



American Academy of Pediatrics  
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™  
California Chapter 3 - San Diego and Imperial Counties



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# FIRST 5 FIRST STEPS 2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS | FIRST 5 FIRST STEPS  
CALIFORNIA CHAPTER 3

*The First 5 First Steps program has changed my entire family. Not only am I a better parent to my baby, but I am now more involved with my five and 10 year olds' education. Our whole family now reads together in the evening, something we never did before. My kids are doing so much better in school.*

*-First Steps Parent*

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## ABOUT OUR FAMILIES

# ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR OF PROGRESS

**We believe our  
greatest  
accomplishments  
are yet to come**

Since the beginning of First 5 First Steps (First Steps) in November 2013, we have worked tirelessly to transform the lives of the families we serve and the communities they live in. From July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016, the success of our program continued. Our home visitors met with more than 629 primary caregivers and 578 children, providing a total of 10,192 home visits.

In this annual report, we share our program outcomes, which reflect our focus on health, child development, and family well-being. We also share stories of families whose lives changed for the better because of their engagement in the program.

We have ambitious plans in place to build a more robust family support program for children and families in San Diego County over the coming years. In 2015 we developed a strategic plan to prioritize future efforts in First Steps. We also made significant progress toward the goal of becoming accredited as the first county-organized, multi-site Healthy Families America system in the nation.

Every day, the passion and enthusiasm of our home visitors and the quality and breadth of services they offer help us to build strong and rewarding relationships with our families. These connections have given us the chance to help children and families thrive, and we believe our greatest accomplishments are yet to come.

With Gratitude,

**Kim Thomas, Project Director**  
First 5 First Steps Program

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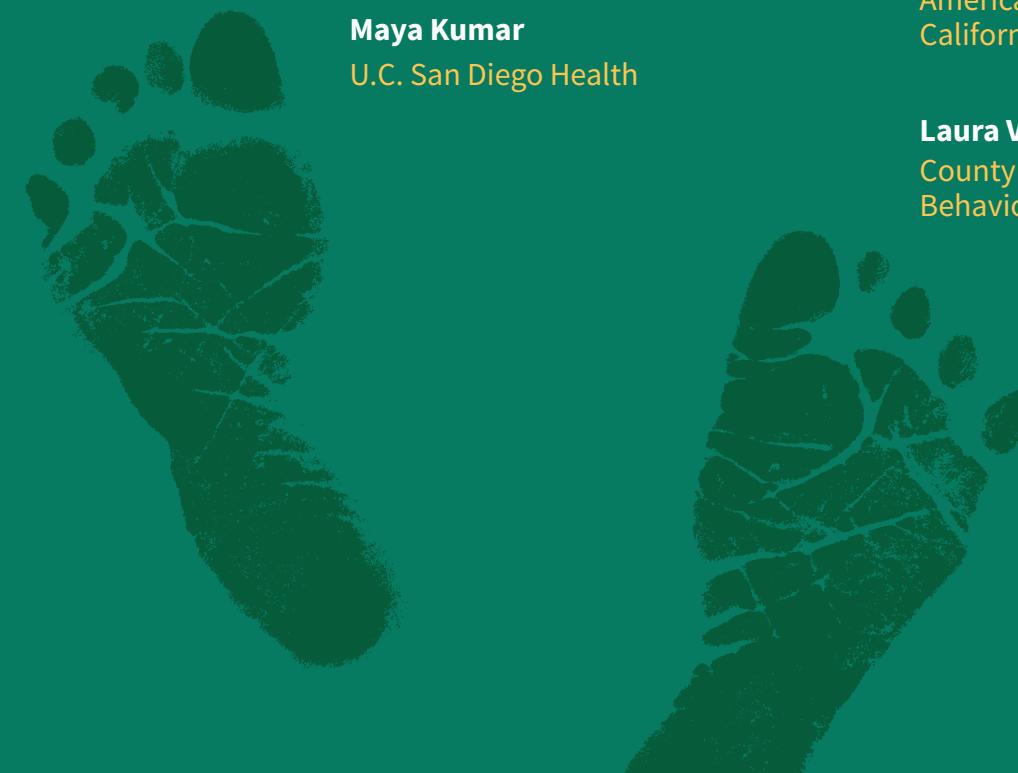
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## SERVICES INCLUDE

- **Parenting Support**
- **Developmental and other screenings**
- **Referrals to community support providers**

## ABOUT FIRST STEPS

First Steps offers personalized support to expectant and new parents to ensure that their newborn gets the best possible start in life. Following the evidenced-based model, Healthy Families America, our voluntary home visiting program matches parents with trained professionals who provide education and support during pregnancy and throughout the child's first three years. This early period of a child's life is recognized as the most critical period of development, which presents a great opportunity to support a child's healthy physical and emotional development through home-based services.

