



For Immediate Release – October 31, 2006

Contact: Michael M. Ruane
(ph) 714-834-2307

**THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN IN ORANGE COUNTY IS IMPROVING IN MANY
AREAS AND NEEDS IMPROVEMENT IN OTHERS**

The Children & Families Commission's investment in children's dental health is critical to the overall health of children and is featured in the newly released 2006 report on the Conditions of Children in Orange County

IRVINE, Calif. – (October 31, 2006) – The 2006 report on the Conditions of Children in Orange County was released today citing visible improvements in several early childhood health and education indicators, but also noting other indicator trend lines in need of greater attention and concern. The Children & Families Commission of Orange County invests Proposition 10 funds in health and education programs to benefit the health and early education of young children.

The annual increase in the percent of children entering kindergarten who were fully immunized by age 2 jumped 6.2% to 77.6% for kindergartners starting in 2005. These are children who were born in 1999-2000, the year Proposition 10 was approved, and the Children & Families Commission began allocating funds. “The Commission funds programs that are active in getting children enrolled in health insurance and using health care services,” said Michael Ruane, Executive Director of the Children & Families Commission. “There is still room for improvement, but the increase in the number of children fully immunized from 2004 to 2005 is the largest seen in over 10 years.”

Other areas where there is marked improvement and the Commission funds supporting programs include prenatal care, economic well-being, educational achievement and safe homes and communities. Areas that are not showing improvement yet, but continue to receive Commission support are low birth weight and overweight children. A complete copy of the report is on the Commission website at <http://www.ochealthinfo.com/csc/report/>.

The Commission identified the need for improved children's dental health in Orange County and funded a new program, Healthy Smiles for Kids of Orange County, which has become a non-profit organization primarily funded by the Commission to provide dental services to children. Last year Healthy Smiles screened over 10,000 children for dental services, 47% of whom had never been to a dentist. Children's oral health is the special feature in the 2006 Conditions of Children report.

The Children and Families Commission of Orange County oversees the allocation of funds from Proposition 10 that adds a 50-cent sales tax on tobacco products sold in California to fund education, health and child development programs for children from the prenatal stage to age five and their families.

###