

University of California, Merced

OBJECTIVES

This project is among the first in Merced County to establish and grow the infrastructure and capacity for agencies, providers, and caregivers to assess and address risks for atypical development for children ages 0 to 5. The project targets the Organizational/ Inter-organizational Level and Community Level. The major focus population are children at risk for intellectual and learning problems.

Goal A: Resource and Needs Assessment

- Having information on the current state of affairs in the region with regard to services available, capacity, and needs is essential.
- Seeking input from relevant groups to build networks

Goal B: Virtual Center (VC)

- A Virtual Center will be developed as a resource for referrals, information, education, and outreach.
- A dynamic central repository of data collected from Goal A.
- help4mychild.org will be designed for accessibility and relevance to diverse groups of users
- The VC will benefit research-based approach of UCM and peer institutions.

Goal C: Community Outreach

- Community outreach is critical for the success of this project.
- Outreach includes: solicitation of input, buy-in, networking, and dissemination of information.
- ID key groups of people with investment in the issues of early childhood and development, health, risk, referral, service, education, and assessment.
- Dissemination of information will include printed materials, formal reports, attending special events, and workshops for targeted groups and the broader community.

ABSTRACT

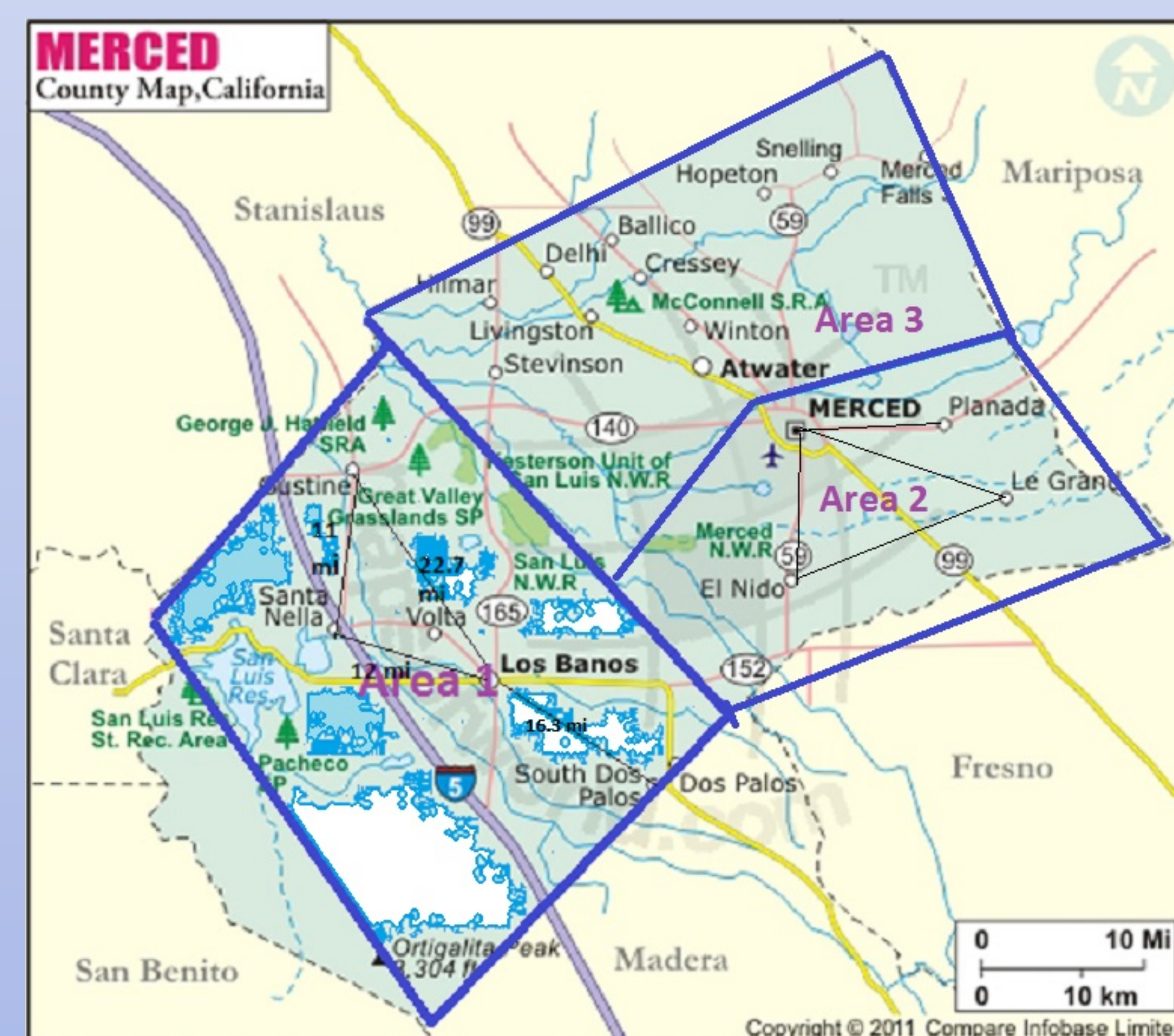
A UC Merced team, along with First 5 of Merced and other community partners implemented Help 4 My Child (H4MC) to develop an online resource for families of children that are at risk for intellectual and learning problems (ID-LD). That ID-LDs are commonly associated with many of the risk factors that are elevated in Merced makes quality screening and access to information on these conditions critical. This assessment also looks at what providers and parents see as important needs, particularly with regard to ID-LD issues. Public awareness and accessibility will be hallmarks of the VC and our community education/ information dissemination and outreach efforts. H4MC represents one of UC Merced's more important investments to support Merced County through assessment, research and community services.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

H4MC represents one of UCM's more important investments to support Merced County through research and community service. The Blum Center is invested in the success and sustainability of the VC and its community outreach as key elements of its own strategic plans. The H4MC team has already initiated efforts to outline a physical resource, research and service to address developmental disabilities within Merced.

Primary areas of evaluation: who is using the VC, how are they using the VC, is use of the VC actually improving screening, assessment, referrals, and service. The needs and resources assessment is one type of formative evaluation that will inform the development and implementation of the res of the project.

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H4MC teams will travel to the three designated areas and assess services that are offered in each city, what is available to parents as a resource for their children, where physicians and providers might refer parents, and if those resources are beneficial. When assessment is complete, all this information will be accessible on help4mychild.org.

IMPLICATIONS

- Statistics comparing Merced County to the overall state/nation indicates that Merced County is a high-risk demographic and better practices of early identification, referral and intervention are likely to have positive effects^{1,2}.
- Elevated rates of poverty, infant and child mortality, premature births, births to single mothers, among others, have been shown to place children at significantly higher risk for a variety of ID-LD^{3,4}.
- Current California data indicate that 10% of students in school, ages 3-22 years, are receiving special educational services, primarily for ID-LD's².
- H4MC will address the above statements by making information accessible to parents and providers.
- The community will have access to and adequate resources for screening, diagnosis, and then treatment.
- There are currently few mechanisms in Merced that touch upon these impediments – H4MC will address these shortcomings and be a go-to resource for the community.

PARTNERS

H4MC is made possible through First 5 of Merced County.



We collaborate with the Blum Center of UCM, Health Sciences Research Institute of UCM, and the Consortium for Research on Atypical Development and Learning at UCM.



REFERENCES

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2. Center for Disease Control, www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/
3. Graziano, A.M. (2002). *Developmental disabilities: An introduction to a diverse field*. Allyn Bacon, Boston, USA
4. MacDorman, M. et al. (2011). Understanding racial and ethnic disparities in U.S. infant mortality rates. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Data Brief No. 74.