Services are funded by First 5 San Diego and provided within the context of the trusting relationship that develops between home visitors and families. These relationships foster the development of a nurturing bond between parents/caregivers and children.

Our families fall into four target populations: teen, military, immigrant, refugee, or those who fall below 200% federal poverty level. Many families in these target populations face hardships and stressors that place their children at increased risk for poor health and developmental outcomes.

## OUR SERVICE MODEL

First Steps is an affiliate of Healthy Families America (HFA), a nationally recognized, evidence-based home visiting program model. HFA was launched in 1992 as an initiative of its parent organization, Prevent Child Abuse America. There are currently more than 600 affiliated HFA program sites throughout the country. Studies of the model have shown that program sites:

- **Improve maternal and newborn health;**
- **Prevent child maltreatment;**
- **Reduce domestic violence;**
- **Improve family economic self-sufficiency and**
- **Increase use of community services.**

## VISION

All children receive nurturing care from their family essential to leading a healthy and productive life.

## MISSION

To promote child well-being and prevent the abuse and neglect of children in San Diego County through home visiting services.

## VALUES AND BELIEFS

We believe in

- **Valuing Children**
- **Strengthening Families**
- **Engaging Communities**





# PROGRAM STRUCTURE

HFA affiliated sites operate as “single sites” serving one city or geographic area, or as “multi-sites” serving a larger community, typically a state, through an organized collaboration of several sites. When accredited in 2017, First Steps became the first multi-site system to serve a county, rather than a state. The large size and diversity of San Diego County make a multi-site system more appropriate and more effective for delivering services. The multi-site structure also brings First Steps several important benefits, notably the leadership from a Central Administration agency. This agency provides back bone support for the system, carrying out necessary tasks on behalf of the direct service agencies, freeing up agencies to focus on their direct work with families. A multi-site system also benefits from increased collaboration and resource sharing between sites. Regular meetings and communication between regional leads results in an exchange of ideas where agencies can learn from each other and jointly develop best practices.

First Steps is organized as an HFA multi-site system with the following components:

## Funder: First 5 San Diego

First 5 San Diego promotes the health and well-being of young children during the most critical years of development – the first five years. First 5 San Diego programs are funded through San Diego County’s portion of the state’s Proposition 10 revenues. Programs and services such as First Steps, are funded based on First 5 San Diego’s strategic plan.

## Central Administration: American Academy of Pediatrics – California Chapter 3

The American Academy of Pediatrics – California Chapter 3 (AAP-CA3) receives funding from First 5 San Diego to function as Central Administration for the First Steps program. AAP-CA3 provides oversight, coordination, and support for the four regional service networks, composed of four lead agencies and five subcontractors, which provide direct services to families. This support includes training, quality assurance, technical assistance, policy development, oversight and administrative functions (Figure 1). AAP-CA3 also serves as the liaison to other family support and home visiting programs locally, statewide, and nationally.





