

## 'Healthy Kids' programs stop 1,000 hospitalizations annually

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A study released this past week proves what Yolo County has known for a while: Spending money on children's health insurance actually saves money in the long run.

After six years of research, the Center for Community Health Studies at the University of Southern California released the data showing that Healthy Kids, a locally funded health insurance program for children, saves the State of California and the federal government up to \$7.3 million annually in health care costs by preventing more than 1,000 unnecessary child hospitalizations per year.

The study, which was funded by The California Endowment and First Five California, focused on children enrolled in Healthy Kids through Children's Health Initiatives in nine counties: Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz.

"The USC study shows why providing health insurance to children is a win-win for our kids, our county and our state," said Helen Thomson, Yolo County supervisor and chairman of the First 5 Yolo Children and Families Commission. "These very programs that have been so successful are also at risk financially, which is why a statewide policy solution that covers all kids is so important."

Since January 2006, Yolo County has had a Healthy Kids program, run jointly by First 5 Yolo and the Yolo County Children's Alliance.

Healthy Kids programs are available to children ineligible for public health insurance programs such as Medi-Cal and Healthy Families due to income or immigration status.

Healthy Kids programs are offered in 25 of the 32 counties and, collectively, they have insured more than 84,000 kids in California.

Currently there are more than 300 Yolo County children enrolled in Healthy Kids. Hundreds of children remain uninsured, due to limited funding for children ages 6-18.

The USC study comes on the heels of recent studies by other independent institutions showing that children in three county CHIs - Santa Clara, San Mateo and Los Angeles - enjoyed across-the-board gains in health access and health outcomes.

The Yolo County Children's Health Initiative was created by First 5 Yolo and the Yolo County Children's Alliance to help the thousands of children in Yolo County who are currently uninsured. Yolo CHI's goal is for every child in Yolo County to have health insurance so they receive the medical, dental and vision care they need.