable populations — children — and is giving them a head start on a lifetime of healthy dental practices that can influence their overall health and their performance in school."

In parallel with the systems-level work being done through the Oral Health Coalition, First 5 San Mateo County continues to fund for its signature Oral Health investment, the Virtual Dental Home Program, led by Ravenswood Family Health Center. This innovative dental model focuses on prevention through parent education, bringing preventive services to the community and providing children with a dental home. The "virtual dental home" uses a collapsible dental chair, laptop computer, digital camera on the end of a dental probe and a handheld X-ray machine that "extends the opportunity to offer dental diagnostic and preventive services in the comfort of their familiar and non-threatening pre-school environment and introduces the child and the family to preventive dental services and education at a very young age," says Dr. Yogita Thakur, Dental Director at Ravenswood Family Health Center.

- **More than 1,125 children in San Mateo County have been served by the Virtual Dental Home since First 5 San Mateo County began the funding model in 2012.**
- **The Virtual Dental Home is on target to serve 600 children ages 1 through 5 this year in San Mateo County with First 5 funding, including an expanded focus on children with special needs.**