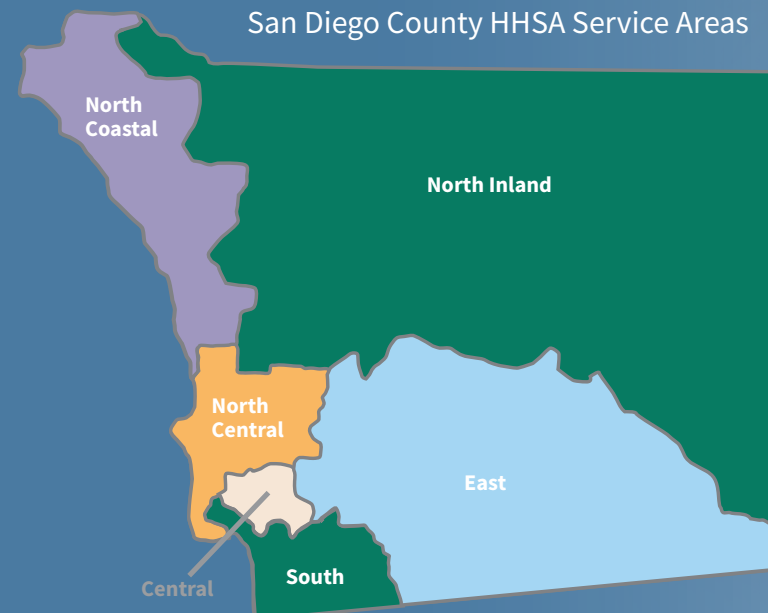
# REGIONAL SERVICE NETWORKS

First Steps serves all six geographical areas determined by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency as detailed in the map (Figure 2). For the purpose of this program, the North Coastal and North Inland regions were combined into one region (referred to as North), and the Central and North Central regions were combined into one region (referred to as Central) for a total of four regions.

Each Regional Service Network has a Lead Agency under contract with First 5 San Diego. Lead agencies may in turn subcontract with additional organizations.

Figure 2

San Diego County HHSA Service Areas



## EAST COUNTY LEAD AGENCY:

**Home Start**

## SUBCONTRACTING AGENCY:

**None**

Home Start provides services to children living in poverty who require immediate, comprehensive solutions to ensure their safety and healthy development. They are a private non-profit agency dedicated to child abuse prevention and family strengthening services.

## NORTH COUNTY LEAD AGENCY:

**Palomar Health**

## SUBCONTRACTING AGENCY:

**Vista Community Clinic**

Palomar Health's mission is to heal, comfort and promote health in the communities they serve through their three hospitals, community health education programs and other services. The First Steps program subcontracts with Vista Community Clinic for additional home visitor staff and services.

## CENTRAL SAN DIEGO LEAD AGENCY:

**SAY San Diego**

## SUBCONTRACTING AGENCY:

**Horn of Africa**

SAY San Diego (Social Advocates for Youth) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to partner with children, families and communities to overcome barriers and create opportunities that enable them to realize and sustain their full potential. SAY San Diego subcontracts with Horn of Africa for additional home visitor staff and services.

## SOUTH COUNTY LEAD AGENCY:

**South Bay Community Services**

## SUBCONTRACTING AGENCIES:

**Operation Samahan, Family Health Centers of San Diego and San Ysidro Health Center**

South Bay Community Services' (SBCS) mission is to restore hope and provide support for people to create the best life they can for themselves. SBCS subcontracts with Operation Samahan, Family Health Centers of San Diego and San Ysidro Health Center for additional home visitor staff and services.

## PROGRAM EVALUATION:

**Harder+Company Community Research**

Harder+Company Community Research (H+Co) contracts with First 5 San Diego to evaluate all their funded programs including First Steps.



# FIRST STEPS BUDGET

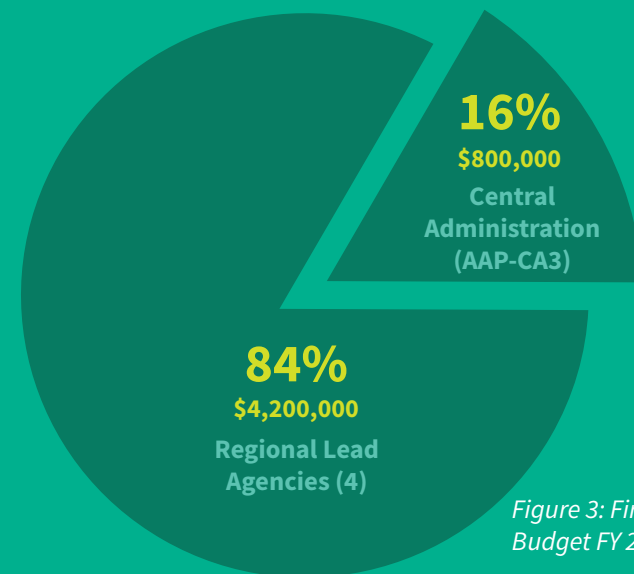


Figure 3: First Steps Budget FY 2015-16

The First Steps program budget in FY 2015-16 was \$5 million. The budget allocates 84% of funds to direct services and 16% to the American Academy of Pediatrics - California Chapter 3 (AAP-CA3) to support the First Steps system and adherence to the evidence-based model (Figure 3). First 5 San Diego approved the same budget allocation annually through FY 2017-18, contingent on annual Commission approval.



