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## **New Campaign Highlights Impact of Quality Child Care on Children's Futures** *Quality Matters is Contra Costa's new child care rating system*

(Concord, CA) Kids who attend quality child care programs do better in life. That's the message of a new campaign in Contra Costa County to educate parents about the importance of selecting quality child care for their children.

The campaign, called *Quality Matters*, also publicly launches Contra Costa County's new system to rate and improve the level of quality licensed child care programs provide to young children. [First 5 Contra Costa](#), the Contra Costa County [Office of Education](#), and the [Contra Costa Child Care Council](#) are sponsoring the campaign.

"The important message to families is that quality matters when choosing an early learning or child care setting for their child. Research shows that children in quality child care are more successful academically and in life," said Sean Casey, Executive Director of First 5 Contra Costa. "*Quality Matters* is improving the quality of child care in our county and will provide parents with tools they need to identify quality programs."

To date, 104 licensed child care programs in Contra Costa County are voluntarily participating in *Quality Matters*. Providers receive training, coaching, support and incentives to meet or exceed quality standards. Most *Quality Matters* sites are located in low-income communities or serve children with high needs – the children least likely to receive quality child care. Sixteen counties in California are piloting child care rating and improvement systems using common criteria and standards.

The new campaign features ads in English and Spanish on buses, transit shelters, supermarket carts and online, and promotes the [qualitychildcarematters.org](http://qualitychildcarematters.org) website which includes tips for locating and paying for quality child care and ratings for participating programs. So far, 83% of child care programs have either met or exceeded quality standards in areas proven to have the greatest impact on children's learning and development. These include staff education and training, child-teacher interactions, and providing safe and enriching environments and age-appropriate instruction.

"With the majority of a child's brain developing during the first five years of life, the quality of care a child receives during this time is critical," said Ruth Fernández, program coordinator of the county's Local Planning and Advisory Council for Early Care and Education, which is housed at the Contra County Office of Education. "*Quality Matters* provides a set of standards to define quality for parents and for providers. Over time, and with adequate state funding, it will help guide parents in choosing the best care they can for their children."

### **Signs of Quality Child Care:**

- **Teacher-Child Interactions:** Providers that interact positively with the kids in their care.
- **Ratio and Group Size:** Small group sizes and a small number of kids to every adult.
- **Learning Activities:** A mix of creative, fun and educational activities that are right for a child's age and help them learn new skills.
- **Staff:** Warm and knowledgeable staff who have a lot of training and rarely quit. Providers have taken classes or earned degrees in Early Childhood Education.
- **Environment:** A rich learning environment with varied materials, activities and routines. Areas are healthy, clean and safe.
- **Child Health & Development:** Providers make sure children receive health screenings and that children are developing on track.

**First 5 Contra Costa:** First 5 Contra Costa helps young children start school healthy and ready to learn by investing in programs focused on children during their first five years, the most important time in children's development. First 5 is leading the effort to create a countywide quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for Contra Costa child care programs. Funding for *Quality Matters* is made possible by First 5, a federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant and a California State Preschool Program QRIS Block grant. Learn more: [www.First5coco.org](http://www.First5coco.org).

**Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) –** The Contra Costa County Office of Education's mission is to be the premier county education agency providing bold leadership, high quality programs, and innovative services. The CCCOE administers the California State Preschool Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Block Grant and partners with First 5 Contra Costa, the Contra Costa Child Care Council, and the three local Community Colleges to administer the county's QRIS Initiative. Learn more: [www.cocoschools.org](http://www.cocoschools.org)

**Local Planning and Advisory Council for Early Care and Education:** The Contra Costa County Local Planning and Advisory Council for Early Care and Education, a program of the County Office of Education, works to promote quality child care through community assessment, advocacy, resource development, and collaboration with other organizations. Learn more: [www.plan4kids.org](http://www.plan4kids.org).

**Contra Costa Child Care Council:** The nonprofit Contra Costa Child Care Council is the only child care resource and referral agency serving all of Contra Costa providing a wide range of free and low cost services and programs. It partners with parents, child care providers, businesses, and the community to promote quality care and early education so that children are ready for school and parents can work. Learn more: [www.cocokids.org](http://www.cocokids.org).