



## **American Psychiatric Association Honors Clinic With National Mental Health Award**

The Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, a longstanding mental health provider in South and Central Los Angeles, is being honored with the American Psychiatric Association's *2006 Award for Advancing Minority Mental Health*.

The Clinic takes great pride in developing mental health programming which is responsive to emerging family needs and community concerns, and is therefore especially pleased to announce that its First Steps Program will be receiving this prestigious award that is made annually to honor psychiatrists and mental health programs that undertake innovative efforts to raise awareness of mental illness in underserved minority communities and increase access to quality mental health services in those communities.

First Steps is a home visiting program which increases access to early intervention mental health services for families with infants and toddlers experiencing multiple stressors, including poverty, language or cultural differences, isolation, mental health problems, domestic violence and/or substance abuse. Through a service model strongly supported by research which demonstrates its effectiveness, First Steps promotes strong parent-child attachment for at-risk families and was developed and designed in response to specific language, economic, and cultural barriers that impede access to service by the Latino and African American communities served by the Clinic.

First Steps addresses the critical need for cultural understanding in the delivery of appropriate interventions to diverse communities in several key ways: 1) Culturally competent Latino and African American professionals provide service, helping the "face of care" to be familiar and easy to interact with, 2) Parents are made partners in developing individualized treatment plans, promoting the inclusion of families' specific traditions and values, and 3) Staff-client interaction focuses on enhancing parent and family strengths.

Parents/caregivers engaged in services are able to successfully demonstrate improved interaction styles with their infants and toddlers, which supports the achievement of positive developmental outcomes for children under three. They also demonstrate improved understanding of the developmental needs of their children and the importance of parent/caregiver interaction in promoting positive developmental outcomes, which greatly contributes to reducing future mental health issues for children. Most significant, enrolled infants and toddlers demonstrate an improvement in their social and emotional functioning, as well as their developmental level.

The First Steps Program is one of six programs of the Clinic's Early Intervention and Community Wellness Division, serving as an important element in the continuum of early intervention and treatment services provided to over 1,400 children under the age of five, and their families, annually.

The Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic is a family-centered provider of mental health services for children zero to 25, with a mission to provide quality mental health services to a community in great need by ensuring easy access and promoting early intervention. ([www.lacgc.org](http://www.lacgc.org))