## PROJECT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES





# IMPROVING THE LIVES OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY FAMILIES

When the First Steps initiative was being planned, First 5 San Diego looked carefully at the needs of San Diego families to determine where resources and services were needed. These became the four target populations of First Steps:

- Low income families (below 200% federal poverty level);
- Pregnant and parenting teens;
- Immigrant and refugee families (at least one parent is foreign-born); or
- Military families (child is a dependent of active duty, guard, reserve, or veteran service member).

629  
Parents served

578  
Children served

10,192  
Home visits provided

## STRENGTH WITHIN: CHELSEA’S STORY

Chelsea\* was pregnant with her third child when she enrolled in First Steps services in January 2014. From the onset of services, Chelsea showed interest in learning about her child’s development. She shared several times with her home visitor, Shahla,\* that she wished she had the same support with her other two children. Chelsea was actively involved in services and enjoyed the activities that Shahla provided to her and her baby. When it came time to decide whether she would return to work, Chelsea shared with Shahla that she was very interested in becoming a home child care provider. This would allow her to have an income while being at home with her children and caring for other children, which she found rewarding.

Chelsea gathered the information she needed to become a home child care provider and made it a part of her First Steps goal plan. Shahla worked alongside Chelsea and supported her through the process. Chelsea completed early childhood education courses to fulfill all Community Care Licensing requirements. Chelsea’s hard work and dedication paid off as she is now a home child care provider and has had the opportunity to stay home with her children while achieving financial stability. She continues to participate in First Steps and will graduate from the program in Spring 2017.





## IMPROVING THE LIVES OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY FAMILIES

### TRUST & GROWTH: CORA'S STORY

Cora,\* a new teen mother, was eager to learn about her new role as a parent. Like most young children, Cora's baby girl was curious about the world around her and was eager to explore her environment. However, the family's home visitor, Soraya,\* observed that Cora often kept the baby close to her side and was hesitant to let her explore independently. In time, Cora began to trust Soraya enough to share something she had not told anyone before. Cora was a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. Cora shared that she felt the need to protect her baby from the world and did not want her baby to leave her side. Soraya helped Cora consider the importance of counseling services to address her childhood trauma, which was impacting her parenting practices. Soraya also supported Cora's emotional well-being by helping her explore and identify her fears in a safe zone. Together, they outlined possible activities which Cora could practice at home to encourage self-care.

Keeping Cora's emotional comfort level in mind, Soraya conducted simple and short activities to allow the baby to explore her world. Cora was able to realize that the baby's development and overall growth could be affected by not dedicating floor time or allowing her to explore her environment independently. By the time the baby reached her first birthday, Cora had learned to overcome many of the fears she shared with Soraya. She is now more confident in her role as a parent and in the techniques and parenting practices she uses to support her baby's physical and emotional development. In addition to healing from her past trauma, she is finding it easier to form positive and trusting relationships with her baby girl and her daughter's father. Cora's overall confidence had grown. She is now setting goals towards self-sufficiency. She purchased her own car and found a job. Cora has been so successful in her employment that she has already received a promotion. Her ability to communicate with the father of the baby has improved and she now voices her needs and concerns to him. Cora attributes her motivation to her daughter who she wants to have a safe, caring, and loving environment. Cora feels her life has improved immensely due to her participation in the First Steps program.





## IMPROVING THE LIVES OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY FAMILIES

### SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE: DOREEN'S STORY

Doreen\* is a military spouse with children ages four, three, and two who was referred to the First Steps Program when she was seven months pregnant. Her husband was due to be deployed to Iraq and she needed support. Shortly after the birth of her child, her husband left for his nine month deployment. She actively engaged in weekly visits and embraced the parent-child activities. Initially Doreen was reluctant to acknowledge her three-year-old's developmental concerns. During the course of services, Doreen began to trust in her home visitor and become more confident in her ability to make decisions to support her child's healthy development. After several weeks, she accepted a referral to First 5 San Diego's funded programs including First Steps. Healthy Development Services program and was then referred to the San Diego Regional Center. Doreen has now become a parent that is able to advocate for her children's needs, and she credits the First Steps Program for teaching her how to be a better parent for all of her children.

