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First 5 Association of California Calls for Expansion of Early Childhood Home and Community Based Services Through Medi-Cal

SACRAMENTO—First 5 Association of California proposes expanding early childhood home and community-based services through Medi-Cal with two new briefs highlighting their role in improving maternal and early childhood health. The expansion would give more parents and caregivers access to comprehensive, preventive support in their children's foundational early years, building on the landscape of existing services typically referred to as home visiting.

"Every child deserves a strong start in life, but too many families face barriers to essential services," **said Avo Makdessian, Executive Director of First 5 Association of California.** "These briefs highlight how expanding home-based early childhood services through Medi-Cal could ensure more parents and caregivers have access to trusted, culturally responsive care that helps children thrive—now and for generations to come."

Home and community-based supports like home visiting provide families with information on how their child is growing, learning, and developing; emotional and physical health support for the whole family; help with goal setting; and connections to community services like childcare and food assistance.

As the original funders and implementers of home visiting in California, First 5 has advocated for the expansion of these services that promote children's health, development, and school readiness. However, with funding largely dependent on state and county budgets, access is limited to a small fraction of families who could benefit.

The two briefs—[Home and Community-Based Perinatal Supports for California Families](#) and [Proposal for New Medi-Cal Benefit: Early Childhood Home and Community Based Services](#)—outline how California can leverage Medi-Cal to expand the home visiting landscape in California. With more than half of California's young children covered by Medi-Cal, a dedicated benefit to cover home and community-based perinatal

services could dramatically increase access, particularly for low-income families and communities of color facing health disparities. The proposed benefit would cover:

- **Preventive in-home visits** that include developmental screenings and health education
- **Lactation support and postpartum guidance** to promote maternal and infant well-being
- **Assistance in navigating Medi-Cal-covered** pediatric care, mental health services, and other supportive resources
- **Culturally responsive coaching** to strengthen parenting skills and promote child development

At the national and state levels, Medicaid—which is called Medi-Cal in California—has been at the center of funding debates. Despite that uncertainty, an expansion of home-based early childhood services represents a cost-effective opportunity to serve greater numbers of vulnerable children and their families. Research shows that home-based interventions can help lower healthcare costs by promoting access to preventive care and resolving health and developmental concerns before they escalate. Studies also show that high-quality home visiting can strengthen family relationships, improve child development, and enhance health and educational outcomes.

First 5 Association’s research is well-positioned to support the state’s interest in expanding access to home visiting and its goals to improve child and maternal health outcomes. Here are the two briefs from the First 5 Association of California:

[Home and Community-Based Perinatal Supports for California Families:](#) An overview of the state of perinatal health in California and the importance of home- and community-based support (such as doulas, community health workers, and home visitors) in improving maternal and infant health outcomes.

[Proposal for New Medi-Cal Benefit: Early Childhood Home and Community-Based Services:](#) A technical policy proposal outlining a new Medi-Cal benefit for early childhood home and community-based services, focusing on community input, covered services, reimbursement structure, and cost.

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About First 5 Association

First 5 Association of California represents 58 First 5 county commissions, which serve more than one million children and families annually. Learn more at www.first5association.org.