

For Immediate Release
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New Program to Insure Children in Santa Clara County

SAN JOSE, CA -- The Board of Supervisors will vote tomorrow to release \$3 million in tobacco settlement money to fund Healthy Kids, the cornerstone of a new effort to provide access to health care insurance to all children in Santa Clara County. This is a critical step in reaching the community's goal of providing accessible health care insurance to the estimated 70,000 children in the County who lack it.

Community organizations, working in concert with the County and other public agencies, will begin signing up uninsured children in Healthy Kids on January 2, 2001 (subject to anticipated approval by the state). On February 1, those children will be able to access comprehensive health care services, including vision and dental care.

Healthy Kids is unique in that it is the first program in the country to use tobacco settlement money, foundation support, tobacco taxes and other funding developed through a public/private partnership to provide comprehensive health care coverage for children. Santa Clara County children, whose family's income falls within 300 percent of the federal poverty level, will qualify. For a family of four that is an annual income of \$51,150.

The Healthy Kids program was spearheaded by PACT (People Acting in Community Together), Working Partnerships USA and Santa Clara County. "This is a great example of a community coming together to solve a crisis," said Bob Brownstein, Policy Director for Working Partnerships USA. "The Healthy Kids program will likely be a model for other counties."

The new program is being administered by the Santa Clara Family Health Plan, a public agency that currently manages 37,000 Medi-Cal and 6,000 Healthy Family members. A key component of the effort is an extensive outreach and enrollment campaign designed to sign up children for Healthy Kids, as well as Medi-Cal and Healthy

Families, two existing programs that currently fall short of insuring all the county's children.

"This is an historic effort," said Supervisor Blanca Alvarado, one of the driving forces behind the initiative. "Through Healthy Kids and our enhanced outreach and enrollment efforts for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families, we will be able to insure all eligible children in the County who now lack coverage."

Once Healthy Kids is fully implemented, it is estimated the program will cost about \$14 million to maintain yearly. So far, about \$6 million in annual funding has been committed to the program, with the possibility of additional funding coming from other public and private sources.

"The time to act is now," said Supervisor James T. Beall, Jr., also a key contributor to the initiative as Chair of the County's Health and Hospital Committee. "Even though we don't have all the funding accounted for yet, we certainly have enough to move forward as planned, and we have a great product to offer to those families whose children are uninsured."