*\*Names have been changed to protect confidentiality*

*“The most helpful thing has been receiving moral/emotional support from my family support worker [home visitor] through a difficult, stressful deployment.”*

*-First Steps Parent*

### WRITING A NEW CHAPTER: ULESSYA'S STORY

Ulessya\* is a 17-year-old Iraqi refugee who was referred to First Steps when she was seven months pregnant with her second child. She was fearful of having a second baby. She was living with her husband and his extended family (mother-in-law, father-in-law and sister-in-law). During the initial visits, the family was wary of having a home visitor come to their home. However over time the home visitor was able to build trust with the family. As time went on, Ulessya became more empowered, teaching her family the activities she learned with the home visitor and the importance of having her husband actively parent her toddler and new baby. Ulessya even returned to school to learn English. Ulessya and her husband feel they have a greater understanding of American culture and are better able to participate in their new community. They feel that their entire extended family has changed as result the First Steps Program. Ulessya is looking forward to completing high school and eventually working outside of the home.





# WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

## Building Home Visitors' Knowledge and Skills

AAP-CA3 prepares home visitors to provide high quality and effective services for families. AAP-CA3 staff created and continuously improve on a robust training plan that is aligned with HFA requirements. All First Steps staff complete at least 170 hours of training in their first year of employment and at least 25 hours of ongoing training yearly thereafter. Trainings include “hands-on” practice sessions to help build home visitors’ skills.

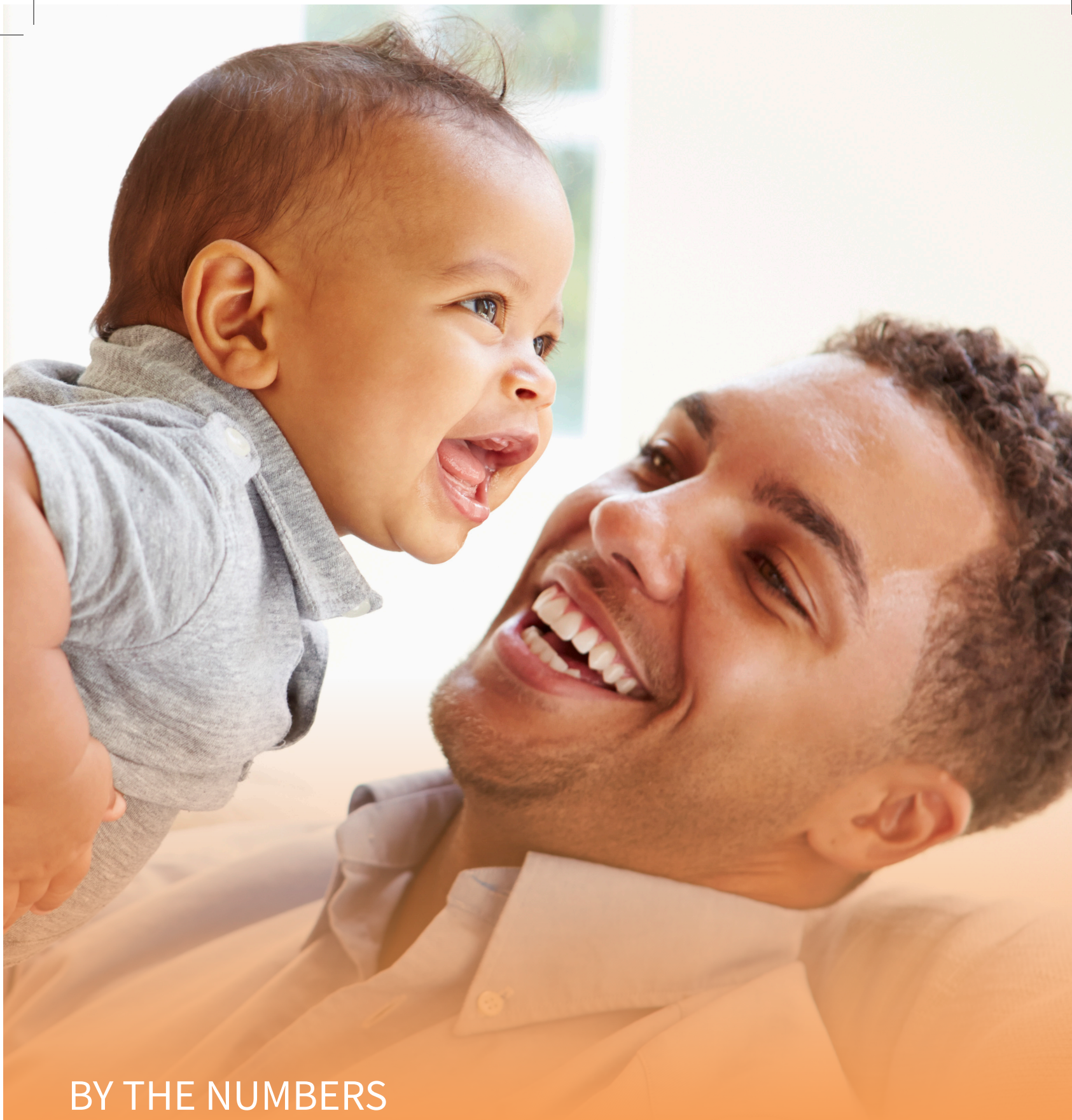
### SAMPLE TRAINING TOPICS:

