

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First 5 Riverside Challenges Families to *Rethink Their Drink* This Summer

(July 12, 2011) RIVERSIDE, CA —

As temperatures rise this summer, many of us reach for cool beverages. But before we hand our child lemonade, a juice box or a soda this summer, we may want to take a closer look at what is inside. Chances are it is full of added-sugar. More and more children are consuming sugary drinks at a younger age. In fact, children now drink as much soda as they do milk.¹ In the 1970's, children drank approximately three times as much milk as soda.² Today, a startling 44% of toddlers between the ages of 19 months and two years, and 70% of children ages 2-5 years old, drink at least one sugar-loaded beverage every day.³ Why should we worry? Nationally, obesity rates have tripled in the last two decades among children.⁴ In Riverside County more than one-third of children are overweight or obese⁵. And in terms of those sugar-filled drinks—research shows a direct link between the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and obesity.⁶

In Riverside County, agencies including First 5 Riverside, WIC, and the Desert Sierra Region Champions for Change are working together to get the word out about the affects of sugar-sweetened beverages through a *Rethink Your Drink* campaign this summer. The goal is simple: get more people to think about what they drink and to make healthier choices for themselves and their children. “We are asking parents to commit to making one change, to choose water this summer. By doing so, parents are eliminating the number one source of added sugar in their children’s diet, reducing their risk of being overweight or obese,” says Harry Freedman, executive director of First 5 Riverside. “Our concern is that our youngest children are getting the nutrition that they need to grow up healthy and better able to learn,” he adds.

To learn more about the Rethink Your Drink campaign and for free helpful resources visit: www.eatmovegrow.org

###

First 5 Riverside, the Riverside County Children & Families Commission, is a division of the Riverside County Department of Public Social Services. It is funded by Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues. Established by the County Board of Supervisors in 1999, First 5 Riverside supports early childhood development through educational outreach, partnerships and funding for early education, health and child care services that benefit children, from prenatal to age 5, and their families. Research shows that support helps children develop a strong foundation for success in school and throughout their lives. For more information about First 5 Riverside programs and other funded services, call 800-266-3880 or visit www.rccfc.org.

¹ California Center for Public Health Advocacy, Nov 2010

<http://first5california.com/parents/files/YoungChildren-ickTheCan%28CCPHA%29-Nov222010.pdf>

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ogden C, et al. “Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity in the United States, 1999-2004.” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2006, vol. 295, pp. 1549-1555.

⁵ Riverside County Epidemiology & Program Evaluation, 2009. Report 4, Volume 4.

⁶ Bubbling Over: Soda Consumption and its Link to Obesity in California, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, September 2009