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Oc Children And Families Commission Takes Action To Address Crisis Of ‘Motel Kids,’ And To Study Potential Threat From ‘Avian Flu’

*Commission also begins work as ‘Vanguard’ region
in landmark National Children’s Study and awards more than \$300,000 in grants to
community facilities*

IRVINE – Acting on a number of critical issues facing area children, the Children and Families Commission of Orange County concluded its October 2005 meeting by taking action to address the potential Avian Flu epidemic, the plight of children who live for extended periods in area motels, and by preparing for a major announcement as part of the landmark National Children’s Study.

During the commission’s October 5, 2005 meeting, commissioner’s heard testimony from Dawn Lee, Executive Director of the Orange County Partnership. Ms. Lee provided an update on the Partnership and Commission’s ongoing strategic plan to address the unique needs of children who reside for extended periods in area motels. She reported on the demographic information, insurance status, services used and needed, and future efforts needed to address the needs of area children. In particular, her report revealed:

- Long-term motel residents in Orange County are equally split between male and female; of the children studied 64% are ages 6-17 while 36% are ages 0-5.
- Residents are representative of the general ethnic breakdown in Orange County: 52% are white, 21% are described as “multi-ethnic,” 14% are Hispanic, and 6% are African-American.
- 49% of adults and 67% of children report having health insurance coverage

- 32% of adults and 25% of children report they do not have insurance coverage
- 61% of adults and 68% of children report visiting a doctor's office for health care

In addition, the Commission authorized \$320,000 in grant funds (known as Capacity Building Grants) for children's health care services throughout Orange County. These funds are delivered by the Commission to provide care to its target service audience: Orange County children ages 0-5; recipients include:

- \$55,000 to the Child Guidance Center, Inc. for programs to assess service levels, address unmet need, and implement strategies to fill gaps from other service providers for county children. Located in Santa Ana, the Center provides specialized mental health, substance abuse, and child abuse counseling. More information is available at: <http://www.cgcoc.org/>
- \$65,000 to Assistive Technology Exchange Center for Children / Goodwill Industries for developing a business plan to coordinate with area schools, nurses and regional education officials. This facility, headquartered in Santa Ana, provides adaptive technology for children especially those effected by ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, impaired vision, cerebral palsy etc... Additional information is available at: http://www.ocgoodwill.org/humanserv_ATEC.asp
- \$75,000 to Rancho Santiago Community College District Child Development Services to develop a staffing model to incorporate child development and health professionals into their program. This Orange County-based junior college system operates facilities at 4 separate campuses around the county; information is available at: <http://www.rsccd.org/apps/rpub.asp?Q=494>
- \$50,000 to Hands Together – A Center for Children to develop a business plan for the expansion of their childcare program. Funds will be used for the facilities new preschool and daycare center.
- \$25,000 to the Kinship Center to provide additional services and training. This facility provides adoptive, foster and relative care for families in need. More information is available at: http://www.kinshipcenter.org/locations_southern.html

Commissioners also addressed the looming threat of Pandemic Influenza, also known as Bird Flu because of its origin from birds in Southeast Asia. The commission received a report detailing steps that could be taken to address a potential outbreak in Orange County – the outbreak affects children due to their fragile immune systems and young age. Orange County is uniquely susceptible to the disease because of the large Southeast Asian population in the area, and because of the frequency of travel and vacation visits between residents from Orange County and Southeast Asia.

Finally, the Commission received an update on an historic achievement: Orange County has been selected as an initial launch site for the National Children’s Study, the largest and most comprehensive long-term study of environmental effects on child development and health to date. The study will be conducted by a team including UCI, CHOC, the Children and Families Commission of Orange County, and the Orange County Health Care Agency.

Orange County was named as one of the seven initial national Vanguard Centers for the study – the total study duration is 21 years, and is directed by the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Children and Families Commission of Orange County was created by Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Act of 1998. The proposition added a 50-cent sales tax on tobacco products sold in California and requires that funds raised be used to support education, health and childcare programs promoting healthy early childhood development from the prenatal stage to age five. The Children and Families Commission of Orange County is responsible for overseeing the allocation of tobacco tax revenues received annually from the State Commission. For more information, please visit the Commission’s website at www.occhildrenandfamilies.com.

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