- Integrated Strategies for Home Visiting
- Parent Survey for Community Outreach
- “Ages and Stages” Developmental Screening Tools
- Depression Screening
- Substance Abuse
- Supporting Diversity-Informed Practices
- Perinatal Health and Mental Health
- Reflective Practice

With extensive training, First Steps home visitors develop valuable skills that help them positively impact the communities they work in.







BY THE NUMBERS  
ACHIEVING QUALITY  
OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES

90% Acceptance  
rate for eligible  
families

70% Retention  
rate at 1 year

First Steps is proud and honored to support families in raising happy and healthy children. Many of the program outcomes exceed national and county averages.

99% Children linked to a medical home  
*[which is higher than the national rate of 54.4% released by Healthy People 2020].*



BY THE NUMBERS



ACHIEVING QUALITY  
OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES

As part of home visitation services, home visitors routinely coach and assess parents and caregivers on development of their parenting and life skills. Helping families learn to help themselves will promote sustainable program outcomes that can continue after families complete services.

After their children turned 17 months:

90.4%

Families expressed feeling confidence in problem solving skills\*

91.9%

Parents expressed feeling confidence in mobilizing resources such as finding medical information or identifying community agencies to meet their family's needs\*

\* Based on findings from the Healthy Families Parenting Inventory (LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc., 2004)

91.1%

Children up-to-date with immunizations

*[which is higher than the County of San Diego rate of 69.7%\*].*

96.5%

Mothers linked to a medical home

92.5%

Children up-to-date with their Well-Baby Checks

83.8%

Other Caregivers were linked to a medical home





# LOOKING AHEAD

As First Steps successfully completes the start-up and implementation phase of the program, we look forward to maintaining and continuously improving services for families.

To guide the program's future direction, the American Academy of Pediatrics – California Chapter 3 (AAP-CA3) identified the need for First Steps to have a strategic plan. AAP-CA3 in conjunction with the regional lead agency, conducted a strategic planning process to reflect on what has been learned since the program began in October 2012.

Direct service staff were the primary contributors during the strategic planning process. Home visitors and supervisors with first-hand knowledge and experience about client families' needs drove the process that produced the Strategic Plan. Program managers facilitated meetings at which the home visitors and supervisors provided input on what families need and what new goals the program can embrace.

The strategic planning process resulted in the development of six strategic priorities to focus on during the next three years:

1. Strengthen and support more families through increased access to family support programs.
2. Build parent leadership in First Steps and the broader community.
3. Increase father engagement in First Steps.
4. Create a learning environment for the exchange of ideas and practices among home visiting professionals.
5. Build professional capacity to address challenging family issues.
6. Develop professional capacity and expertise for child and family mental health support.

The First Steps Strategic Plan builds on the momentum and success we have experienced in our first three years and identifies directions and priorities that will enhance our services. It will serve as a roadmap for guiding innovations and progress as we continue to be a resource for children and families in San Diego County.

