



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **LOCAL CHILD CARE PROVIDER RACES TO THE TOP!**

Carina Diaz de Barajas, Director of Kids Place 2 Explore and Learn, LLC, in Tracy, reached Tier 4 in *Raising Quality!*, the county's quality rating and improvement system for early learning and development programs.

This rating system, which launched in 2013, is designed to help parents find high-quality child care and early learning opportunities for young children – and to help ensure all children develop the skills they need to be successful in school and life. The rating system includes five tiers, with Tier 5 signaling the highest level of quality.

The development and implementation of the rating system have been funded through Race to the Top, a federal grant designed to support states' efforts to improve early learning programs. The San Joaquin County region will receive \$2.4 million over the course of the four-year grant, with local Race to the Top efforts being coordinated by First 5 San Joaquin.

"The launch of *Raising Quality!* represents a pivotal step in ensuring positive outcomes for our youngest learners," said Lani Schiff-Ross, Executive Director of First 5 San Joaquin. "This new rating system will help providers develop and help parents identify high-quality child care for their infants, toddlers and preschoolers."

The new preschool and child care rating system is voluntary. Unlike current child-care licensing inspections, which only evaluate whether basic health and safety guidelines are met, *Raising Quality!* looks more closely at the learning and development opportunities a program provides: what level of education a teacher or caregiver has, for example, and whether a curriculum is in place to support school readiness.

"*Raising Quality!* is a program that allows child care providers, in particular Family Child Care, the opportunity to grow both personally and professionally," said Diaz de Barajas, whose program earned the highest tier level in Tracy. "I have been very fortunate to work with a great deal of tools that were introduced and provided to me by this program, along with personal one on one technical support from First 5. This program not only compensates you with monetary awards but most importantly it helps support a high quality child care environment. I also gained personal rewards--it feels great to have someone validate that my program offers high quality care to children and their families."

Any licensed family child care home, or public and private center serving low-income children, non English speakers, and/or children with special needs, ages 0-5, is invited to participate in *Raising Quality!*

at no cost. Participants are eligible for support to assist in improving their programs, and cash incentives for achieving high levels of quality.

For more information on *Raising Quality!* contact First 5 San Joaquin at (209) 953-5437 or check out the First 5 website, [www.sjckids.org](http://www.sjckids.org).

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#### **About First 5 San Joaquin**

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. First 5 San Joaquin allocates Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.